

Fighting the Ki-84Ia

by sick

The Frank is a vicious opponent. It's as fast as the Pony, better armed, and turns better as well. With combat flaps, it can turn with a Spitfire, it can out-accelerate anything and out-climb all but the Bf109, and its snapshot capability with it's high velocity cannon is as good or better than an FW190D-9.

So how does one fight such a predator? The answer lies in the two things the Frank just can't do: a) dive well, and b) roll well, particularly at high speed. As long as you engage the Frank with an energy advantage, you can prosecute a series of high side gun passes against it, but be very careful of relative energy states. The Frank accelerates so quickly, with its huge horsepower and very light frame, that it can recover E far faster than you might think. If the enemy flies his bird as an angles fighter, as many Frank pilots are apt to do, you will be in no danger, but a wily Frank driver will use their climb and acceleration to achieve an energy advantage, and their high top speed to chase you down.

If you do find yourself at a disadvantage against a Frank, don't despair. This is where the inherent weaknesses of your opponent will save you. Immediately dive steeply, trading altitude for airspeed. The Pony will out-dive the Frank rather handily. If the Frank is close behind you, use a defensive spiral to gain separation. Then, with sufficient separation and full WEP, you can disengage in level flight. If the Frank appears to be catching you up, wait until he is about d8 to d10 behind you (which will be d4 to d7 on his FE), and split-s away from him at high speed. His anemic roll rate will make him incapable of following, and you can now disengage at will.

If you disengage like this from a Ki-84Ia, remember that he's a damn fast opponent. He won't be able to catch you, but don't expect to be able to gain enough separation to safely reverse against him. You may have to just run home, which isn't a lot of fun, but it sure beats a silk ride. The Frank loses speed and turning ability with altitude, so the more air you're able to retain when you disengage, the better (especially since the Pony is just the opposite, and thrives in the rarified vapors four or five miles up).

In summary, a Frank flown as an angles fighter is no danger to you. You can hunt him and kill him like any other turn and burn special. A wily Frank driver, flying his bird as a hot rod energy machine, is a distinct danger, but he can't kill you if you aren't there. Don't stick around, don't get greedy. He may call "Runstang!" over Channel 100, but as they say, "sticks and stones..." With an energy advantage, you may be able to engage the Frank for some time, especially if your opponent succumbs to the lure of hard breaks to spoil your guns solution. Be patient, retain energy, and you will kill him.