

## Macchi C.205 vs. Spitfires

*The following two stories come from the book "Un Pilota del Cavallino Rampante", (edition La Galaverna-Flaviana, Battaglia Terme, Padova, 199) written by Tenente Pilota Paolo Voltan, 4° Stormo Caccia, Regia Aeronautica Italiana. They refer to two different missions, flew by Paolo Voltan on August 14<sup>th</sup> and September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1943.*

*I think the following descriptions may be helpful in order to understand the performances of the Macchi C.295, one of the best fighters of the Regia Aeronautica in WW2. This plane was equipped by a FIAT RA 1050 Tifone (same as DB 605 A-1, build under license by FIAT), developing 1450 HP (the same engine mounted on Me 109 G and H1)*

*Reading the following stories, you can easily understand the C.205 was much more maneuverable than the Me109, being able to outturn the allied Spitfires MkVb and Mk.IX, at that time operational over Italy.*

*I decided to translate this text in English, so other people of the IL-2 community can enjoy the description. Have fun.*

*EAF 51 Bear, C.O. 51° Stormo, European Air Force*

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### **August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1943, over Sicily**

On 14th of August our flight took off with 8 planes. They were all Macchi c.205, armed with two 20mm. Cannon (finally!) and the usual two m12,7 mm. Machine guns. I was the wingman of Ten. Querci, and we were the third section, flying close to him on his right side, as for the general rule in combat flying....

...Our flight of eight planes climb to 3.000 mt. Our orders were to climb to 6.000 mt., escorting a flight o RE.2002, flying at 5.000 mt. The difference in height of 1.000 mt. Should have allowed us diving attack, in case an enemy formation would attempt to intercept the RE.2002 in order to stop their bombing attack....

...We were flying over Milazzo, when a short burst from our flight leader warned us that an enemy formation was in sight. I rased the head, and high in front of us, a little on the left, I saw a formation of not less than fourty Spitfires, diving toward us.

As soon they were about 300 meters from us, they opened fire all together, and an avalanche of red tracers hit us, while our sections break on the left or on the right, attempting to avoid the enemy fire.

Querci made an hard break on the right, and I followed him carefully, while feeling my sweat on my head. My hand was firmly keeping the stick, my finger ready on the firing button, in order to open fire as soon as needed.

Closing on maximum turn, Querci was trying to position himself at 6 o clock of some bandit, because after the first merge it was only a matter of ability. In fact the maneuverability of our Macchi enabled us to engage the whole enemy formation, until the RE.2002 were on target. The Spitfires, meanwhile, were all around us in the sky, flying in sections of two planes.

I was still flying near Querci, continuously checking around to watch possible treats. Suddenly in front of us we saw two Spitfires turning hard on the left. Querci opened fire,

but due to the turning rate, the tracers missed them near their tail. I was ready to engage them, but then I saw two other Spitfires coming from the right, aiming at Querci plane. With an hard bank on the right I turned toward them, hardly missing to hit them both, but making impossible to them to open fire on Querci.

I suddenly realised I was alone, while all around I can see a furball of British and Italian planes, firing and running the ones after the others, in the middle of an hell dogfight. In that moment two Spitfires crossed in front of my plane, flying in very close formation. They should have miss me, because they were turning on the left, following an isolated Italian plane. In a matter of seconds I close on their six, pushing my Macchi on maximum turn without falling in a spin. A few seconds again and I would have been able to put the enemy wingman in my gun sight. I felt the plane trembling and shaking as usual, announcing the beginning of an horizontal spin. Pushing a little forward the stick I succeeded in stabilizing her, while I realized I was slowly gaining advantage on the bandits, that probably did not spot me yet. Shooting at the wingman would give me an advantage. If the leader would not know the wingman was hit, I could lately attack the second target with another burst.

The progresses I was making spiraling totally took my attention, and I forgot to check my six, where suddenly I could find another section of Spitfires. The bandits were finally in my gun sight. I knew that if I wanted to hit them, I should aim ahead of them. On the contrary our continuous turn on the left would have pushed my bullets away from the target. When I let the first burst go, I had the confirmation of my thoughts. In fact the tracers showed my burst were missing the bandit, sliding down, away from his tail, leaving the two planes still free to aim to their hunt to the other Macchi. A second burst hit the wingman Spit. The plane banked: initially a dark smoke burst out of his engine, than a sudden fire blow on the whole plane, that went down as a torch. I got him!

The other was not yet aware of having lost his wingman, because was still engaging the other Macchi. This was still turning on the left while climbing, knowing this was the best way to get free from the dog on his tail. Looking around I could see planes flying in all directions, but no one of the British was following the RE.2002, that in the mean time should have accomplished their mission. On my gun sight I still had the other Spit, and I was committed not to leave him for any reason.

The victory I got on his wingman push me to a wider turn, and I had to close again, if I wanted to get the other too. The hard turn was pushing me on my seat, and moving my head in the different directions was an enormous effort. A few seconds again, and I could fire another burst on my target. The shape of the spit was slowly entering in my gun sight, well centred in the external circle. I should just wait a little, to put it right in the central cross of my gun sight. Than I had to go further ahead, in order to aim before the Spit, and balance the turn speed. When I shoot, a burst erupted from the Macchi's guns, shaking the whole plane. My tracers hit the target that, being turning, was totally exposing his full shape in gun sight. I can see my bullets entering his wing, the cockpit, the engine, but the plane was still flying as nothing was happened. I was ready to shoot again, when I saw some red lights passing near my plane. I turned suddenly my head, and what I can see where the turning propeller blades of two Spits, with a spiral painted on the nose, creating a strange visual effect, and together with tem, the flashing machine guns shooting at me.

At that moment I was not really thinking what I was doing. My reaction was pure instinct. With a sudden break I turned my plane on the right, closing the throttles. The two Spits passed over me in overshooting, and I found myself on their six, but unfortunately too far from them.

I opened full throttle, trying to catch them, but they were really too far, and I would have needed too time to do that.. I needed some rest after all that emotions: I had a look around, and I realized I was alone. The remaining Spits were heading toward the Mount Etna. No other Macchi in sight. My altimeter was showing 6.000 meters... Watching the

clock and the televel, I understood I was flying since 70 minutes, and it was time to return to home base...

## **September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1943**

My Squadron, 73<sup>a</sup> Squadriglia, belonging to the 9<sup>th</sup> Group of 4<sup>o</sup> Stormo (Wing), was based at Gioia del Colle since August 28<sup>th</sup>, 1943. We were flying Macchi C.205, finally armed with 20 mm. Cannons, and a maximum speed of over 650 Km/h.

We scrambled at around 10,30 AM. We got notice of a formation of 65 B-24 Liberator south of Pescara, flying toward south, returning to their bases in Tunisia.

We take off in eight planes... we climbed at maximum rate at 6.000 mt.... The possibility of attacking a group of 65 bomber was making all of us excited. The first to spot the Americans was Rinaldi, my wingman...

The American tactic was always the same: flying in boxes, so they can enforce their offensive power. A formation of 65 Liberators may provide firepower of 650 machine guns, and approaching them as very dangerous. We knew that their guns can fire horizontally for about 300 meters, than the bullet would change their trajectory, loosing a great part of their speed. As a consequence Liberators gunner did not open fire until our planes were very near. Our tactic was flying in the same direction as them, on the side of their formation, at a distance of about 500 meters. Their speed was about 450 Km/h, and therefore we had a speed margin of about 200 Km/h. So we flew straight, over passing them, and then with an hard turn, attacking them frontally. This was the side in which B-24 were more vulnerable, due to dead angles caused by the engines, where the gunners cannot fire.

When we over passed the formation of about 500 meters, a little higher than the bombers, dive toward them and firing. The volume of fire hitting our planes was terrible, but the duration of the attack was only a few seconds. As soon we were approaching the closer, we made a roll, turning our plane upside down, and reverse in a half split-s and fast diving toward the ground. While turning, we were showing all our shape to the bombers gunners, but only for a few seconds. Continuing our dive until being out of sight, we climbed again on the opposite side. Then we flew again on the side of the formation, waiting to be again straight in front of them, in order to start the next passage. This kind of maneuver might be repeated several times, at least until the remaining fuel in our fighters allowed us to attack again.

That day, as soon we spot the bombers, while moving on our attacking position, a formation of eight Spitfires suddenly appeared on our right side. Fortunately they were not higher than us, and so they did not dive on us firing. The four Macchis on the right side of the bombers abandoned the attack route, turning toward the Spits. The other four, including me and Rinaldi, continued in their pursuit of the bombers..

From my cockpit I could see the furball between the others. The altitude was favorable to the Macchis, because until 6.000 meters our planes were practically unbeatable. Mariotti, followed by his comrades, went into the dogfight wit a terrible commitment. In spite of being four against eight, the Italians soon were dominating the situation. The maneuverability of their planes, and the ability of the pilots put them in the condition of being able to fire without being fired. The duel last about ten minutes, while we were flying south, following the bombers.

The intercept happened south of Termoli, and the fight continued toward Puglia, with our series of attacks ... At the third pass one of the leading planes banked on his wing, while a long black smoke was erupting from his wing. After firing at him, when I rolled upside down and dived, I could see her well and clearly while climbing on the opposite side. The B-24 was flying without control, in a narrow spiral dive. Was the end: the huge beast was going

down smoking, while I could see some parachutes opening over her. But we need to make another attack, although we already flew over Bari, heading to Jonio see.

In the following pass another B-24 started to smoke heavily and to loose hight, without loosing control. At least other five bombers were heavily damaged.. We were now flying over Santa Maria di Leuca, and our fuel level did not allow us to perform another attack, therefore we headed home, very curious about learning the story of the other section.

They were already arrived at home base before us. One spit shot down and confirmed, maybe a second one. A poor score, but obtained by only four Macchis against eight Spitfires, that at the end decided to disengage....

Each fight was always different from the others. After this dogfight our debriefing conclusions were two. The fighters attacking the Spits make a few comments about the ingenuity of the British, being outturned by the Macchis, without succeeding in break, and therefore hit by our fighters, and running home at the end, helped by the fact that our Macchis were out of fuel, and therefore cannot pursue them.

The other section got a good confirmation about their tactics in attacking bombers, able to produce good results. The limited fuel was the main reason why of the limited results. But it is also important to mention that we were only four against 65 of those huge bombers, and the volume of fire shoot at us was really terrible...