

## A round with the Tecnam P96 Golf



**T**ECNAM'S P92 series of high wing aircraft have become a familiar sight at New Zealand aviation events during the last two years.

More recently the low wing version of the popular light-weight has been making its presence felt, firstly with a privately owned example, and then Tecnam Limited's own demonstrator.

The privately owned example has certainly created interest. The demonstrator, assembled in late February had its first cross country to Matamata, the day after New Zealand test flights, for *Aviation News* to briefly appraise the aircraft.

Although a microlight, this is a cabin training aeroplane with a cross country performance that has to be experienced to be believed.

A more trim looking aircraft than its high wing P92S sibling the P96 Golf bears all the hallmarks expected from the Italian manufacturer.

Noticeable is the build and overall finish. The earlier aircraft were good but this is better. Neat trim fittings within the cabin and close fit panelling outside.

The cabin is a surprising 1.12m wide. There is a simple but effective seat adjustment for those with longer legs and magnificent visibility.

The canopy slides aft for entry and exit which is achieved over the leading edge of the wing. A step is provided each side abeam the engine bulkhead.

Sitting in the cockpit we notice what appears to be a clipped wing when compared to the P92 Echo. Indeed the P96 Golf features a span of 8.4m compared with 9.3 for the P92 Echo. The resultant 'clipped wing' gives a very crisp rate of roll, cuts through light turbulence with ease and enables a five knot higher indicated cruise speed than its P92 cousins. This is a pilot's aeroplane which is just fun to fly yet when it comes to imparting pilot instruction it will do everything and more which was expected of the traditional flight trainers which grace the lines of clubs and flying schools.

### Handling characteristics

With 100 hp up front from the 912S Rotax the P96 Golf wants to fly immediately the throttle is opened. Slight back stick pressure immediately full throttle is achieved and we're airborne in just over 100m. Climb at 70 knots sees better than 750 fpm while a max rate climb will see better than 1000 fpm.

Heading out to a suitable training area we note great visibility over the nose and forward and down from the wing leading edge.

Stalls are predictable with buffet warning and as flap is progressively extended the stall speed comes back to just under 33 knots. Hold it there and the P96 will drop a wing readily but recovery is quick and conventional. Slow speed 'bad weather' configuration is best demonstrated at 55 knots with 15 degrees of flap extended. Full manoeuvrability is maintained in this configuration. For blue skies, clean up the flap, advance the throttle to 75% and cruise quickly builds up to 115 knots. Then comes the fun flying. While the P96 Golf is not cleared for aerobatic manoeuvres the semi aerobatic sequences of pylon turns and Cuban eights are



Rearward sliding canopy allows for simplified entry and exit. Pilot and passenger enter over the wing leading edge.

not only exhilarating but amply show off the short span Golf wing to advantage with ultra crisp changes in direction. The airframe has a +3/-3 load factor.

There's plenty of room behind the seats for the overnight gear and inflight requirements even with 70 litres of fuel on board.

Full flap extension is 40 degrees of electrically actuated flap. The aircraft is gaining a reputation as a good short field performer coming in over the fence at 45 knots and a go around, climbing out with full flap, will see 500 fpm initially while the pilot cleans up the office.

So where does the Golf best fit into the training system. This is a highly suitable PPL trainer. It doesn't deserve to be locked into a microlight only regime. Transfer to a heavier general aviation aircraft is really only going to require a comprehensive type rating.

Being classed as a microlight brings some operating cost advantages too although Giovanni Nustrini of Tecnam Limited points out that all the aircraft imported are assembled by AeroTechnology Ltd engineers at Ardmore and the engineer enters an appropriate release in the aircraft logbook. Optional avionics and instrumentation is installed by South Pacific Avionics at Ardmore. The owner has the option of maintaining the aircraft under Part 103 microlight rules or sending it to a certified workshop.

He is also quick to point out the cost advantages of operation. The C152/PA38 equivalents are commonly on line for around \$115 per hour. A Tecnam series aircraft will, at \$80 per hour, generate income for the owners. This includes insurance, allowing for engine replacement and interest on capital outlaid. It's obviously time for a serious look from both smaller and larger organisations. The first northern clubs have seen the light and purchased P92 series aircraft.

In all a serious yet fun all-metal microlight which has a distinctive affordable niche in the training and recreational sport pilot field.

**Just ask an owner who has one .**



The lines from the high wing P92 series are evident but the shorter span wing for the P96 makes for really crisp performance.



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Left: Rugged sprung steel landing gear  
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