

Pavidis Prevails



Brian Kinwald and Mark Pavidis go head to head

1999 Reedy Race of Champions

Part of the extensive pitting area



Mike Reedy, the man behind Reedy motors and batteries, likes to enjoy his birthday each year. To help him celebrate he invites all the best drivers in the World to come together in a very special one-off event. To get an invitation, you have to have finished in the top ten at the World Championships, The ROAR National

Championships, The FEMCA Nationals or the EFRA European Championships. For this Invitational race the drivers use both 2wd and 4wd buggies but instead of the usual qualifying, there are a whole series of races over two days. What's more you don't get to drive against the same people each time, the drivers are rotated. Points are then scored for finishing position in each race.

The Track

The venue was the awesome indoor arena at M n' M Hobbies in Southern California. This huge facility has loads of space for maybe 200 or more racers and everyone gets bags of room. The track was something else entirely - daunting is about the best word I can think of, and that's if you're a World class racer. If you are an average sort of driver like me it was just plain scary! Let me give you a verbal tour. Long main straight into tight hairpin right, dogleg onto tabletop, drop off into tight left, tight left again but over three stutter jumps on the turn, uphill over tiny jump into double apex right. Drop down a roller-coaster start to an incredible triple jump that if you got it

The amazing dirt track - so challenging

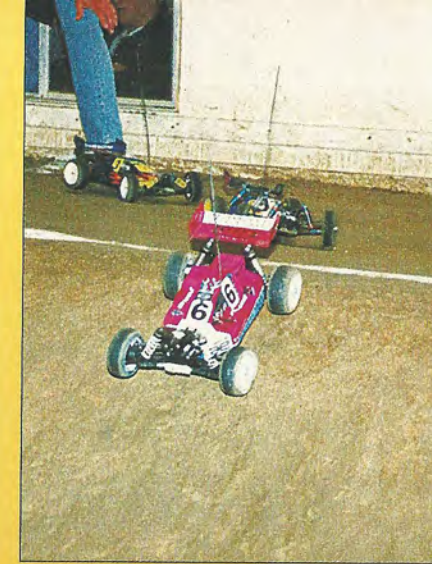


Mark takes 2WD and 4WD

right you cleared in one. Land carefully, brake and turn sharp right to launch the car over a steep tabletop. Brake again, turn sharp left and try and clear a big double. Round a left turn and then right turn down to a hairpin over a bad bump bang on the apex of the turn. Short straight into a medium right to go onto the straight. That's the lap and to get round it once without crashing was an accomplishment, to get round it quickly and for four minutes was a Herculean feat!

The Cars

The Americans stick pretty much to set-ups that are remarkably close to the standard settings recommended in the kit instructions. All they were doing



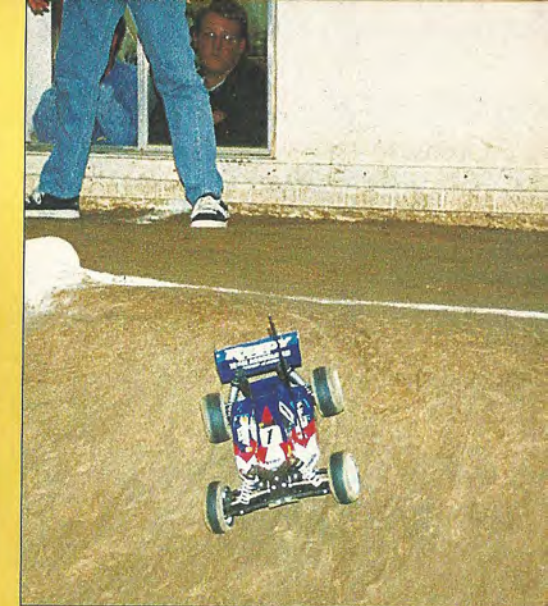
Another MX-4 shows the steep drop into the triple jump

with their Associated B3s was fitting some firmer front springs. These were a new blue design that is stiffer than silver and would take away some of the front end grip and make the car easier to control. Tyres were very interesting, as the track surface was a type of moist dirt and clay mix. This surface was quite smooth and firm with no loose dirt or dust. The tyre to have was a Pro-Line slick in M2 compound but you needed to sand off the top of the rubber surface to get to the slightly softer rubber underneath. Then you had to soak the tyres in on-road tyre additive and make them softer and stickier still. Up front a set of Pro-Line M2 ribs had to be sanded down to a pair of slicks and 'souped' up like the rears. When this was all done properly, the grip on the track was astounding. You could pull a wheelie or grip roll anytime you pleased. Motors tended to be 11 turn or even bigger. Trying to run a 10 turn meant you popped a wheelie every time you hit the throttle.

The Races

The 2wd event started first and in the Invitational some thirty drivers took part. It was a great pity that none of the Japanese dri-

The M - n - M Hobbies entrance



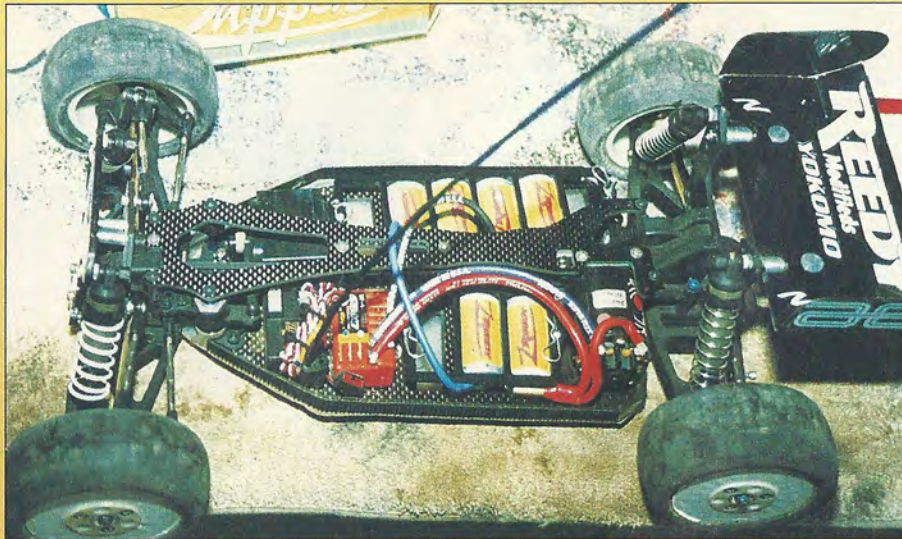
Mark drops down into the hollow ready to slingshot over the jumps

vers made the trip, none being missed more so than reigning 4wd World Champion, Masami Hirotsuka. Something like another 100 or so were in the Open Class but this would run to normal qualifying and finals. Remember, in the main event, every race mattered. Each driver had six races in each class and the best five scores in each class would all have to count.

Brian Kinwald, the reigning 2wd World Champion and driving for Team Losi, must have started as event favourite. The track owner told us that Brian virtually lives at M-n-M, often staying ten hours or more each and every day. Main competition was going to be Mark Pavidis driving for Team Associated. The two European Champions, Craig Drescher and Jukka Steenari, were both hoping to do well and finish inside the top ten.

'The track was something else entirely - daunting is about the best word I can think of'

Mark Pavidis looked inspired and he kept his B3 right on the edge all of the time, but never stepped over. No one could live with his pace round this awesome track and he took a perfect 2wd score with five 1st places. Matt Francis overshadowed his team-mate, Brian Kinwald, took four 1st places and a 3rd to go second. Brian was third and Jukka Steenari a fantastic fourth. Craig Drescher made it into tenth place. Mark's car had looked supremely fast. It was rumoured that now Reedy were doing their own line of batteries, they had found some exceptional voltage from somewhere. This could be the reason why Mark's B3 flew so well, or maybe it was just his driving. A fast car usually gets you to the crash that bit quicker, Mark's control made sure that didn't happen to him.



The Yokomo of Dave Duggan favoured the 4 and 2 cell arrangement. Look at those tyres

I stood in awe watching these top drivers jumping their cars. They are so skilled that they would alter the attitude of their cars whilst they are in the air, to make sure they land square on all four wheels. If the car takes off nose in the air, then a quick dab on the brakes brings it back in line. Nose down over the jump and you just kick the throttle a little and up comes the front. It's all a kind of gyro effect around the big rear tyres, but you have to do it just right or you make matters worse.

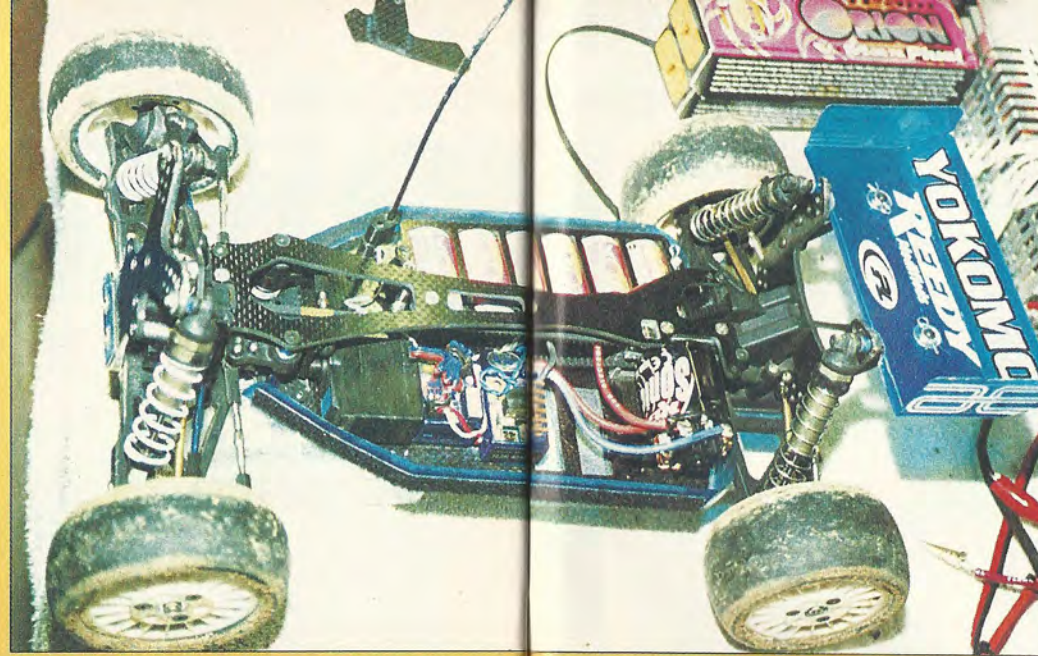
4wd Race

It's another day. All the top men from the industry were there, Associated, Reedy, Losi, Trinity, Pro-Line, Novak, LRP, and Yokomo America. The Americans don't race 4wd that often and the European drivers fancied their chances at some top results. No way! This track was just too much and only Jukka Steenari made any real impression on the Americans. He has some experience of racing on dirt but not much with these huge jumps. He certainly got to grips to bring his Losi XX4 home a fine 4th in 4wd. Yokomo America had brought along

some new parts for the MX-4. These consisted of a new stiffer chassis, a one-piece top deck and a new front shock mount. When these were on the cars the chassis had virtually no flex, unlike the standard car. The thinking is that the chassis should be very stiff and then the suspension does all the work.

'it was Matt Francis who put up the biggest challenge'

The Japanese tend to favour a flexible chassis and make that work as part of the suspension. Full size car manufacturers always go for the stiffest shell and those cars tend to handle the best - I guess the stiff chassis is the way to



Craig Drescher ran a new top deck and all the cells on one side on his Yokomo

go. Yokomo America came up with some new springs to complement the stiff chassis, and some prototype one-degree toe in rear blocks. The end result was a very competitive car and we hope to be bringing these parts to Europe to see how they work on our tracks.

Brian Kinwald, in the Losi XX4, made a good start in the 4wd event by winning his first two races. Then he broke his car in the third and was beaten into second place in all the last three. Mark Pavidis, Yokomo MX-4, took four wins and a third and took the 4wd event quite comfortably. Craig Drescher managed one storming run in his Yokomo MX-4 to win a race in great style, beating Brian Kinwald in the process. Unfortunately over the six races he could only manage a points tally for 18th place overall in 4wd.

Overall

Mark Pavidis had dominated both classes and to rapturous applause, took the Reedy Race of Champions title for 1999. No one could deny that Mark was a true champion. The expected head to head battle with Brian Kinwald never really happened. In the end it was Matt Francis who put up the biggest challenge but even he was three whole points away from Mark's final tally. Take a look at the score card for the top ten.



Brian Kinwald was favourite, he almost lives at this track



Mike Reedy working hard on yet another team motor

Snippets

Most spectacular driver over the triple? Greg Hodap with his Losi cars. Greg could hit that triple every time and land it right. Greg would have got his car to clear a six foot person standing in the second dip if anyone had been brave (stupid) enough to stand there. Greg should be a pilot, such is his skill in the air.

Driving standards were very high on a skill level, but to European eyes some of the tactics used during the races were highly questionable. Penalties were almost non-existent and as a result the racing was rough and tough with no quarter asked or given. Definitely not for the faint hearted - English Gentlemen stay at home!

With racing starts, getting the 'Hole Shot' when the start tone sounded was vital for a good result, unless of course you were Mark Pavidis. Mark seemed able to come back from all kinds of bad starts and still win. Mostly though, if you got dumped at the start you might as well have given up - four minutes doesn't give a lot of time to get back on terms.

Epilogue

While we were in California, Dave and I were invited to tour the Associated and Novak factories. Highlights were watching a modified motor being assembled all the way through being wound, balanced, trued and Dyno tested. Be assured, those folk at Reedy Modifieds know their stuff, take their time and every single motor gets the full treatment. We tried to get a look into the room with the battery rigs for the new line of Reedy Zappers - No way! That was like Fort Knox!

Visiting Novak Electronics was like walking into a space lab. This was really high tech stuff with robotic assembly and testing rigs. They even have a machine to cut, strip and solder the pieces of silicon wire - they want it done that accurately. It seems incredible that so much work goes into producing a top of the range speedo. The biggest surprise was that every speedo, right from the cheapest to the most expensive, is made on exactly the same machines and to the same high standards. It is only the components that differ slightly.

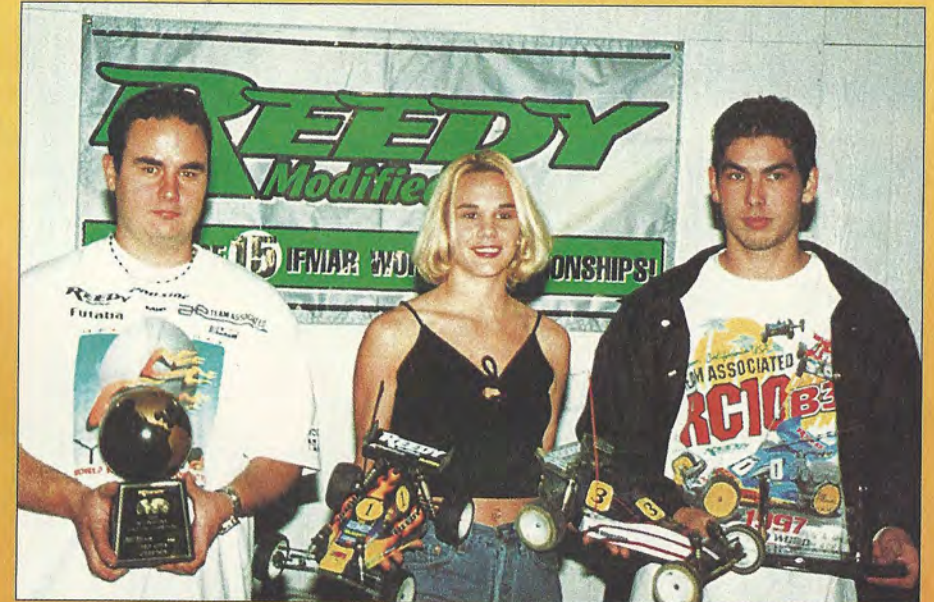
A Final Thought

What a pity that we can't build a track like this somewhere in Central England. If we could practice and race on the same stuff as the Americans then maybe we could give them a run for the money when it comes to World Championship time.

The only other option is to get the World Championships held on a European style grass track - this year's Worlds in Finland are on dirt again. The only difference is that the

Position	Name	2wd Score	4wd Score	Overall
1	Mark Pavidis	5	7	12
2	Matt Francis	7	8	15
3	Brian Kinwald	8	8	16
4	Jukka Steenari	8	10	18
5	Greg Hodap	14	12	26
6	Travis Amezcua	14	15	29
7	Sorab Tavakoli	16	14	30
8	Mark Francis	18	13	31
9	Jimmy Babcock	15	18	33
10	Scott Hughes	14	19	33

Rauma track is fairly flat and there will not be any of those crazy jumps. Craig and Jukka might just spring a surprise for us. Roll on August! **RRCI**



Frosty Sinclair (left), the front man of Yokomo America TQ'd both the 2WD and 4WD open classes. He won 2WD and came second in 4WD



The top 15 drivers in the invitational event. Matt Francis (2nd), Mark Pavidis (1st) and Brian Kinwald (3rd) in the front row.