

Supermarine *Spitfire* Mark XVI

1945

General History

Ability. And Good Looks Too

The *Spitfire* is an absolute beauty from nose to tail. Its streamlined form and distinctive elliptical wings reveal its ancestry of Supermarine racing planes from the 1920s and 30s. An exceptional aircraft, the handsome fighter's designer, Reginald Mitchell, once called the *Spitfire* a "bloody silly name."

The fastest military aircraft in the world in 1936, the *Spitfire's* exceptional speed and rate of climb made it an ideal interceptor to pounce on marauding German bombers and speeding V-1 buzz bombs over English airspace during World War II. In combat, *Spitfire* pilots say the machine felt like it was an extension of their nerves and muscles, leaving Royal Air Force (RAF) flyers free to concentrate on the world outside their windscreen and push the attack.

Constantly improved, versions of the *Spitfire* flew in combat from Britain's entry into World War II to the end of the Third Reich. In fact, *Spitfires* flew alongside new jet fighters in RAF frontline service into the 1950s!

Symbol of a Nation

Lifting young pilots into the air several times a day to clash with hordes of invading German fighters and bombers during the Battle of Britain, the *Spitfire* became the symbol of a nation's victory in their darkest hour. Although the *Spitfire's* less glamorous wood and fabric stable mate the Hawker *Hurricane* shot down more attackers in the fray, the public and press seemed captivated by the *Spitfire's* unforgettable curves. In England and the United States, the handsome RAF pilot and his trusty *Spitfire*, touted as the guardian of the British Isles, appeared in newspapers, magazines and newsreels as a symbol of the struggle against Nazi Germany.

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About This Aircraft

This *Spitfire* was delivered to Castle Bromwich, England on June 23, 1945. It was assigned to Number 695 Squadron that July and was still flying when 695 became Number 35 Squadron on February 14, 1949. Reassigned to Number 2 Squadron based at Little Snoring, the plane was downgraded to an instructional airframe on September 1, 1952. At an airfield in Bichester, England, the plane was repaired and modified to "taxiing condition" to appear as an early model *Spitfire* in the 1969 movie *Battle of Britain*.

After filming, the plane went to Number 4 Squadron of the Central Flying School at Kemble, England, where it was destined to fly with the Red Arrows. Before it was fully overhauled, the *Spitfire* was moved to Little Rissington and mounted on a pylon outside the airport's entrance. It stayed there for more than five years before coming down in 1976. Acquired by Doug Arnold of Warbirds of Great Britain, the plane was totally restored. It was purchased by Evergreen in 1990. This *Spitfire* is considered one of the best examples in the United States today.

Specifications

Type:	Fighter Aircraft
First Flight:	Prototype K 5054 on March 5, 1936
Wingspan:	36 feet 10 inches
Length:	31 feet 5 inches
Height:	11 feet 6 inches
Wing Area:	242 square feet
Weight, Empty:	5,634 pounds
Weight, Loaded:	9,500 pounds
Power:	One Rolls-Royce <i>Merlin</i> (Packard-built) 1,580 horsepower engine
Normal Crew:	One
Typical Armament:	Two .50 caliber machine guns; two 20 mm cannons; 1,000 pounds bomb load

Performance

Cruise Speed:	324 miles per hour at 20,000 feet
Top Speed:	404 miles per hour at 20,000 feet
Range:	234 miles at 228 miles per hour
Service Ceiling:	41,500 feet