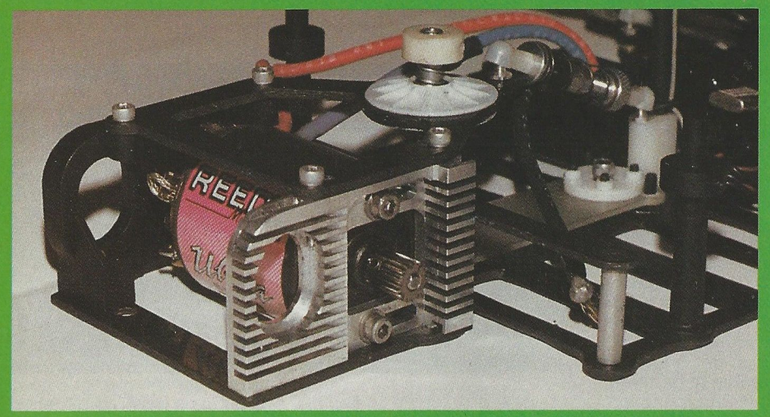
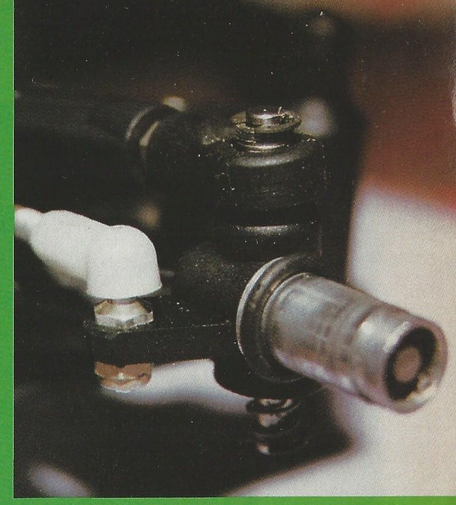
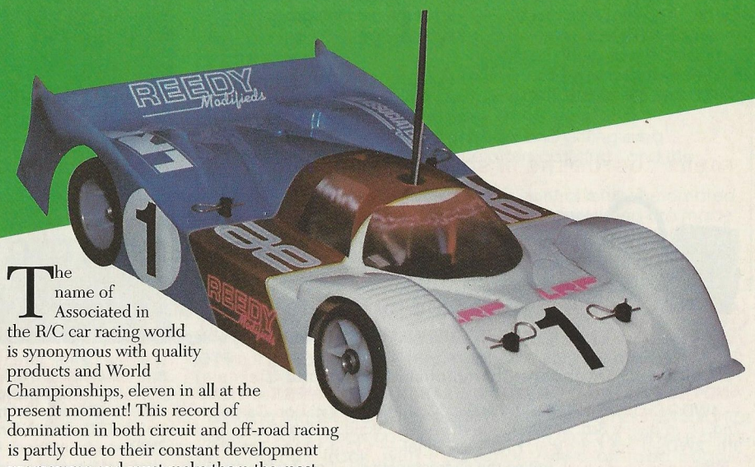


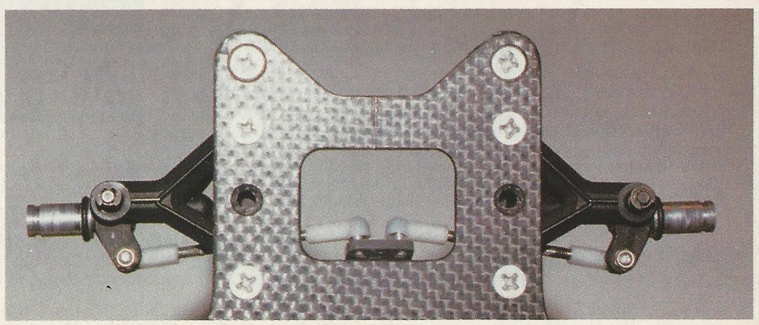


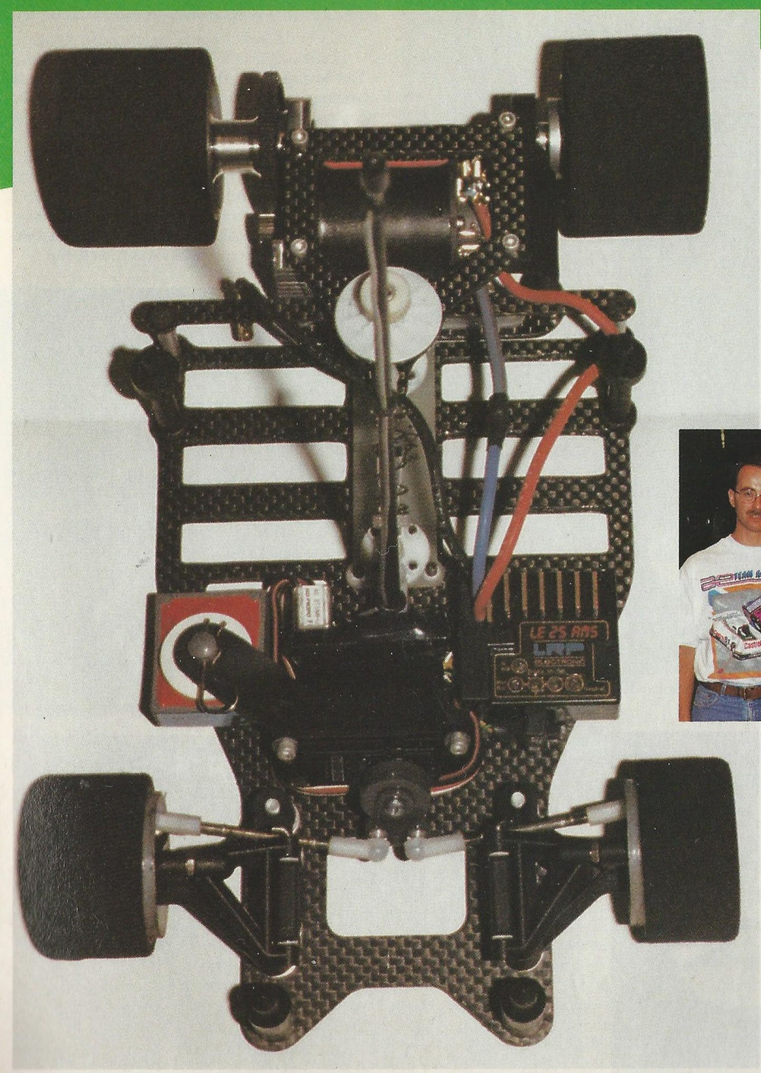
Associated 12LW

The latest version of the 1/12 World Championship winning car, reviewed by Steve Rowley.



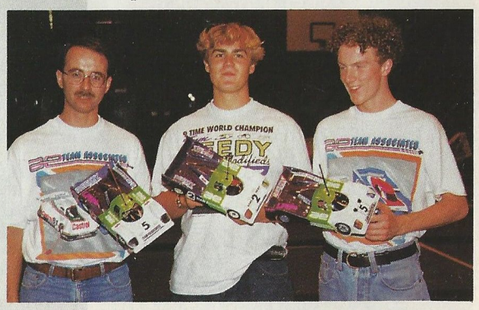
The name of Associated in the R/C car racing world is synonymous with quality products and World Championships, eleven in all at the present moment! This record of domination in both circuit and off-road racing is partly due to their constant development programme and must make them the most successful model car manufacturers in the world. Their dominance in the sport is similar to that of Williams in Formula One; eight out of ten cars in the 1992 1/12 World Championship A final were Associated 12lws! The 12lw was first seen at the 1990 Worlds as a prototype, seven of them made the A final at their first meeting, and since then the team have improved the car immeasurably, the latest version being the car pictured, fitted with the new 'wishbone' front end. The rear suspension remains as before, using the conventional T piece and ball set up, this having proved its worth over many years as being rather hard to improve upon.





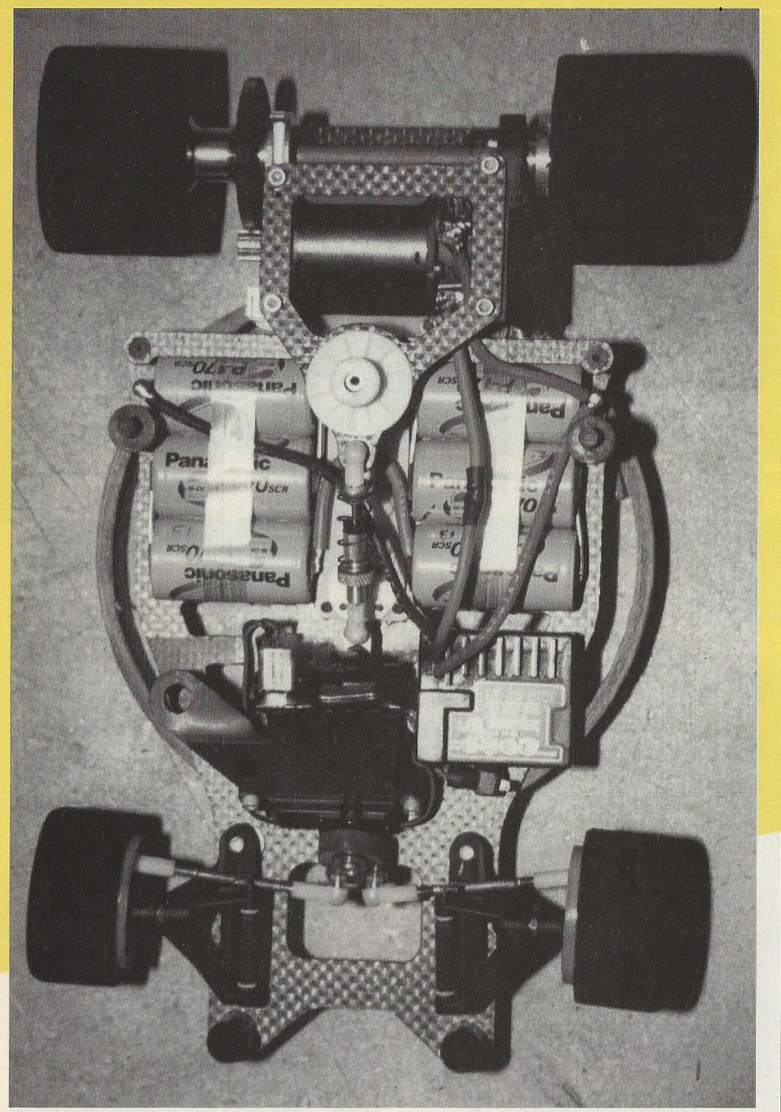
Up-Front

The front suspension has been redesigned for 1993, a double wishbone, fully adjustable independent suspension set up taking the place of the sliding kingpin design much copied by just about every other 1/12 car manufacturer since the introduction of the original 12l many years ago. The new front end was due to have its' debut at the Michigan Worlds, but due to a fault in the tooling process was not ready in time. Luckily for us, it is now generally available and has made a real difference to the car in the handling department.

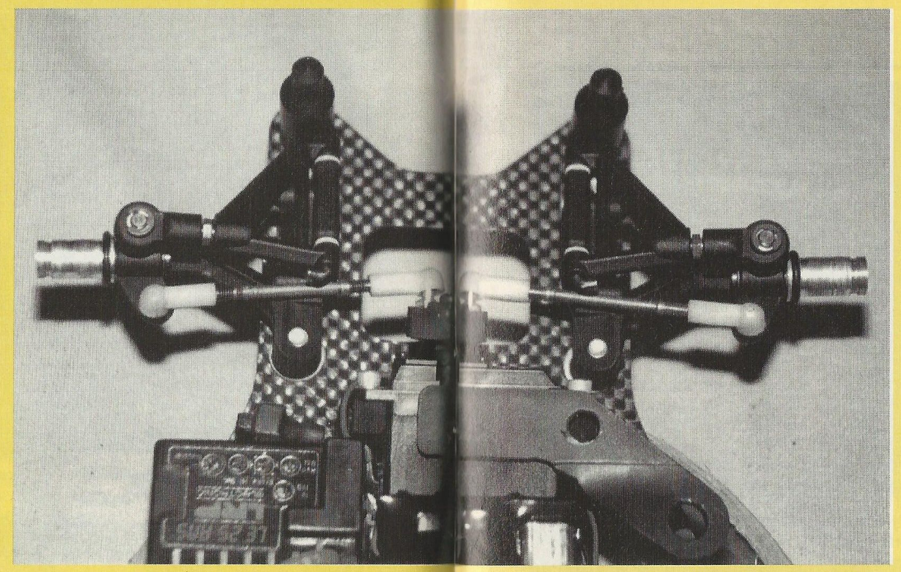


The bottom wishbone is fixed, and has a captive ball in the end through which the kingpin slides. The top wishbone pivots in the conventional fashion, and also has a captive ball in the end, this acts as the anchorage for the top of the kingpin. The inner pivot for the top wishbone can be mounted at various angles to allow for varying changes in the castor angle to take place as the suspension is depressed. The spring and 'e' clip for this new set-up now go to the bottom of the king pin,beneath the lower wishbone, with a further 'e' clip at the top.

This arrangement allows the easy adjustment of castor and camber, with the new servo mounting blocks giving suitable geometry to avoid the possibility of bump-steer. The beauty of the new

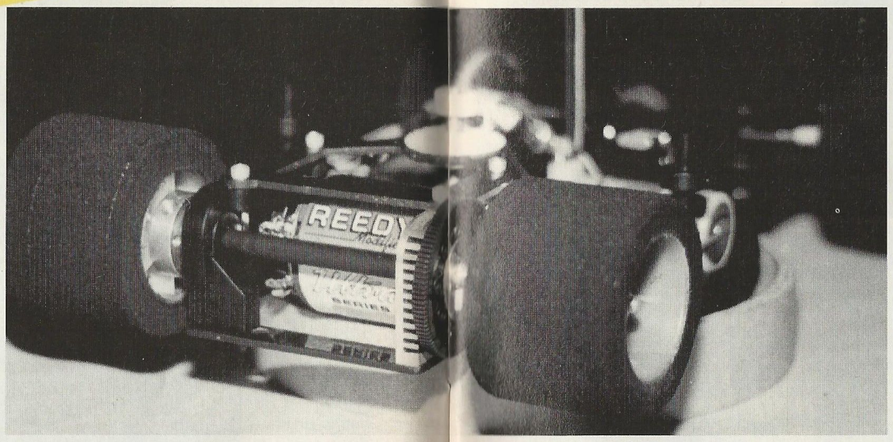


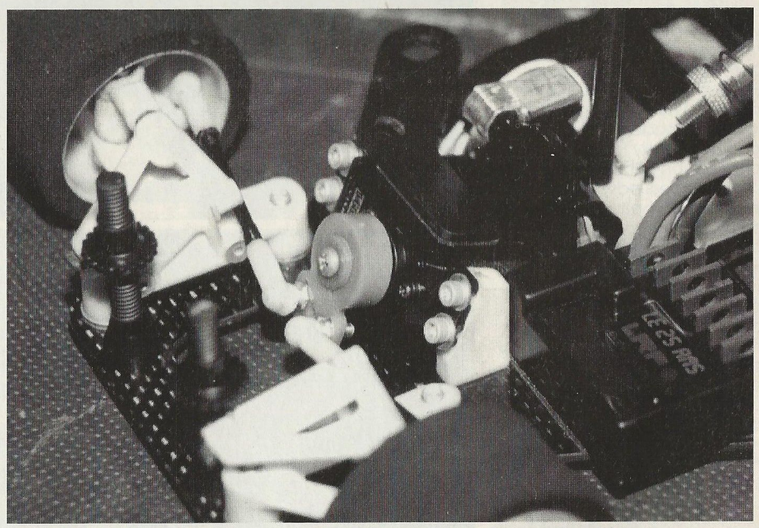
suspension is that it will fit straight onto any 12lw chassis, the only modification required being the repositioning of the (new, longer) front body posts between the suspension at the front. The new chassis now supplied in the kit has two 'ears' or lugs projecting forward at the front on which to mount the posts now that they can no longer mount on the front blocks, as per the original car. The only minus point with the 'new' set-up is that the servo mountings take up a lot of room, so really small gear is required; Sanwa servos, LRP speed controllers and small 40mhz receivers being the choice of the Associated team.

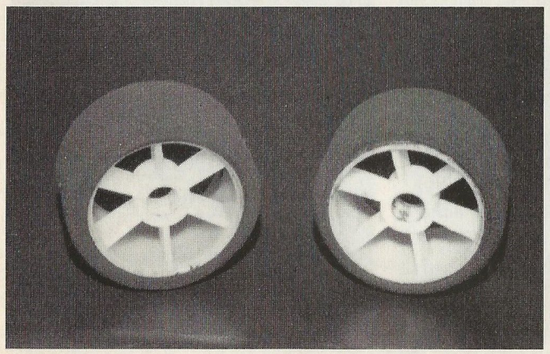


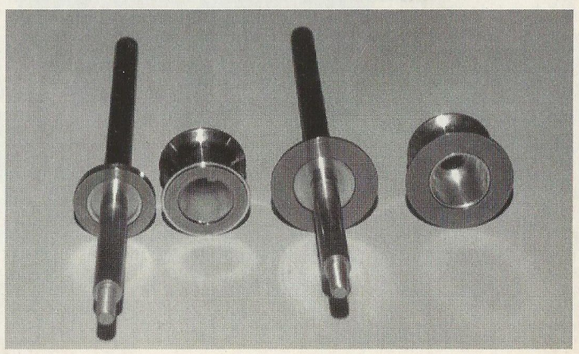
For Better or Worse?

Not having driven the original 12lw, I cannot comment on the difference between the old and new suspension, so to find out more about just what the improvement was, who better to ask than Phil 'Dangerous' Davies, the Team manager for the British 1/12 Associated team. Phil has had a little success(!) with his 12lw cars over the last few years, the high point being second qualifier at the 1990 Worlds, and so far this season the new front end seems to suit his style very well, the outcome being three National wins. His feelings are that the new front end 'locks' into a line better, and exhibits much less power on understeer than before, this being most apparent from mid corner, when a tight line and a fast exit are of the utmost importance. When comparing the 12lw to its main competitor (and we all know what that is!), the 12lw is able to change direction faster and, to my way of thinking at least, has more 'feel' in the steering as well as less inherent understeer.









Even More Recent Developments!

Soon to be available from Associated is a modified diff, this being pretty similar to the existing item apart from the thrust washers. The new washers are about half the size of the originals, thereby offering a reduction in rotating mass, also lowering the weight of the axle assembly. New wheels are also making their way into the shops. These are lighter than their predecessors and are also stronger, offering the advantages of both less unsprung weight and a longer life span. At the moment, the Team drivers have a large selection of front springs at their disposal, ranging from 14 to 24 thou gauge, in both music wire and stainless steel, the two materials having different characteristics. All of these goodies should be available from the shops specialising in 1/12 soon.

The Future?

The advent of the new front end has seen a move back to the Associated by quite a few drivers looking for that all important 'edge'. Nigel Hale, a star back in the days of silicone racing (I was there! Ed), has made a lightning comeback with a 12lw, and now he's fitted the new front end, there's no stopping him dominating F2. The only drawback at present is that the kit, supplied with the new chassis, doesn't include the new wishbone front end, this is only available as an optional modification kit. This situation will change soon, and the complete car will be priced very competitively. With Associateds' reputation, its great handling and the competitive spare parts price structure, the Associated 12lw, in its most recent form, looks set to recover the ground lost in Europe to the homespun produce.