

MAKING SPRINGS THE REX HINSON WAY

By George White

In a conversation the other day with Rex Hinson, the subject of how to make a spring came up. As many old timers will remember, Rex is the guy who made the torque meters for the heavy duty winders that many of us use for endurance models. He made all the springs for those torque meters in an amazingly simple manner. Here's how he did it:

Make two blocks of wood (pine is good) about 2X6X3/4 inches, lay them on top of one another evenly and drill two 1/4" holes about 4" apart through both pieces. Then insert 1/4" bolts through the holes, with washers on both sides and nuts. Loosely tighten the bolts.

Insert a length of wire of the approximate size and length to make your spring between the blocks and tighten the nuts so that the wire is very hard to pull through.

Determine the size mandrel you wish to use to determine the diameter of the spring, then insert it, together with one end of the wire into the chuck of your lathe (or if you're like most of us, your drill press or portable drill).

Start your drill/lathe on very low speed while holding the block so it will wrap around the mandrel and let it pull the wire through the blocks of wood. Carefully let the wire turn around the mandrel without overlapping. Obviously you'll need to find a way to secure a hand drill if that's what you use.

I must confess I haven't tried this method, but see no reason it wouldn't work for springs smaller than the ones Rex made using 1/16" wire and a 3/4" mandrel for the torque meters. For driving the FAI button timers, I learned long ago that the use of a rubber band to drive them is an exercise in frustration. I've found that an 18" long piece of .009 wire wrapped around a 1/16" mandrel produces a spring of the correct size and strength and is much more reliable. I must also confess that several years ago I met a man by the name of Kavork Fags at Geneseo who had produced a small spring winder, which allow me to make springs in seconds. I don't believe he's making those anymore, so perhaps those who didn't buy one will need to resort to the wooden block and drill/lathe method. I rather doubt that a .009 wire would need that large a set of wooden blocks however.