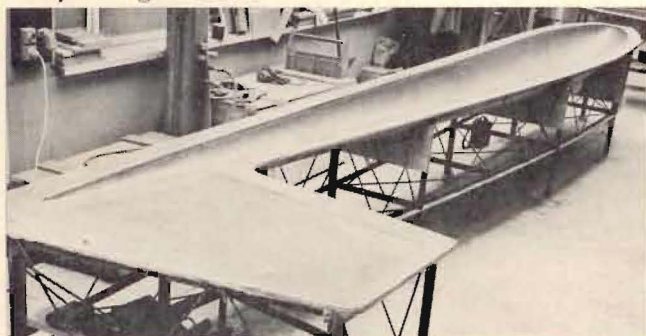


Diamant Test Pilot Report

D. Delafield

After 3,575 cross-country miles this last summer, we are more enthused than ever with the HBV Diamant. So, armed with plenty of confidence, I agreed to write a Pilot Report for *Soaring*.

Alice and I fell in love with the Diamant during our honeymoon in Switzerland. We were enjoying a final fling (thanks to our airline passes) before settling down to three years of study. And so it developed, that on July 22, 1965, René Comte flew us over to the FFA factory at Altenrhein on the shores of Lake Constance. We were almost as impressed by the large, modern factory, in its charming setting, as we were by the fiberglass sailplane. That evening, over some hot mulled wine, I placed our order. We have had absolutely no regrets since.



Half-shell mold for Diamant fuselage.

The ship is the end result of a university project by the young glider pilot-engineers Bircher and Voornveld. They had previously experienced marked success building a modern fuselage for their club K-6. With the encouragement and facilities of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, they then designed a high-

performance fuselage to use Huetter's fine fiberglass wings. Next came the inevitable problem with most dream sailplanes—money. Fortunately they took their project to René Comte. Though he had retired from soaring he was ready, after a good look at the plans, to get back into the sport.

Under the urgings of René, the designers and the Institute, FFA agreed to build a trial lot of ten fuselages, the wings to be supplied by Haenle. These first ten sailplanes would result in a net loss to the factory, but it too had been swept up in the enthusiasm. Much to FFA's delight the first ten Diamants were quickly sold. They have now tooled up for quantity production of the complete sailplane.

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Serial No. Three (Two November) arrived at the Miami, Florida docks during my final exams and just a week prior to the Marfa Regionals. Somehow we made it to Texas and were able to cautiously pick our way into fourth place. Then, with 40 hours in the log, we confidently drove out to the Nationals where I proceeded to indulge in every stupid error known to man. The result was that only pilots who had a chance to climb and glide with the Diamant know its true capabilities.

The Diamant could be classed as an exotic Standard Class glider, since it has a retractable gear and camber-changing flaps in addition to a 15-meter span. The fuselage is long (24.8 ft.) and low, necessitating a reclining pilot position similar to the HP-14 or the Foka. The cockpit readily fits my angular six foot three, however, and even after flights of nine hours I am not unduly stiff. The cockpit and headrest are finished in a plush blue synthetic fabric made at René Comte's textile mill. One's legs extend around a large, easily re-