

The Ultimate New Year's Gift Might Be This Salvaged Hawker Sea Fury Air Racer

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The highly modified Hawker Sea Fury Mk.11 unlimited air racer "Furias" is for sale. VOODOO 1650 VIA YOUTUBE

While you're daydreaming this week, spare a few minutes for what it might be like to own your own 460-plus mph modified warbird air racer. If the thought gets your blood flowing, then you may want to buy "Furias". You'll have to put it back together but you'll have major cool-factor cred.

The ex-Australian fighter is for sale by Rockford, IL-based [Courtesy Aircraft](#) for a relatively reasonable \$375,000. The 'reasonable' price reflects the fact that Furias is non-flyable after suffering damage in a landing accident after qualifying at the Reno National Championship Air Races in 2012. Right before the accident, pilot Matt Jackson, qualified

the big Sea Fury in third place at a speed of 467.287 mph on Reno's 8.08-mile oval race course.

When set against the asking prices for flyable Sea Furies in stock configuration - one just sold for \$1.4 million - the list price for Furias looks appealing. But like purchasing a wrecked supercar from a junkyard, the acquisition price is only the floor of what a buyer will need to spend to make it functional again. To get a handle on the realities of what it might take to make Furias airworthy again, I spoke with one of the most renowned warbird restoration shops in the world - [Sanders Aeronautics](#).



This stock Hawker Sea Fury Mk. 11, the same model as Furias, recently sold for \$1.4 million.
NICHOLAS HERPEUX VIA PINKFOOT

Sanders Aeronautics specializes in Hawker Sea Fury restorations and Sea Fury-based air racers, several of which it has owned and raced since the early 1980s. Company president and race pilot, Dennis Sanders, says the asking price is a good one but affirms that Furias will need a lot of work.

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When Jackson lowered the landing gear after qualifying, a faulty valve caused the hydraulically actuated gear not to fully lock in the down position. The left main gear was good but the right main (the large forward gear leg on the starboard side of the Fury) would not fully lower and lock. Despite repeated attempts to get it to lock, Jackson was unsuccessful.



So upon landing the gear folded and the right wing dropped, causing Furius to cartwheel. Jackson emerged with a few bumps and bruises but the airplane suffered significant wing, gear and fuselage damage, some of which can be seen in photos with the sale listing. Dennis Sanders says the modified Sea Fury is eminently repairable however.



A screen grab of Furius being moved by crane-sling after its landing accident. While damage to its ... [+] VOODOO 1650 VIA YOUTUBE

Furias' 28-cylinder, 4,000 hp Pratt & Whitney R-4360 Wasp Major engine would have to be removed. The wing and fuselage would have to be separated along with its fuel tank. All the major components would have to be placed in fixtures and straightened including the center section of the fuselage and its structurally important longerons. Repairs to the wings, landing gear and new propeller would follow.

What's the price tag for all of that? "It's probably a million dollars to fix it," Sanders says though he adds that Sanders Aeronautics would have to go through aircraft in greater detail to come up with a full figure. The good news is the restoration shop has all the necessary parts for the 70 year-old fighter/racer thanks to decades of shrewd surplus parts buys by Dennis and his father, Frank Sanders.

Not surprisingly, the project would take well over a year, perhaps two. It would require an owner with vision, someone who wanted to fly it or see it fly again as a racer and contest the Unlimited championship at Reno. As Sanders noted, Furias has potential. It is one of fastest racing airplanes in the world with good prospects in the right hands of reaching the magical 500 mph lap-speed around the Reno course.

An alternative (a less fun one) would be to restore Furias to stock Sea Fury configuration. It would take a bit longer and take a bit more money but it could be done. That said, there are about 24 Sea Furies listed on the U.S. civil aircraft register, rare birds one and all. But there are really only two full-bore Sea Fury-based racers still extant, making Furias even more collectible.



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BH **Brad Haskin** 

31 December, 2022

Hmmmm.....those photos of Furius being loaded on the trailer after the accident sure look familiar. Would have been nice to at least get a little bit of credit for them.

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