



THE

Over the past few months RMC has been devoting a fair number of its pages most months to the ongoing developments in the story of Kyosho's 'Optima Mid' series of Off-Road cars.

I say series because there are now quite a few variations of the car to choose from. This may appear confusing and to be honest it took me a while to find out what the differences are. If you are already in the picture then good for you, if not see if the list below makes any sense.

Optima Mid (the original car)

Optima Mid Turbo (Turbo version of the same car - Option House shocks, chassis etc. but same wheelbase).

Optima Mid SE. (SE stands for Special Edition and features many of the O/H and Turbo parts but is still the same wheelbase).

Optima Mid LE. (LE stands for Limited Edition, only sixty or so kits appeared in this country).

Optima Mid XL (long wheelbase version of the Turbo - we think!)

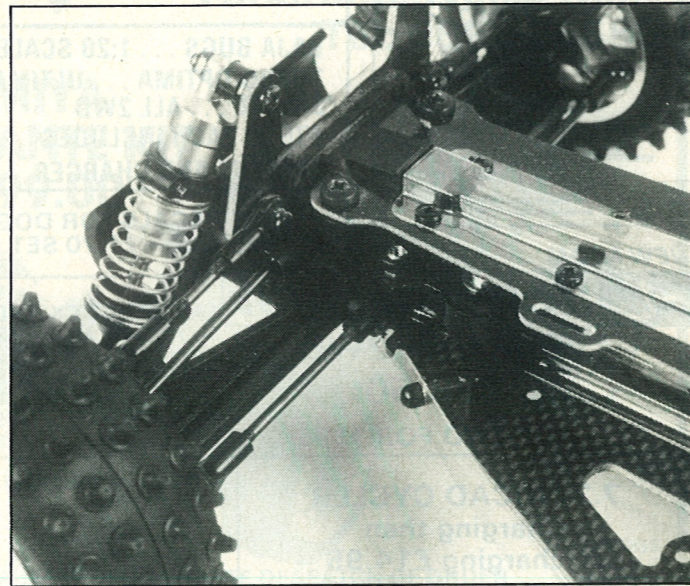
There, I hope that makes things clearer for you (if not - tough). In between the various kit releases we have

had a continuous flow of new products from the Option House catalogue to deal with. One of the most recent additions was dealt with in last months On Test, the Long Wheelbase Conversion.

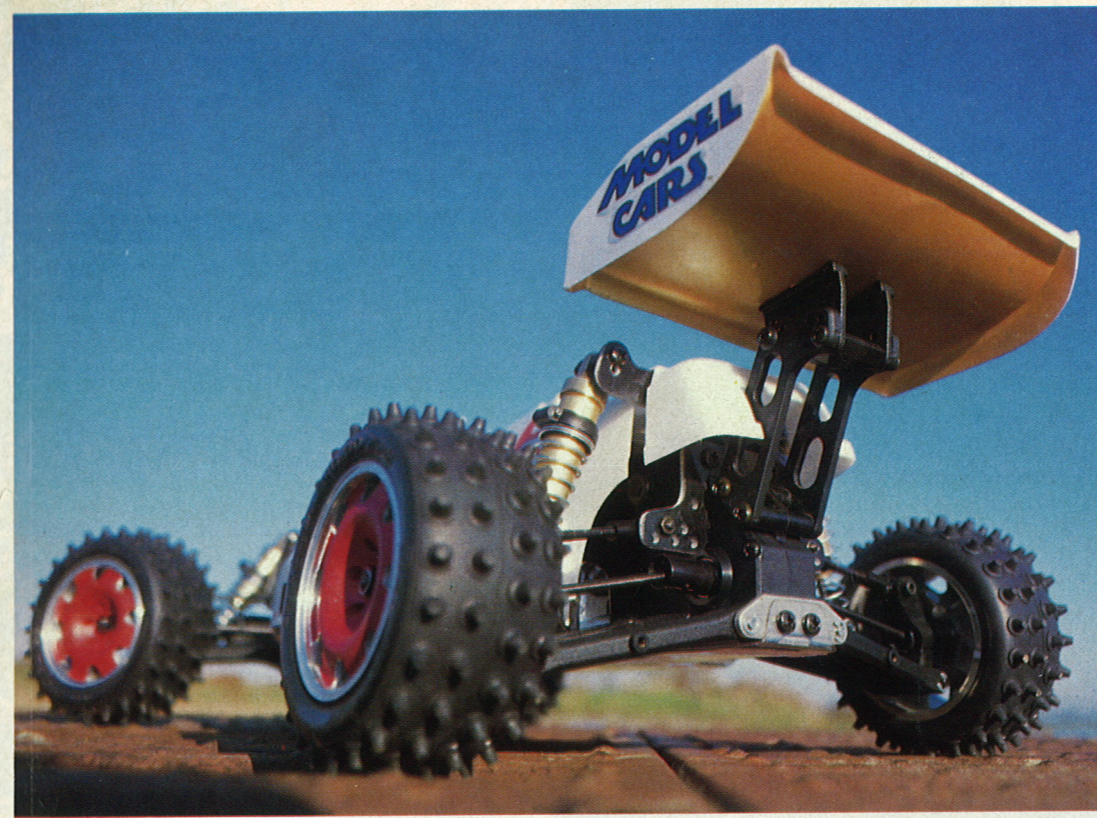
At the moment this is the only way to convert your Mid from standard to long wheelbase because the extra long kit is not yet available. In any case this is a far cheaper alternative than buying the new car which is expected to top out at close to £300.

So do you need to go "long" with your Mid? Well the general opinion is that the LWB Mid is easier to drive and handles the bumps much better than the original car. Finding the solution to better handling over rough ground was something that occupied a lot of the UK Kyosho Team's time last season. Up against the longer 'XL' version of the Schumacher 'CAT' the 'Mid' was finding it hard to compete. The 'CAT' had started off life in short mode and only truly started to dominate when the extra millimetres were added. So the decision to go long was made and Team drivers Pete Stevens and Nino Athanasiou started to experiment with different length chassis'.

THE LONG RIDER



Top: the new conversion kit doesn't contain the new bodyshell and undertray although it is available as an extra. Above: neat undertray and body fixing via plastic posts joint to the chassis. Right: the new shell is lower, longer and more shapely than the old one. Paintwork by Bob Petrie.



Is extra length the way to go? Kyosho think so with their new conversion kit

The problem was that as well as trying to win national race meetings Pete and Nino were also trying to build a car capable of competing with the best. The obvious problem was deciding on how long the wheelbase of the car should be and then building the chassis and finding the correct length drive belt to fit. Also to complicate things a saddle pack battery set up was being used.

The extent of their success can be measured by Pete's wins in two of the last BRCA national meetings of the year with the final prototype car.

Instead of keeping the developments to themselves Pete and Nino worked closely with Kyosho in Japan to produce the new car and this conversion kit. The aim is to win the World Championships this Summer and the development of a LWB car is an important step towards that goal.

Fortunately Kyosho have been quick to bring the fruits of a years development work to a hungry public not just to increase sales but also to maintain brand loyalty. The conversion kit contains everything you need to change your car from standard to long wheelbase. Obviously this includes the chassis, top plate and longer drive belt. At the same time you have the option to use saddle pack batteries.

From the bottom-up

To begin with the chassis first. This is produced from a material described on the box top as carbon/glass/carbon epoxy. Looking at it closely the chassis appears to be a sandwich of carbon fibre on the outside with a filling of carbon reinforced glass epoxy. This is both light and extremely strong.

All the cut outs are produced perfectly with hardly any sharp edges to worry about. The screw holes are countersunk to produce a totally flat chassis bottom free from any protrusions. Two sets of three slots for the saddle pack batteries feature either side of the chassis. Two posts sit either end of the slots and hold a plastic bar which clamps down on the batteries to hold them in place. The posts are adjustable for height so that you can use the clamps



**MODEL
CARS**



OPTIMA



with *Kyosho's* plastic cased batteries or with cells just in their heatshrink.

If you want to use stick pack batteries then this is no problem. Two sets of holes between the saddle pack cut outs allow the fitting of the battery mounts (from the standard Mid).

Just forward of the left hand side battery location (looking from the rear of the car) is an additional cut out. This is presumably for the addition of the extra cell for 8.4 volt racing. The cut out is incomplete because the battery clamp post gets in the way. By moving the post to the other set of holes further forward and then filing out the slot to its full size the seventh cell can be fitted.

Elsewhere on the chassis the two slotted holes are for fitting the steering servo whilst the two extra countersunk holes toward the front have no apparent use whatsoever. The top plate is just a longer version of the

original and bolts on in exactly the same way. Basically then there is no fuss in fitting the conversion at all because the new parts fit to the old perfectly. The only chore you have to carry out is to

take apart the gearboxes, remove the old belt and fit the new one. This may be a blessing in disguise if the gearbox hasn't been checked for a while so take time to get everything clean and working properly. The

belt is described by *Kyosho* as reinforced to prevent stretching over the extra length. Interestingly the belt in the review car was thinner than standard although the number of teeth per inch was the same.

Because it is longer the car needs a new bodyshell. Unfortunately you do not get this in the conversion kit so it has to be bought separately. Building the car on a Saturday night ready for racing the next day will be a real pain if at midnight you realise the old bodyshell doesn't fit. When you buy the conversion kit make sure the shop has got the bodyshell in stock too and be prepared to shell out an additional £17.00 or so. You do however get an undertray into the bargain which along with the body helps keep most of the muck out of the chassis. The undertray doesn't actually fit directly to the chassis but instead hangs on the new body posts. This



RADIO CONTROL MODEL CARS

Left; we used last month's 'SE' Optima Mid kit to construct the LWB car. We also fitted 'gold' dampers and soft springs. Bottom left; the aluminium wheels were painted to give a different look. Right; the saddle pack installation is great. The batteries fit snugly into the holes and are well clamped down.

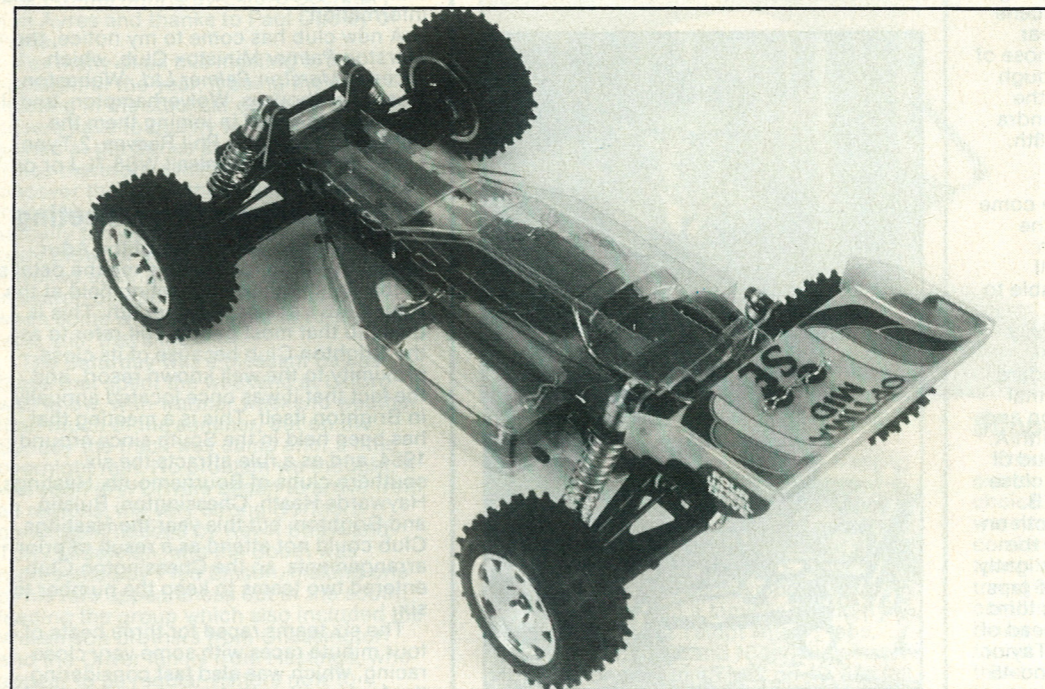
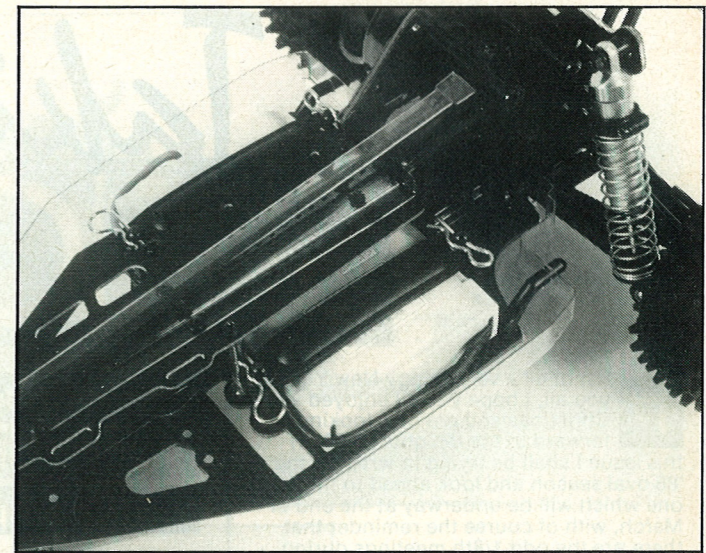
is so the undertray actually protects the chassis and stops the heads of the screws from becoming clogged up with dirt.

The new body mounts are a pain and will probably be thrown away by most people in favour of a velcro fixing. The body posts project outwards from the chassis and make getting

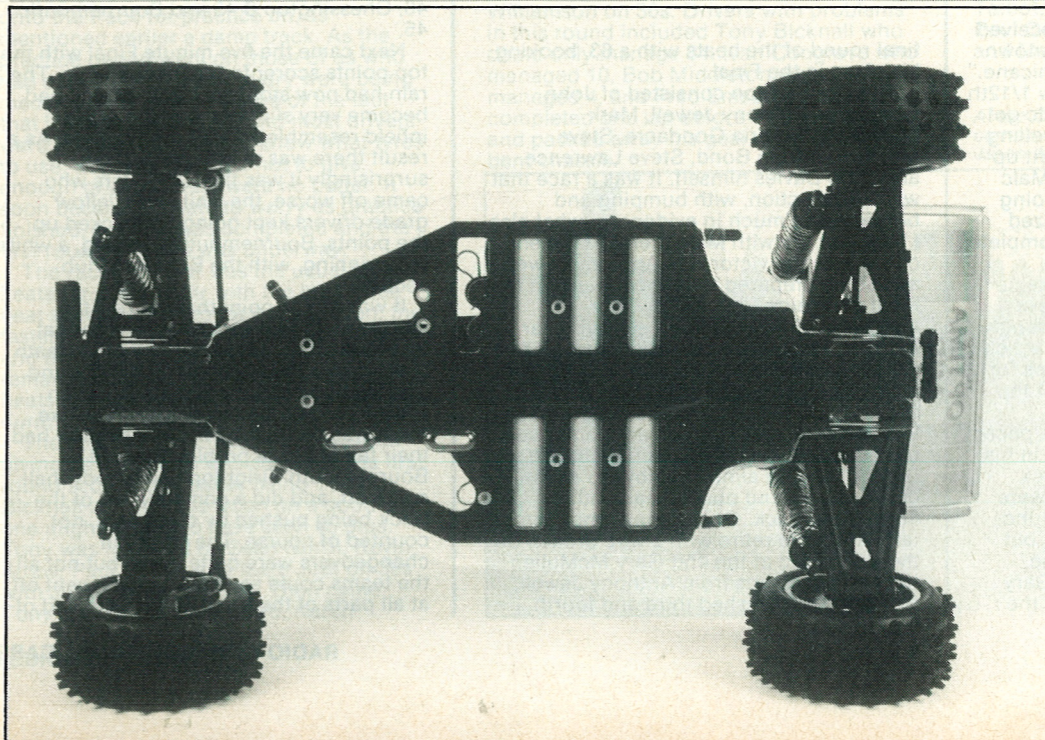
the body on and off very difficult. In the end the body will rip around the mounting holes and that will be that. By servo taping the undertray to the chassis and then fixing the whole operation is quicker and easier. Once it is on the body looks really nice because it sits much lower, the shape is more streamlined plus the moulding is superb.

With the undertray in place you will find that there is actually more room in this car to place all the radio gear and so on than the original Mid. Wonderful!

The Box top says that the conversion is designed for



Above; the new layout gives more room for radio gear and makes the car look more purposeful. Below; the chassis has the extra place for a seventh cell with only minor alteration. The cells sit well back on the chassis for stability.



the 'Turbo Mid' but we used the SE version from last month with a couple of alterations. The Platinum shocks were changed for the gold Option House type and the anti-roll bars removed. One other little mod. carried out was filing off the original body mounts from the shock towers to let the body sit properly.

Track Test

Pete Winton has been driving Pete Stevens own race prepared LWB Mid which in most respects is identical to the standard car so have a look at that for any hints on driving the car.

In theory a longer wheelbase should promote understeer but this can be overcome by changing the camber settings and adjusting the suspension. The review car has ball differentials and this also helps.

The main benefit of the longer car is how much better it is over the bumps. The original Mid suffered from the rear wheels kicking up when travelling over rough ground and generally throwing the car off line. The new car takes it all in its stride much better and glides over the bumps to make driving a much more relaxing experience.

There is no doubt that there are certain advantages to going long not least the fact that the conversion is so easy to accomplish.

If possible ask someone who has already tried it to give you their impressions, better still drive one for yourself.

Price: £70.00 (approx).
Bodyshell £17.00. (approx).