Reviewed by Colin Theobald

Nissan Primera

Our man inside the Nissan Touring Car Team builds the Tamiya 1:10 version and takes to the track...

What would you do if you won 18 million pounds on the national lottery? A country mansion in acres of land complete with your very own model car track. Perhaps a Ferrari or Lambo in the garage, why not both? What would I do you ask, well, after giving 3 million to save Team Lotus (as long as they gave me a pit pass for the Grand Prix) I would start my own British Touring Car Team. I would love to be the driver, but after being a passenger in one I don't think I'd be quick enough, by the way Mr Harvey, brake pedals are for slowing down.... Another thing I would do is buy my own Lexan moulding machine and make every bodyshell in the B.T.C.C., including the Volvo Estate. But, and a big but, I haven't won yet, so dreams will have to be dreams for the time being.

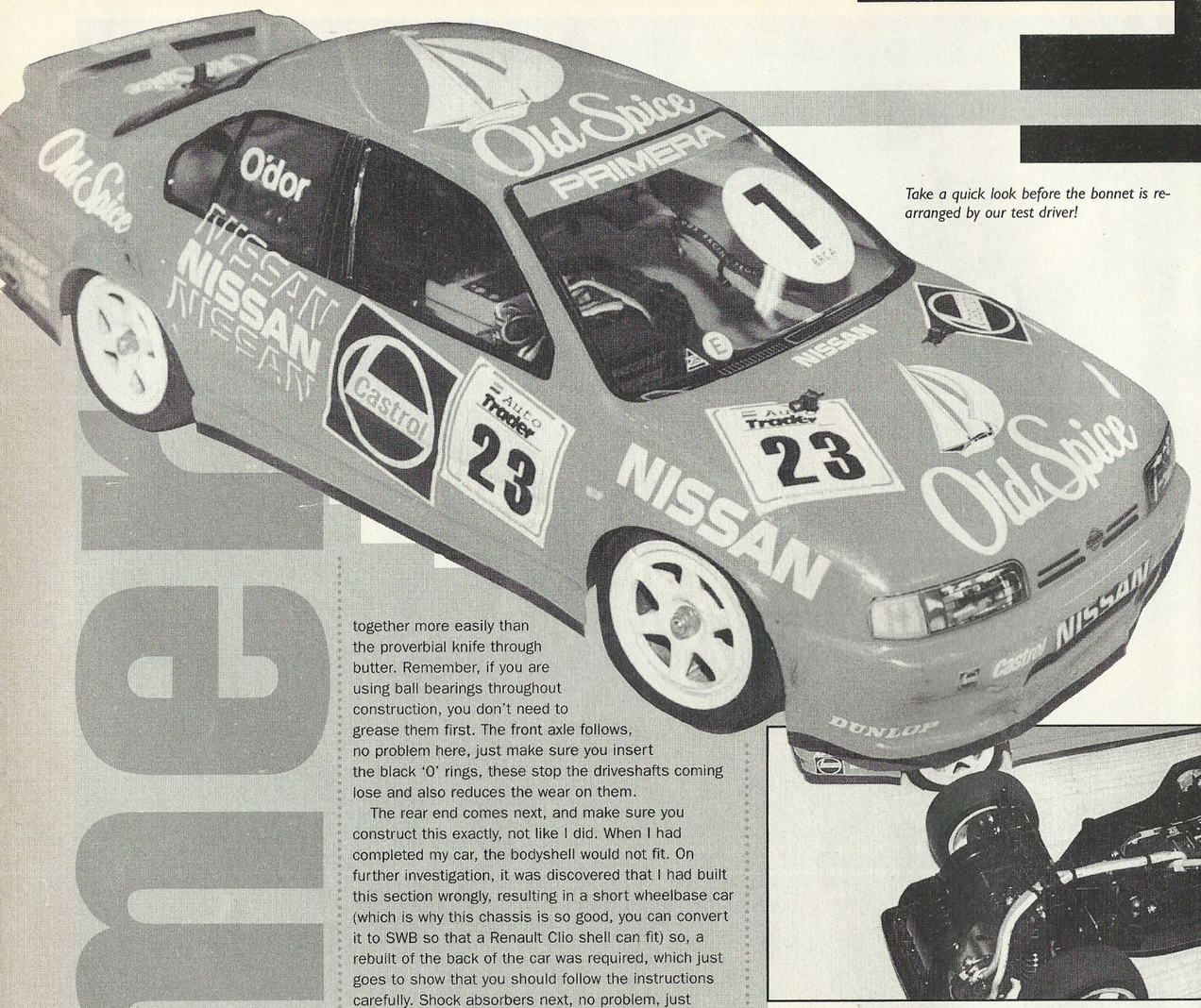
Fortunately, Tamiya are starting to make my dreams come true, firstly with the Ford Mondeo, and now, the Nissan Primera, and do Tamiya know how to mould a bodyshell or what. Quite simply, perfect. Although the kit is based on the Japanese Touring Car Championship Car, I couldn't resist in the Old Spice British Colour scheme.

So then, on to the review of this superb model. The kit (except the bodyshell) is the same as the Mondeo, with the motor right at the front of the car driving the front wheels, just like the real thing.

Assembly

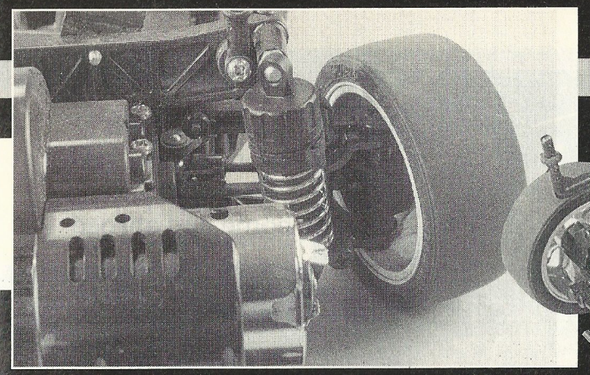
Before you start, firstly, organise yourself with a few small containers so you can keep all the screws together so that you don't lose any, and secondly, if your budget allows, go and buy a FWD Touring Car bearing set (Part No. 53137). It is definitely a worthwhile expense, and obtaining them before you build your car saves a lot of messing about at a later date, and the car will run a lot smoother and slightly quicker with them on board.

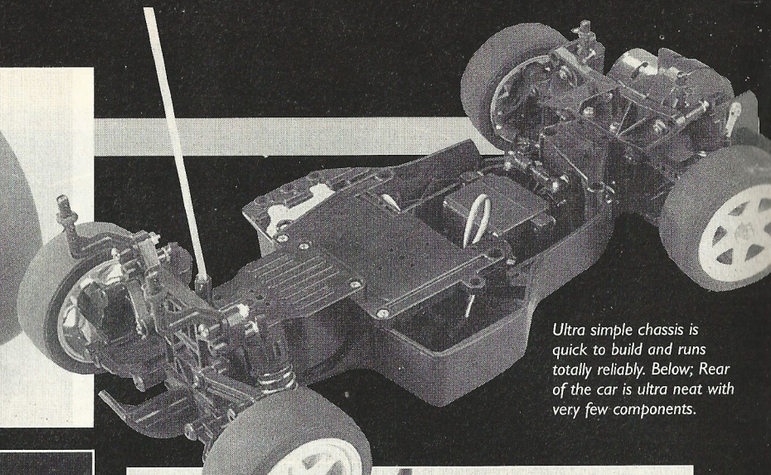
The first item that requires careful attention is the ball differential. Follow the construction of this exactly to the instructions and the diff will virtually last forever. One tip here is not to over-tighten the unit or you will end up with flat spots on the diff balls. Once the unit is constructed the front end goes



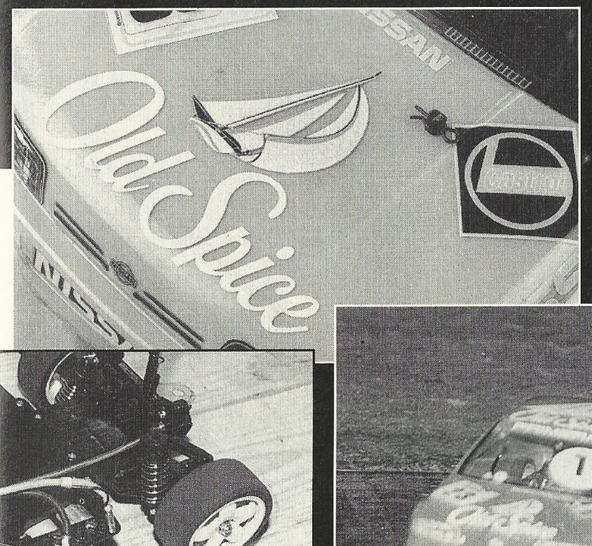
Take a quick look before the bonnet is re-arranged by our test driver!

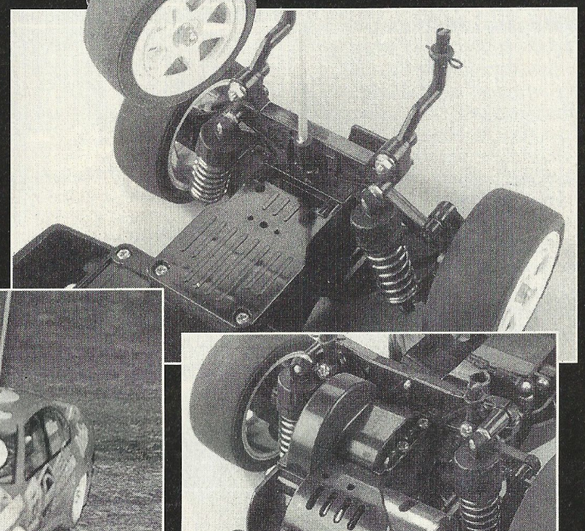
The Nissan "ghosting" is a little bit intricate, placing the sticker on the car and by using a scalpel, cutting them out. Lettrasets were used for the O'dor names on the windows. End result, one perfect replica car.

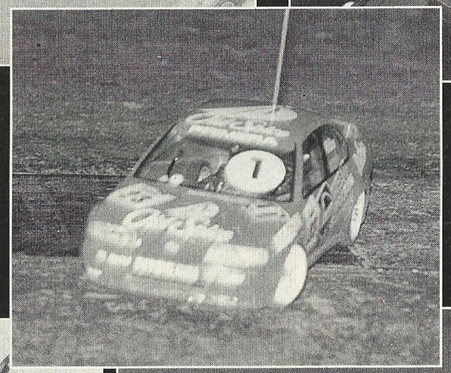


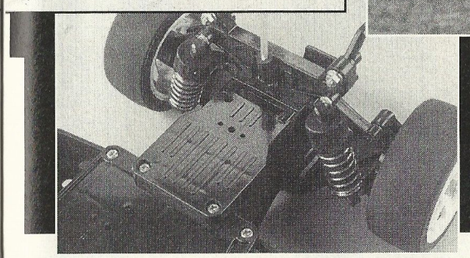


Ultra simple chassis is quick to build and runs totally reliably. Below; Rear of the car is ultra neat with very few components.

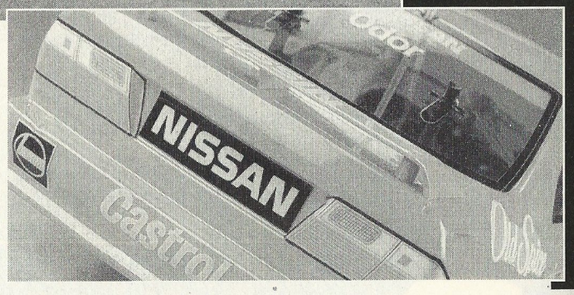








On the race track for a test session at the 1995 ME race meeting - making the A final...



together more easily than the proverbial knife through butter. Remember, if you are using ball bearings throughout construction, you don't need to grease them first. The front axle follows, no problem here, just make sure you insert the black 'O' rings, these stop the driveshafts coming lose and also reduces the wear on them.

The rear end comes next, and make sure you construct this exactly, not like I did. When I had completed my car, the bodyshell would not fit. On further investigation, it was discovered that I had built this section wrongly, resulting in a short wheelbase car (which is why this chassis is so good, you can convert it to SWB so that a Renault Clio shell can fit) so, a rebuilt of the back of the car was required, which just goes to show that you should follow the instructions carefully. Shock absorbers next, no problem, just watch out for flying e clips. The motor goes in next, and make sure you insert it correctly, too tight a mesh will eventually strip the gears or even burn out the motor, too lose and the gears will strip also.

Radio installation is extremely easy and I would recommend an electronic speed controller here, but if you are sticking to the kit supplied item, make sure you follow the instructions which are packed with the unit. Not far to go now, attach the front end to the chassis, like wise the rear and attach the wheels and you have basically finished the rolling chassis. Just a few adjustments to the radio trims and you are almost ready to go.

The perfect body?

The bodyshell is perhaps the most enjoyable part of constructing any model car. You can follow the kit scheme, or, like myself, opt for another idea. The B.T.C.C. Primera is very easy to paint. Just mask off the windows, which is incredibly easy thanks to the window masks provided in the kit and spray it red. Job done. Decals was another problem though. The majority of the stickers on the kit supplied sheets, but Old Spice logo's aren't available, so telephone calls to the team was required and eventually to their signwriter, who made a superb job in reducing the sizes to scale for the model.

Track time

The cars first run was at the Model Engineer Show at Olympia, completely built as per kit with the exception of the ball bearings and electronic speed controller. After the practice runs and the first round of qualifying, the car was lacking somewhat in the grip department, so a change to some super slick M Grip tyres was made and the car handled like a dream. End result, a place in the 'A' Final. Not bad at all for first time out. Although I retired in the final, which was due to driver brain fade. I thoroughly enjoyed the outing.

To give the car a real test, a visit to the West London Racing Centre Circuit was required. Fortunately I had chosen a dry day so no water proofing was required. The car's first run was with the same set-up as Olympia, but due to the track surface being more grippy, a slight correction to my steering movements was required. One great thing about front wheel drive cars is the way to keep out of or get out of trouble is to keep the power full on, and the car will drag itself out of any rear end slides. Two further runs and the car was flying around the track. The speed isn't as quick as some of the more elaborate modified cars, but with the Tamiya Eurocup, this is all you can do to these cars, and believe me, racing these cars is great fun, with the cars so evenly matched. You have to plan overtaking so far in advance just to get past your competitor.

Just for fun, for the last test run of the day, an Acto Power Touring Car Motor was installed in place of the kit motor. Not surprisingly, the car was much faster, but a lot of front wheelspin slowed a quick get away. The Primera became unstable due to the higher speeds but the most improved area was the enjoyment factor.

So, there you have it, a car that will bring endless hours of pleasure, easy to drive, and before long, you will want to race it. The Tamiya Eurocup is entering its fourth season very soon and it is not too late to enter this series, with races taking place all over the country. From the beginner to the expert, the series caters for all on a strict rule basis so that everyone competes on an equal basis. I myself will be racing in the two wheel drive class this year, so watch out for regular reports on how the car is performing.

Many thanks to Andy Bell of Sign Designs for his help with the logo's, Helger Racing for the extra decals and last but not least, Tamiya for making part of my dreams come true.....all I need now are six numbers.