

Patches for the Newcomer

By Heureux

Preface/Disclaimer

The author is relatively new to Red Baron 3d. This article contains opinions and practical suggestions that are based on personal experience; advice obtained on the Delphi Flight Simulator Forum and from published works such as Wings of Honor tutorials and patch maker Web Page directions. It attempts to walk the newcomer through the patching process in a way that will minimize problems. You may encounter problems anyway. The decision to experiment with patches is yours alone, as is any risk of rendering your game unplayable. It may be reassuring to know that one can always uninstall all the game files, reload a fresh copy and try again, even if a problem does occur. A lot of assistance is available from the Red Baron "Community" at the various on-line Red Baron Forums and elsewhere. If anyone's contribution to the state of the patching art has been overlooked or mischaracterized, please accept this apology. I would never claim to "know it all", even if I'd been around for years.

What is a Patch?

One of the many great things about Red Baron 3d is the wealth of "patches" freely available from the World Wide Web. A great number of very devoted and talented Red Baron fans have invested countless hours designing a wide range of improvements to the basic game (often referred to as "corporate" or "OEM" Red Baron). Patch creators typically maintain Websites where their work can be downloaded. The Red Baron Web Ring is an excellent place to find links to these sites. Recently, the Wings of Honor Website provided a comprehensive Resources page where one can find most patches in one place.

Patches can be categorized several ways:

- ?? Utility programs for adding patches, improving multi-player on-line gaming or tinkering with game design components
- ?? Basic game design changes or additions that permit a wider range of player settings, game effects and play options
- ?? Historical research corrections incorporated into the game
- ?? Terrain, ground objects or aerial effects artwork creating a more realistic environment
- ?? Aircraft artwork that is more realistic or visually attractive
- ?? Flight characteristics or damage modeling changes intended to improve realism

Many patches improve Red Baron in more than one way. Some "super patches" attempt to incorporate individual patches in a mutually compatible set that improve the game many ways without requiring the user to experiment with numerous potentially conflicting patches.

Learning to use patches can be a bit confusing and intimidating. It is easy to feel as if one lacks the necessary technical knowledge needed to use patches, if one is a newcomer to Red Baron. Unfortunately, many people are reluctant to try patching, because no one wants to "mess up" the way their game works. Fortunately, it is not that hard to learn how to use patches. You will find the benefits of using patches far outweigh the time and effort needed to learn how to use them.

Getting Started

Patching is not difficult, but it does require you to have at least a little understanding of how to use a Zip utility and manage files with Windows Explorer. It is advisable to have a fresh installation of the OEM game before you start adding patches. Use Windows Explorer to take a good look at the way the stock Red Baron game folders are organized.

Read the instructions for any patch you want to use, as with any software. The Web Page you download a patch from often contains instructions. Patch makers tend to put more effort into their creations than their instructions, but you can usually figure it out, especially if you check a Forum for help. You can add patch enhancements directly into your games data folders, or add and remove patches with Tom Harradine's (von Tom) Campaign Manager utility, which is highly recommended.

Von Tom's Campaign Manager is the first patch you should download. Either the cmbeta10 or newer cm11 (released 01/30/00) versions will do. This utility makes adding and removing patches easy. If you can figure out how to use patches without it, you can easily install and use Campaign Manager, so you may as well take advantage of it. Campaign Manager goes in the RedBaron3D subdirectory. The path looks like this:

C:/Sierra/RedBaron3D/cm11

Take a good look at the cm11 subdirectories and files. Note the "Patches" folder, where you will be placing the game patches you want to use. Note the Rbbackup folder, where Campaign Manager will keep a default set of data files if you choose to. Study the readme files. Locate the cm11 application file (a roundel on a green box) and make a shortcut to cm11 for your desktop. Now run Campaign Manager, and take a good look at it before you try to add any patches with it. Click on Patches and Files, then Backup RB Files. This will place a default backup copy of the current Data files in the CM11/Rbbackup/Data folders. Note that CM can only have one backup copy at a time. Backup RB Files saves a copy of whatever game configuration is in use at the time, overwriting any prior backup. It wouldn't hurt to have a look with Windows Explorer to see them, if you still aren't clear what you're doing.

Avoiding Problems with Patches

Not all patches create the exact same filing system when you unzip them. Some are designed to automatically create a folder with their descriptive name (which is what you will see in the CM add and remove lists) and subfolders containing the new data. If you set the zip utility to create subfolders, you can just unzip these patches directly into the Campaign Manager Patches folder and be good to go. Not all patches are created equally, however. You may be lucky, but it helps to learn the following about HOW Campaign Manager and Red Baron handle patch files, especially if you want to try a variety of patches.

It is recommended that you download patches to a "holding folder" (name it anything you choose). Unzip the patch there and examine the contents. You may find a readme.txt file containing additional instructions. Make sure you have the patch folders and subfolders set up right, then cut and paste them into the Campaign Manager patches folder, when satisfied they are arranged properly (as described later in this article).

Use Windows Explorer to take a good look at the C:/Sierra/**RedBaron3D** data directory and its 4 subdirectories. This is where the game accesses the new data from the patches, which Campaign Manager will copy from the **C:/Sierra/ RedBaron3D/cm11/Patches** folder. The Data subdirectories look something like this:

C:/Sierra/ RedBaron3D/Data/3dpatch	(terrain patch data ends up here)
C:/Sierra/ RedBaron3D/Data/Multi	(things that appear only in MMP go in here)
C:/Sierra/ RedBaron3D/Data/shellpat	(things that appear only in Single Player go here)
C:/Sierra/ RedBaron3D/Data/simpatch	(things that appear in both SP and MMP go here)

Patches work best when installed in an orderly fashion. Not all patches are compatible. If you add a patch and have problems, remove it and often the problem will stop. Even if it doesn't, at least you know where the problem started. If you add a bunch of patches all at once, it is much harder to sort out which patch triggered the problem.

Start with one of the larger patches. The Beery "Super Patch" suite, UnOfficialPatch 4.5, Cam's Art Attack Flander's Field set, and Comeau's Wingstrut sets are large patches. These larger patches typically contain a set of compatible files that eliminate the need for numerous smaller patches. Use only patches that the large patch author approves for use with his/her patch. For example, Beery asks that one not mix BSP with any other major unofficial patch. Any patch that includes files such as except.dat, filelist.dat, pilots.dat, squadron.dat) is not cross compatible with his patch suite.

Depending on the patch makers' interests, their patch may change data in only one or in many of the categories listed above. Some are original work, while others are compilations of other people's work, modified for compatibility. The EASIEST way to avoid patch conflicts is to settle on one comprehensive patch, such as the Beery set. The BEST way to avoid patch conflicts is to learn about what the patches do and pick compatible ones that change what you want to change.

Speaking of patch conflicts, it is worth mentioning that patch makers have a lot of themselves invested in their work. It is advisable to use some discretion when talking about patches, to avoid sparking a "flame war" of artistic egos. It is likewise appropriate to show some consideration for the authors. Don't look a gift horse in the mouth, as they say. Patch makers like recognition for their creations, and they are sensitive to criticism and plagiarism, just like anyone else.

Adding Patches with Campaign Manager

Using Windows Explorer, place a major patch in the Campaign Manager Patches directory, after which the path should look something like one of the following:

C:\Sierra\RB3D\cm11\patches\uop4.5\Simpat/"the files"
C:\Sierra\RB3D\cm11\patches\beery20\Shellpat/"the files"
C:\Sierra\RB3D\cm11\patches\r-4Seson\3dpatch/"the files"
Depending on what type of data the patch modifies.

Start Campaign Manager, click on Patches and Files. Highlight the patch you want in the Patches available field and click add. The patch name should appear in the Patches in Use field. Exit CM and take a look at the new data from the patch in C:\Sierra\ RedBaron3D /Data. Now play Red Baron to see what changed. If you like it, continue adding patches that your research tells you are compatible, in the following order:

A Major Patch

Graphics (Promised Land, for ex.)
Sounds (Promised Land, for ex.)
Graphic Add-ons (i.e.: terrain patches, Garps Flames etc)
Flight model (EM/LeadSled, etc.)
Damage model (Uhlman for ex.)

You cannot use many patches on-line in Multi-player mode (MMP). Adding non-MMP compatible patches last makes it easy to remove them with the Campaign Manager before venturing on-line. Graphic and sound enhancements usually don't cause MMP problems, but flight models (FM) and damage models (DM) do.

Choosing Patches

There are several "major" patches out now, as noted above. Generally speaking, these improve many aspects of OEM Red Baron. The On The Edge 4 Seasons patch is terrain only. Its size and completeness make it worth considering as the default backup for terrain, however. Adding it first and then using CM to Backup RB Files will allow one to experiment with alternative terrain patches later, yet easily revert back to the 4-Season set as the default, without having to add it again. This makes it easy to play around with different terrain patches, which tend to be conflict prone.

Terrain patches can generally be used with major patches such as UnOfficialPatch, the Wingstrut patch and Flanders Field, which do not contain terrain files that would conflict. The Beery patches, as noted above, are built of components taken from a wide range of patches. They will work with other Beery patches, but may conflict with patches from authors that modify the same data. One can also delete specific bmps from the larger patches that isn't desired, if you know what you are doing.

Several flight and damage models are available that really improve the realism of aerial combat in Red Baron, particularly patches from the FGMOF (Fairy Godmothers Of Flight) and Uhlan. These patches make the aircraft fly and take damage more like the real thing. Damage model (DM) patches compensate for the corporate version's unrealistic damage model, placing game's damage boxes more accurately and reducing their size. The state of the art in flight model patches as of 09/2000 is generally considered to be the "lead sled" (emlsai) FM. The flight model in emlsai is a derivation of the "Final FGMOF Version 1.2", with improved SPAD VII, XIII, and SE5a. It is for use in "authentic/advanced" setting of Red Baron only.

Some seasoned Red Baron users prefer the more aggressive way the AI (artificial intelligence) of the enemy pilots flies in the Intermediate setting. It is possible to utilize any of the EM's or LeadSled for Intermediate use, as follows:

Make two copies of the Acspecs3.dat file from the flight model patch you want to change. Put them in another folder to work with. Rename one of the copied files Acspecs2.dat and the other Acspecs.dat. Copy or cut the newly named two files and paste them (overwrite) back into the original patch, with the original Acspecs3.dat file. Change the game setting preference to Intermediate. Your AI just became very aggressive and flight worthy. You may want to consider whether you plan to fly in single player mode only or MMP before making this modification. You can also set up separate FM patches for MMP and SP use.

The Future

It is hard to say whether any company will see profit in creating a new World War One flight simulator that approaches the ability of Red Baron 2/3d to attract and hold the interest of fans and combines the level of historical research we enjoy with state of the art graphics. Until that happens, it appears the dedication, enthusiasm and talent of the "Red Baron Community" will keep the old game alive and well. Hopefully, this article will help the newly brevetted "pilote de chasse" explore the truly marvelous improvements that keep us in the air over the Western Front.