

SERIOUS AKRO—AT A FLYING CLUB?

We were a little surprised when we learned that the Xtreme Decathlon we were to review was not being sold to a private owner for purely personal use—it was going to be leased to a flying club. Our experience with the airplanes in the more capable end of the aerobatic spectrum is that they are jealously guarded by their owners—while it's not usual for them to be used for training, it's rare for them to be available for rental.

Generally, it makes sense as once you get into the performance range of the Xtreme Decathlon the most common trainer is a two-place Pitts Special—not known for docile manners when the wheels are touching the ground. The Xtreme doesn't quite have the performance of a Pitts S-2A, but it's not that far away, and it has the same ground handling as a Citabria—which has been on rental lines for decades. So—why not?

The Xtreme we flew is owned by Nick Slabakov and leased to the Aspen Flying Club at Centennial Airport, just south of Denver, Colorado, which has had a Citabria available to its members for more than five years. The club and its instructors are used to tailwheel checkouts and deciding who should be turned

loose in an airplane where the risk of RLOC is well above its nosewheel brethren.

Slabakov told us that he had been fired up about the Xtreme Decathlon ever since he first heard of it. A member of Aspen Flying Club, he worked with club co-owner Chris Dillis, to put together a lease that would work.

Dillis said that the club had been giving aerobatic and tailwheel dual in the Citabria for years and that the Xtreme Decathlon would open up a new market for akro training. He pointed out that aerobatic schools

are few and far apart and the idea of having an airplane with the capabilities of the Xtreme that someone could rent after completing training should

increase club membership.

Club members pay \$35 per month in dues and can rent the Citabria for \$125 per hour and the Xtreme Decathlon for \$189 per hour.

The club has put together a fairly extensive set of checkout requirements for the Xtreme, however, for pilots current in the Citabria they didn't look too onerous. We're glad to see an aerobatic airplane with the capability of the Xtreme Decathlon coming to a flying club. We'll be watching to see if there is enough demand to support it.

