

Track Test

IT MUST BE some time since a chassis was released onto the market with a pedigree of results as mixed as those of the *Parma* 'Panther Euro'. Despite failing to win a single National Championship event to date, the 'Euro' has featured often in A-Finals and has collected a team prize. Yet its form was proven by Phil Olson's magnificent win in the European Championships, from which it gained its title, plus first and fourth place in the World Championships.

At the beginning of 1984, *Helger Racing* got together a team of drivers



Above: two views of the 'Panther Euro'. Rolling chassis (left) and complete (right).

Panther Euro

Pete Winton gets his paws on a 1/12th scale world beater

to contest the National Championship. However, the car was not as good as it needed to be and so team driver Chris Arnold set his fertile brain to an extensive development programme and along with Buddy Bartos of the mother company (*Parma International USA*) produced the 'Euro'. Most of the differences between the new car and the old 'Panther' (particularly the chassis design) are a result of Chris' persistence in the face of much pressure for results and much credit should go to him. There is only the broad similarity of cell layout to compare the old car with the new, the plastic rear pod is now replaced with a metal channel, the shaker plate removed and the front axle blocks substituted for a fibreglass beam to support the front wheels.

Now, where's my screwdriver?

All the parts are supplied in the ubiquitous plastic bag which has become the fashion these days (unfortunately) inside which are three more bags of bits, an instruction sheet and the chassis plate. The quality of all the components is good but not of the highest order. Particular let-downs are the rear aluminium body posts and fibreglass axle pod top plate.

The instructions are good and assembly is straightforward once the appropriate screws are identified. Since *Parma* quote the screw sizes in the American form (6-40, 8-40, etc.) be careful that you use the right ones in the right place.

The front axle is mounted upon two plastic spacers and angled

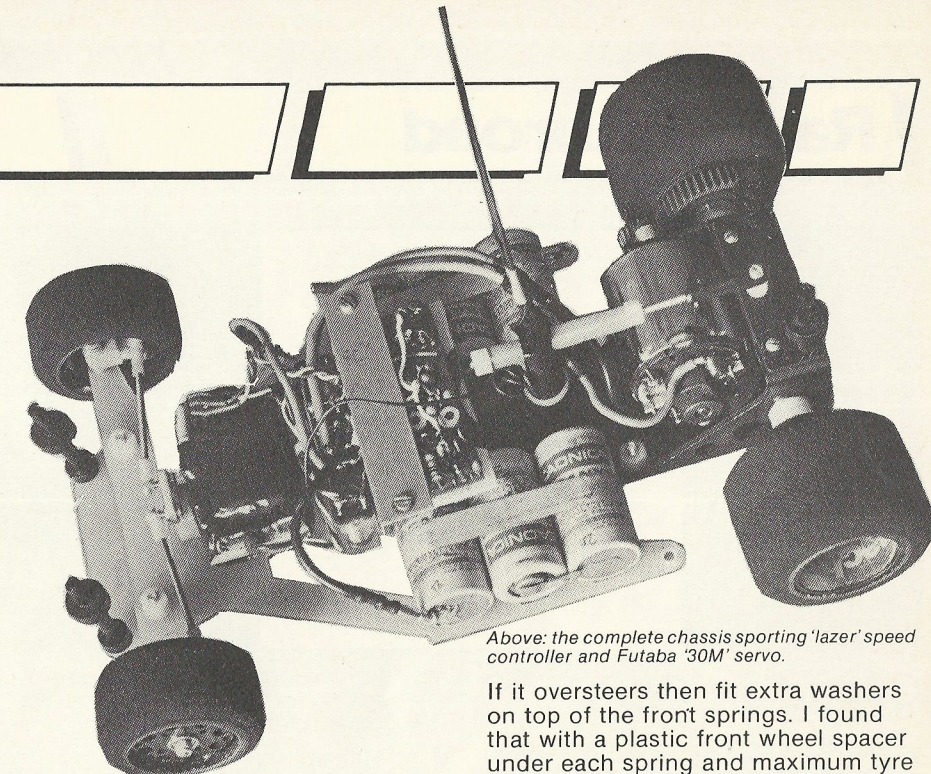
wedges to give an adjustable castor angle. The white plastic wedges have to be cut in half, leaving a thick and thin wedge which can be used to give adjustable ride height at the front. I used 3° wedges to start with. The instruction sheet recommends polishing the kingpins but I found this to be unnecessary. Fit the steering to the beam blocks and then position a large washer over the spring before clipping the circlip in place.

The rear axle pod assembly is easy, except for the two self-tappers which hold the top pod plate. In my kit the two screws supplied were too large for the holes in the pod which caused me much head scratching and an eventual search for an

alternative. However, *Parma* assure that this slight problem will be overcome by the time you read this.

If you decide to fit an electronic speed controller you will have to make a small plate on a post to screw onto the front 'T'-piece screw. Use an old body post and mount the controller just above the Ni-Cads. Fitting the steering servo (*Futaba* '30M') and receiver (on top of the servo) was the next operation and again no problems were encountered. There is no rollover mast supplied but a small 18swg piano wire item can be fixed to the damper post.

Any type of 1/12th motor and differential can be fitted, as can all the currently available front wheels. To round things off (sic) I fitted *Parma* medium tyres (what else?!!) front and rear.



Above: the complete chassis sporting 'lazer' speed controller and Futaba '30M' servo.

If it oversteers then fit extra washers on top of the front springs. I found that with a plastic front wheel spacer under each spring and maximum tyre treatment the car was nicely balanced on the local club circuit.

This car is so docile it's almost soporific! It is a basic understeerer until the grip is high, then it whistles round. On turn-in it gives the impression of wanting to spin out but if you keep the power on it holds a good line. Once committed to the corner, keep the power on and steer round, but if you need to greatly tighten the line then a momentary lift off the throttle will produce instant results. Using a combination of steering and power this car is made to respond well to changes in direction.

The 'Panther Euro' scores high for its simplicity, strength and low maintenance factor. It is average in construction and cost. There is front and rear ride height adjustment although the minimum rear tyre diameter is limited by the axle pod and not the chassis.

You cannot fault the handling but it does need good grip to give its best on *Parma* tyres (maybe *Tru-Tyres* '07' or *Associated* 'Greens' would cure this). It is not in the least bit twitchy nor does it exhibit any hidden vices; as I said it feels docile but not slow. Definitely recommended for beginner and expert alike and full marks to Chris Arnold for all his hard work. □

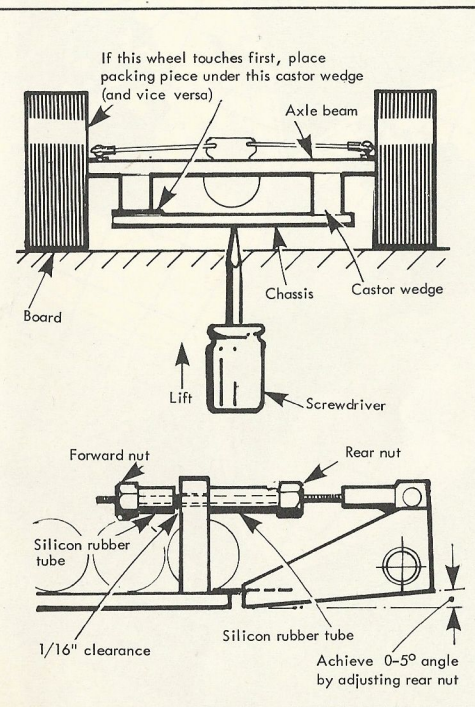
(preferably a new set) place the car on a flat surface. With the front wheels near the edge lift the front of the car in the centre of the chassis using a screwdriver so that the wheels are just clear of the surface. Spin each wheel and then lower the chassis slowly. Both wheels should touch together. If one wheel stops before the other, place a thin packing piece (old Lexan from a bodyshell is ideal) on top of the castor wedge. See fig. 1. Try the process again and hopefully both wheels should stop together.

If not, try again. If more than two pieces are required, something else is wrong, so re-check the chassis assembly.

Now fit the cells and place the chassis back on the flat surface and undo the forward pod damper nut to the end of the thread. Do up the rear damper nut until the axle pod is almost level with the chassis. See fig. 2. Now do up the forward damper nut until there is approximately 1/16in. clearance from the damper post.

Now, where's the track?

Treat the rear tyres full width and the fronts 3/4 width with your favourite additive and drive the car. If you have understeer, then increase the treatment width on the front wheels.



Now where's my tweak plate?

The initial setting up of the car is fairly easy. Build up the chassis less the cells and using a set of tyres which are exactly the same diameter on each side of the two axles

Below: the side-by-side cells locate into three slots either side of the chassis and are secured with glassfibre tape.

Below: the Panther rear axle channel will accept any commercially available differential. Parma, Associated and Schumacher shown here.

Below: the rear, alloy channel axle and motor pod, damper and 'T'-piece different thicknesses of 'T'-piece (colour coded) are available to suit different tracks and grip levels.

Below: the GRP beam front-end with Parma's own injection moulded nylon steering blocks.

