

Old Trainer vs. Warbird Wannabe

LAST MARCH, Hawker Beechcraft flew an AT-6 Light Attack aircraft to Lee Lauderback, ultra-high-time P-51 Mustang pilot at Stallion 51 Mustang Flight Operations in Kissimmee, Florida, so that he could compare its performance with that of the 1940s-era North American T-6 Texan and P-51 Mustang – and enable some eye-candy formation flights. The AT-6 is a contender in the U.S. Air Force Light Air Support program; a winner will be selected in June.

The Hawker Beechcraft T-6 trainer, which won the Joint Primary Aircraft Training System competition in the 1990s, replaced the Navy's Beechcraft T-34 and the Air Force's Cessna T-37 trainers. "The Mustang is the quintessential fighter," Lauderback says; "however, Hawker Beechcraft took a lot of the lessons learned from the Mustang and improved upon them."

"We consider it an honor that Lee would even mention the AT-6 and the Mustang in the same sentence," says Derek Hess, Hawker Beechcraft director of Light Attack.



"Hey, watch your six." A 1944 North American T-6 Texan horses around with a Hawker Beechcraft AT-6, a candidate in the U.S. Air Force Light Air Support program.