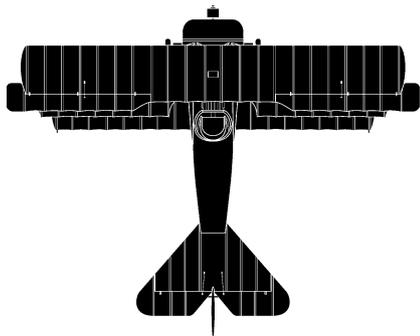


Dr I



Imperial Germany's Dr I was one of World War I's most famed fighter aircraft. Built by Fokker Flugzeugwerke, the "Dreidecker" airplane was procured in only small numbers but nevertheless was prominent in the great air battles of spring 1918. Moreover, it was renowned as the aircraft in which Germany's "Red Baron," Manfred von Richthofen, scored the last 17 of his 80 air-to-air victories. Von Richthofen perished in the Dr I when shot down on April 21, 1918.

The aircraft was conceived in a kind of knee-jerk response to introduction in early 1917 of Britain's Sopwith Triplane, which soon dominated Germany's Albatros over the Western Front. The Dr I design was typical Fokker fare; it had a welded steel-tubing fuselage and cantilever

wooden wings. The short-span, narrow-chord wings were stoutly built with parallel main spars and interplane struts to prevent flexing. The fixed landing gear had a fourth airfoil surface. The Dr I was highly maneuverable and had a high rate of climb, but it was slow in level flight and was worryingly prone to breaking up in the air.

Von Richthofen first flew the Dr I on Sept. 1, 1917, and shot down an enemy aircraft. He thought it was superior to the Sopwith and argued for buying large numbers as soon as possible. Before long, however, the aircraft began to suffer wing and engine failures, and production halted. It was one of the war's best dogfighters, but Germany withdrew it from front-line service, in favor of the faster Fokker D VII, in the summer of 1918.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: Imperial German Air Force Dr I as it appeared in spring 1918 when assigned to Jagdgeschwader 1, Jasta 11 in France. It was flown by Manfred von Richthofen—the famed "Red Baron"—who was JG 1's commanding officer.



Triplanes of Jasta 26 at Erchin, France, during World War I.

In Brief

Designed, built by Fokker Flugzeugwerke ★ first flight July 5, 1917 ★ crew of one ★ number built 320 ★ one Le Rhone/Oberursel Ur.II 9-cylinder rotary engine ★ armament two 7.92 mm Spandau LMG 08 front-mounted machine guns with 1,000 rounds of ammunition ★ max speed 115 mph ★ range 185 miles ★ weight (loaded) 1,292 lb ★ span (top wing) 23 ft 7 in ★ length 18 ft 11 in ★ height 9 ft 8 in.

Famous Fliers

German aces: Manfred von Richthofen, Werner Voss, Heinrich Gontermann, Kurt Wolff, Hermann Goering, Lothar von Richthofen, Ernst Udet, Adolf Ritter von Tutschek. **Test Pilot:** Anthony Fokker.

Interesting Facts

Designed by Reinhold Platz, a professional welder ★ featured in films "The Blue Max" (1966), "Von Richthofen and Brown" (1971), "The Red Baron" (2008) ★ named "Dreidecker," German for "triple decker" ★ plagued by poor workmanship, which caused several notable fatal crashes ★ fitted with wing-tip skids to prevent ground looping ★ took off after a run of about 50 yards ★ continues to be flown in replica form ★ used staggered wings to offer better visibility ★ mentioned by Charles Schulz as opponent to Snoopy's Sopwith Camel in cartoon strip, "Peanuts."