

SBD Dauntless Part 2

Category: Scale Articles

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Written by Ron Peterka

THE DOUGLAS SBD “DAUNTLESSS” DIVE BOMBER PART TWO OF TWO

Continued from an article in the website “general” section

Ron Peterka



Designed in 1939 at the Douglas Northrop facility in El Segundo, CA, the SBD was first flown on May 1, 1940. The war with Japan had not yet begun, but the world was dealing with Nazi led Germany and war appeared eminent. 5,936 SBDs and Army Air Force A-24s were built with production ending in July 1944.

Five basic versions were built until the SBD-5 became the standard with the following specifications. The major difference between the Navy/Marine version and the A-24 Army version was the removal of the tail-hook on the A-24. They are an all metal design with fabric covered control surfaces.

Wingspan:	41 feet 6 inches
Length:	33 feet
Height:	12 feet 11 inches
Ceiling:	27,100 feet
Range:	1,205 miles
Weight:	9,353 pounds
Power plant:	1,200-horsepower Wright R-1820-60 engine
Speed:	252 MPH (cruise 165 MPH)
Crew”	2, pilot and rear gunner
Armament:	2,250 pound bomb , or, under-wing rockets :two fixed .50 cal forward firing MG and one or two flexible MG mounted in rear cockpit (note: this bomb load figure from Boeing specs, but other specs say One 1000 or 500 pound bomb on a centerline yoke and one 100 pound bomb on each under-wing rack. If rockets carried, they were on the underwing bomb racks.)

If the SBD was in its usual 70 degree dive configuration, releasing the centerline bomb would go right through the arc of the propeller. Bad thing. So, it was attached to a swiveling yoke that, upon release would swing the bomb down to a position that would allow the bomb to clear the propeller. Wing loaded bombs or rockets would clear the prop arc.

The Dauntless also served the New Zealand and Mexican air forces.

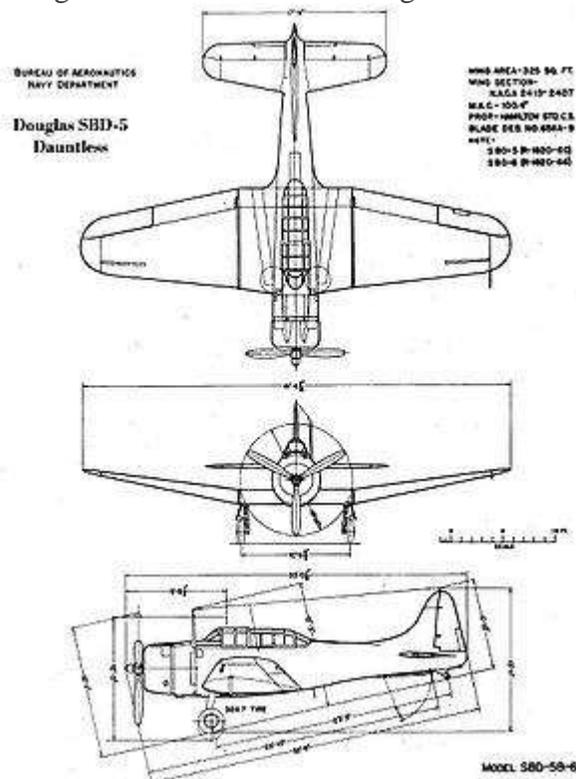
A Dauntless from the carrier *Enterprise* is credited with sinking the first enemy warship in WWII.

At the Battle of the Coral Sea on May 4, 1942 the Japanese carrier *Shoho* with a twelve plane Cover Air Patrol (CAP) was spotted and a squadron of SBDs sent to attack. Among those was a SBD-3 piloted by Ens. John Leppla with gunner John Liska in the rear cockpit.

As he approached the *Shoho*, Leppla found two Japanese *Zeros* on his tail and the gunner Liska hit both of them, taking them out of action. Just after beginning his dive another *zero* attacked from behind. Leppla applied the split dive brakes and the *Zero* overshot the dive bomber which promptly shot the *Zero* down and continued his attack dropping a 100 pound bomb. The *Shoho* was eventually sunk.

On his way back to his carrier (*Lexington*) Leppla spotted a Japanese seaplane below him and proceeded to shoot that plane down too. Total four enemy aircraft put out of service in one flight.

The standard Navy color scheme at the time (1942) was medium blue upper surfaces with light gray undersurfaces with a 'soft' line between the two colors. Insignias would be blue circles with white star on fuselage sides and on top and bottom of both wings. The model type and Bureau number on the tail would be small white letters. Ship and Squadron I.D. would be in white on fuselage sides forward of the insignia roundel.



Several large scale model plans are available (Zirola, Bates, Don Smith) and with a wide base landing gear and 7 1/2 degrees dihedral, most are good fliers. Plenty of documentation is available on the internet and the model should be fairly acrobatic.