

COUGAR

Pete Winton looks at
Schumacher's
latest CAT



Cougar Pounces

The endless fascination of car reviews is where companies get the names from. The Japanese must take the biscuit without doubt, what are Avanti, Egress, Burns, Optima? Of the more

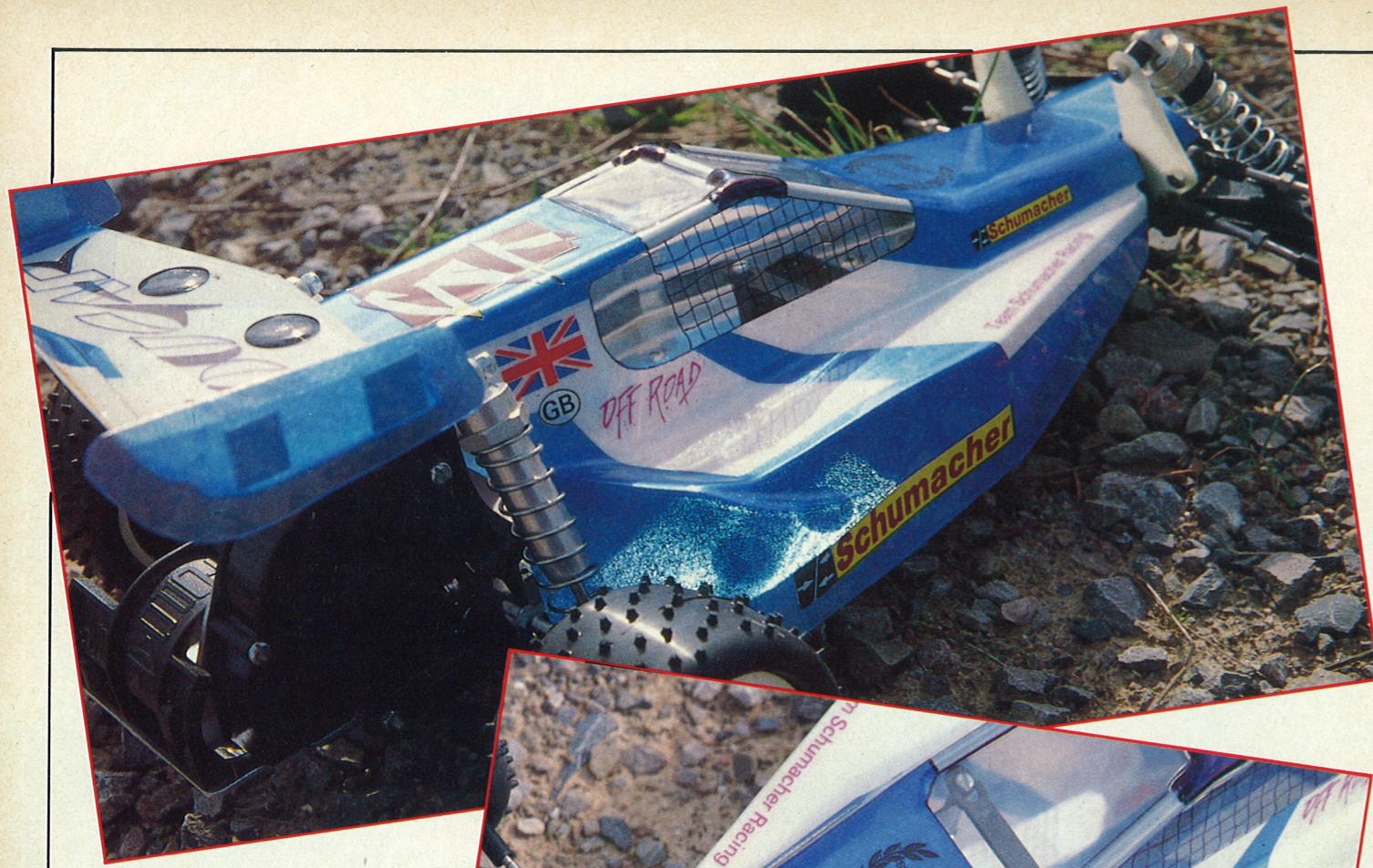
sensible, it is educational to look up the word and find where it comes from. The Cougar is an American name for the Puma, a mountain lion. Since the car in this review is unashamedly aimed at the American market, the name

is most apt.

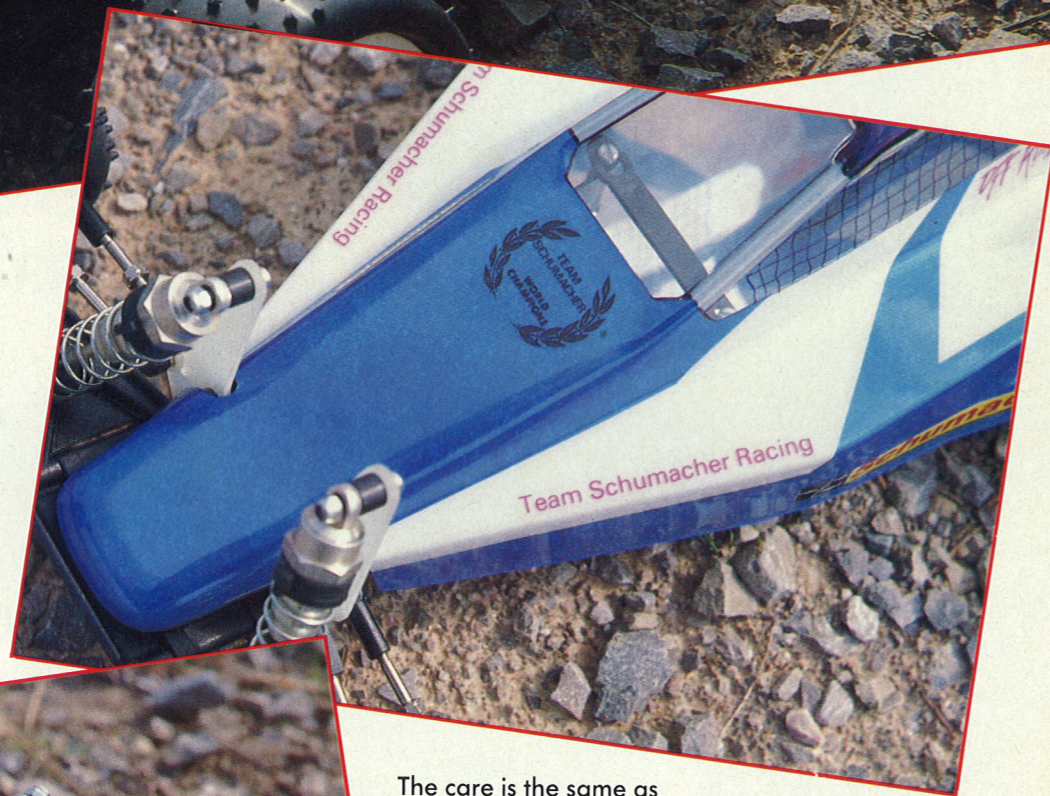
In one way this car is a great shame, since it is an admission of defeat. The original Topcat was a fine piece of engineering which had innovation, strength, and simplicity as its hallmarks. However, the car

was a disappointment at the 1989 World Champs, and never made its mark in the USA because of its marketing, and its design. All that is about to change, and even moderate success in the US market will propel Schumacher right back into





the big league of their 1987 World Title year. The lack of American success is mainly due to the Topcat's design, which has not tangible benefit that they can understand, and looks too European. The Cougar on the other hand, is the car Cecil told me he did not really want to build – an RC10 look-alike. And that is the shame of it; to succeed in the US, you must build US-type cars.



The car is the same as the Topcat right up to the front suspension. Topcat's class leading features are its gearbox, chassis, driveshaft system, strength and simplicity – all that is retained. The Cougar has a

new front suspension system which mounts the spring/damper units upright instead of laid flat on the chassis. To accommodate that change there is a new system for the steering arms, and single rod-type upper links in place of the top wishbones. Mounting of

the front suspension to the chassis uses the same holes as the Topcat, and a glass-reinforced resin plate is provided to mount the top of the spring damper units. New bottom wishbones are used, as well as a new-design upright and kingpin system. The Schumacher wheel retention system remains, so all Schumacher wheels will fit the Cougar. It has to be said, once built the car looks just like an RC10, Ultima, JRX2, or Astute.

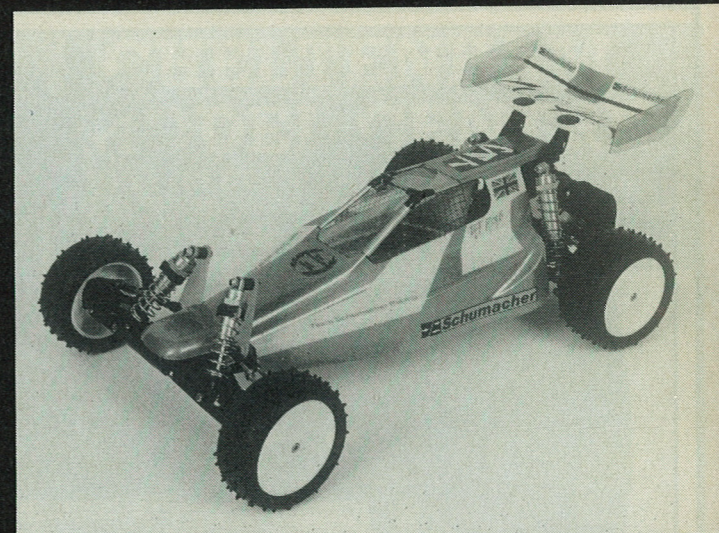
It must also be said that as usual, Cecil Schumacher has endowed his version with the clever differences that make a Schumacher product better. The angle of the front suspension (the castor) can be altered by removing spacers from the shock tower support, hinging it on a little vee in the moulding. The only 'handed' part in the whole front suspension is the upright, thus making spares easy to stock in the pit box – if you have one wishbone it will fit either side. There is a proper cutaway in the wishbone to give maximum lock, and once that condition is reached there is a positive stop to prevent the steering being jammed. Above all, the new front suspension is light (the car may even be underweight in standard trim, weight it) and easy to set up. Best of all perhaps, the 'blob' Topcat body has been replaced with one which looks as though it was designed, not created from old shoe boxes, washing up bottles, and sticky back plastic! (An exaggeration, but I couldn't resist the joke!)

There have been a number of subtle modifications to Topcat parts since its launch a year ago, so it goes without saying that the Cougar remains as easy to build as ever, with the new front suspension improving that situation. The result is the best car for the average clubman it is possible to buy, on price, quality, and reliability. Please don't think that because Jamie Booth can win a major event with his Astute, that the Astute is a better car than the

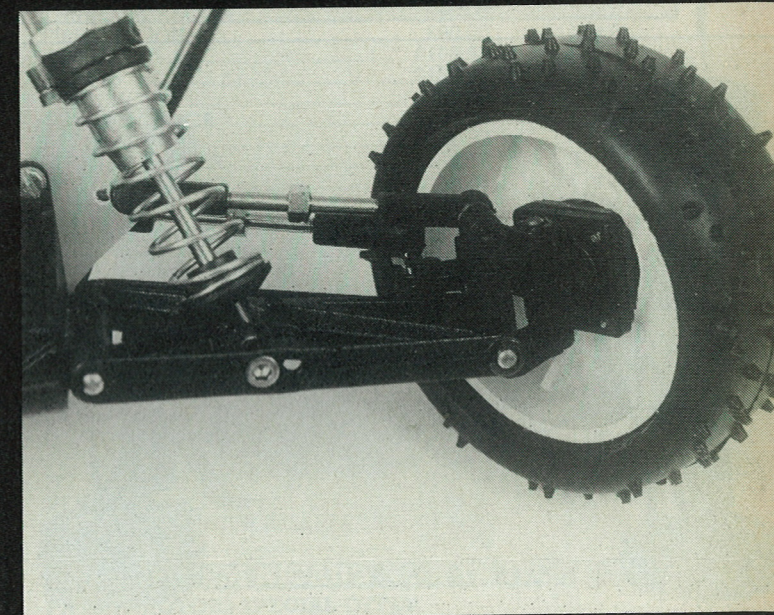
Cougar. Jamie (arguable the second best driver in the World) finished 6th in the World Champs with a Topcat. The next Topcat was 38th! Schumacher's Cougar is now the value-for-money bargain of the decade, and if Jamie drove one he would still win.

The question is, should you go out and buy a Cougar to try your hand at Off Road racing, or should you buy a Topcat? The answer is, that you should buy whichever car you prefer if you have some experience in R/C model cars, and you should err towards the Cougar if you are fairly new to the hobby. Complete newcomers should only buy either car if they have access to a knowledgeable friend who will help them with choice of radio gear, speed controller, and mounting of these parts in the car. When all's said and done, this is still a competition car, not a moving scale model. And, should you rush out and buy the front suspension conversion kit for your Topcat to convert it to Cougar specification? You will have to await our track test for the answer to that, but since the kit costs about £99.00, you may like to try for yourself first; It's hardly a fortune! The only niggle is where the steering servo is supposed to go, there are no prepunched holes in the chassis, and that is not going to please the Yanks. Steering servos should go up the middle (on Topcat they went slightly sideways), and be securely fixed with posts. We received a complete car for this photo session, so those posts may or may not be in the kit (hint, hint).

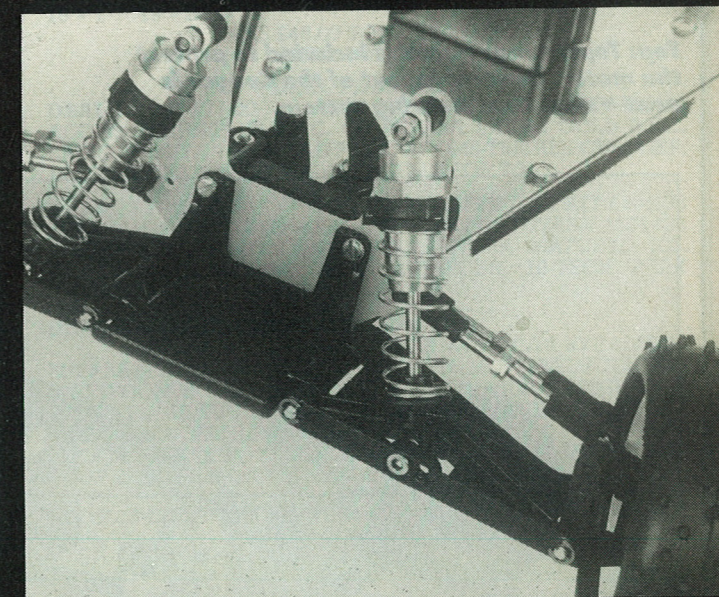
Schumacher have done it again. The Cougar is exactly the car required to bridge the gap between the mobile model and the full competition car, a role it fills even better than the Topcat. Cougar is fully upgradable to the same specification as the National Championship winning cars (and for very little money) so owners will never need to buy another car from the Schumacher stable to stay competitive.



Cougar comes with a new body! Surely Schumacher's nicest to date.

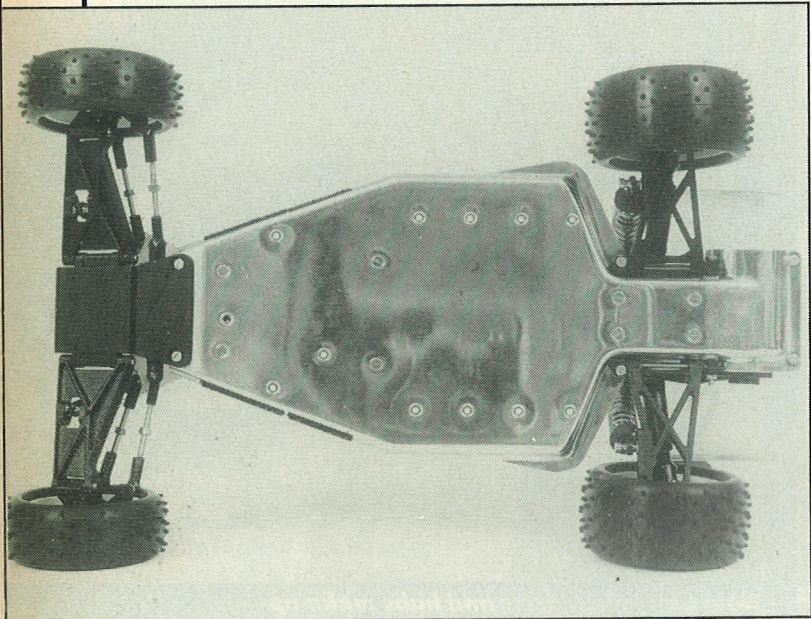
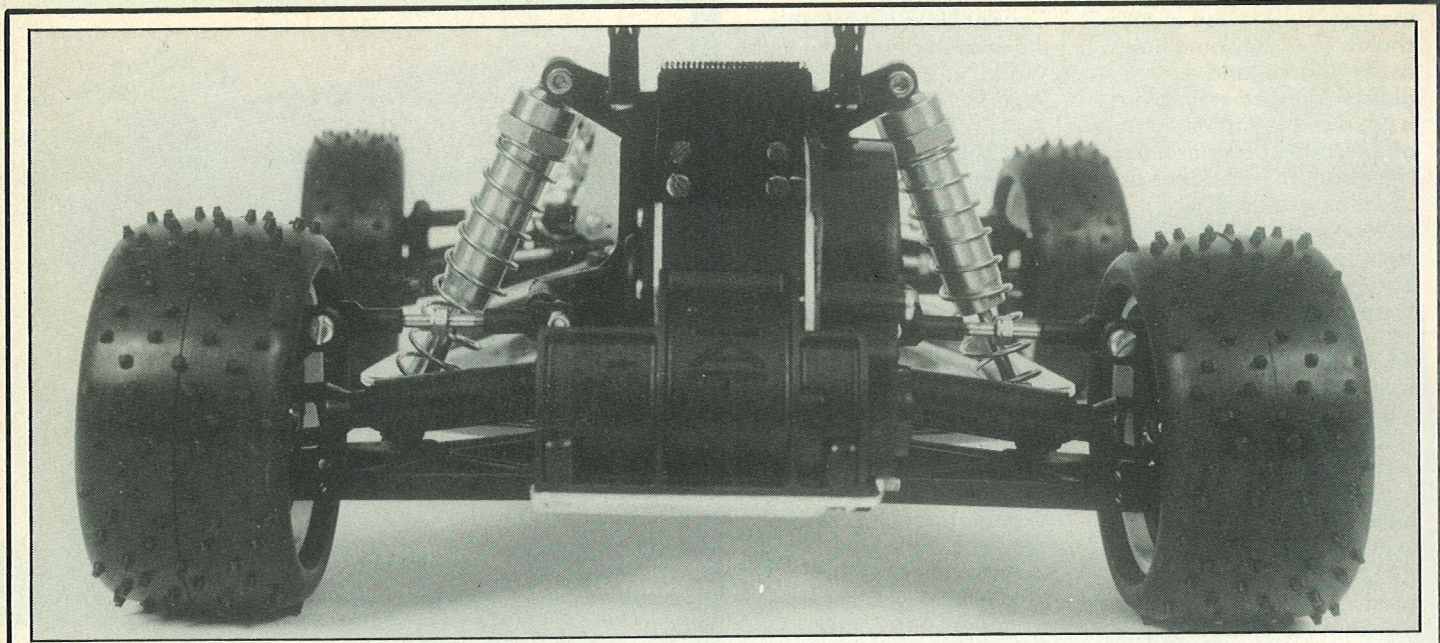


New ball joints, arms and hubs make up the new front end.



Cougar looks neat and uncluttered – no front anti roll bar as yet.

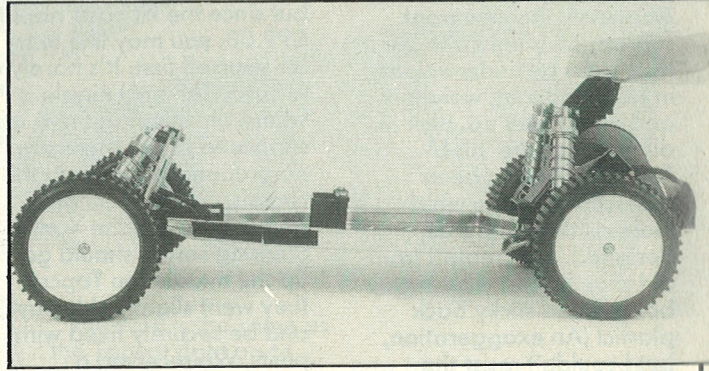
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Schumacher have set the competition a hard task to try and beat the Cougar. Always buy your car and with the optional ballrace kit, it is money very well spent. I feel sorry that Cecil Schumacher had to compromise his original

idea to get the market share in America he obviously needs. His solution is, however, one of the neatest you will find. Cougar should be a name to reckon with, however it was derived. Another winner - buy and enjoy.



Top: Topcat rear guard is included to protect the motor. General layout of the Cougar is neat - note new steering system.

