

Two new Tamiya chassis'  
- but which is best?

# Tamiya Eurocup Warriors

**HEAD TO HEAD**  
The Tamiya Nissan R390  
and Porsche 911 GT1

Porsche's of Luke Burley and Ben Elliott proceeded to dominate qualifying and the ease with which Luke won the final signalled this was going to be the car to have for 1998 - or is it?

## And another

Lo and behold just in time for this year's series Tamiya do it again and release the TA03R with a completely new chassis and either Nissan R390 or Honda NSX shells. So which is the car to have for this year and which one will you need to get to the 1998 Eurocup Finals in Salzburg?

RRCi asked double Eurocup finalist Ben Elliott to test both the Nissan and Porsche head to head and give us his verdict.

## Over to Ben

Tamiya have made two major changes with the TA03R (Nissan R390) over the TA03R-S (Porsche 911 GT1). The TA03R has a longer wheelbase with the batteries mounted much further forward to put more weight over the front wheels. The first time I saw the car was at the Eurocup finals in Italy last year and when I talked to the Japanese designer he told me TA03R with its longer wheelbase should be easier to drive quickly than the shorter Porsche but not quite so nimble. Now my preference is for a car with plenty of front end 'turn-in' and I was in two minds about the Nissan. I liked the battery position as I felt the weight shifted toward the front would give very positive steering but I wondered how the longer and heavier chassis (by 45g) was going to affect the handling. The only way to find out was to run both cars and see.

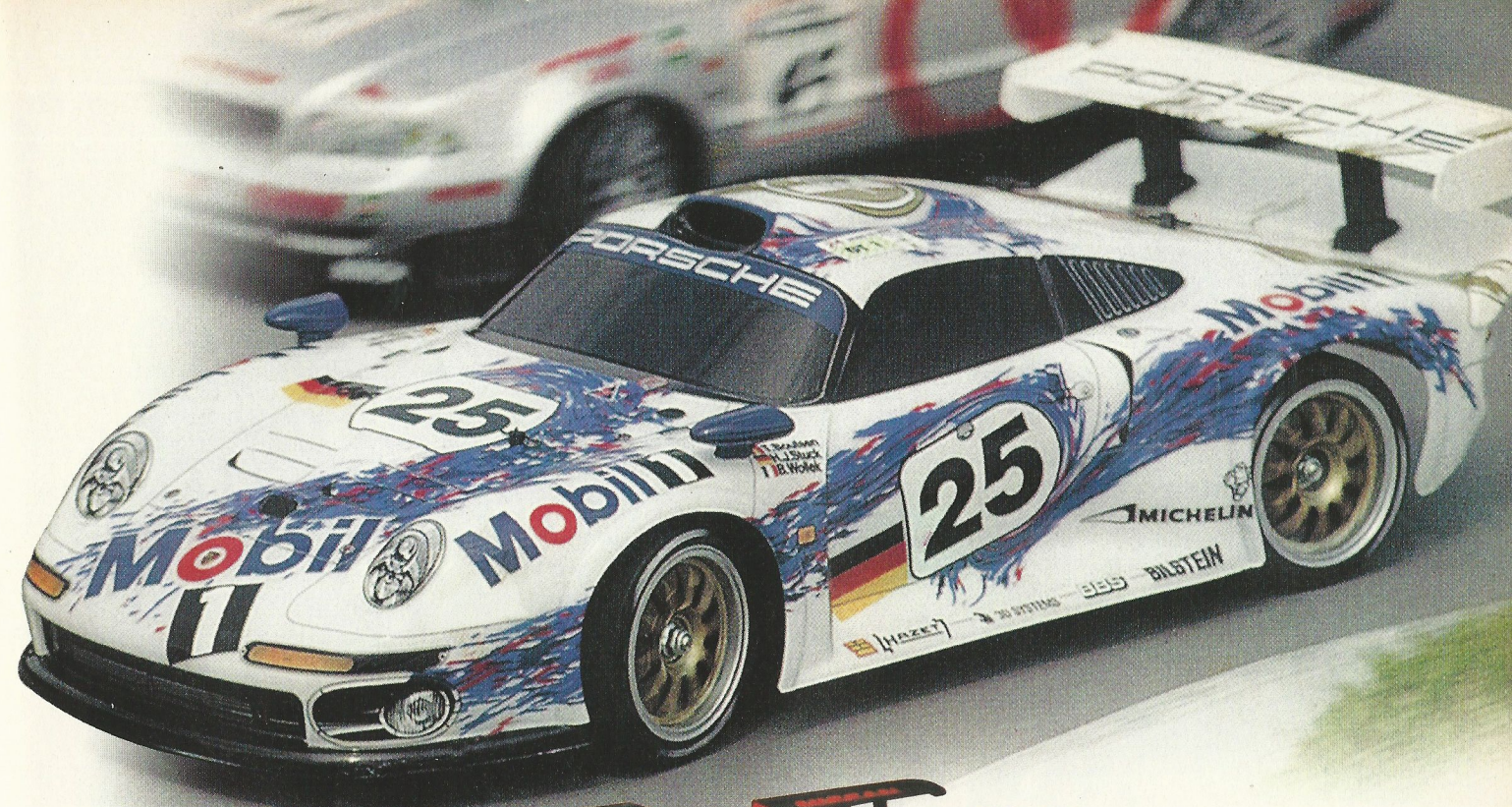
I took an unconventional approach to building the Nissan. In fact I didn't buy a Nissan

kit at all. Firstly I took a TA03F Pro - David Jun Special and converted it by buying the TA03R chassis, the front gearbox, graphite top deck, 15 tooth pulleys, body post set, rear skid plate and Nissan bodyshell. In case your wondering David Jun is a Tamiya USA employee who won the 1997 ROAR On-road nationals in Florida with a specially made TA03F Pro. Building on this success Tamiya have put this car into limited production (Look out for David Jun's hot setup tips in next months RRCi Ed. And our full test of the David Jun TA03F).

Now personally, I don't care if he won Mr Universe with the car - having sampled the superb handling of the Porsche GT1 at the end of last year I wasn't even tempted to go back and build another front engine monstrosity. In fact the David Jun Special only caught my eye because it comes with virtually all the hop-up options and at a very reasonable price. And believe me you need all the hot-up options you can afford to be competitive in Eurocup and it was cheaper than buying a standard car and adding all the extras.

## Building hints

Some tips when you build the car. Tamiya actually design the cars to have a lot of 'slop' and wobble because the vast majority of kits sold never go near a racetrack - they're just belted up and down the road and they don't break so easily if things aren't a precision fit. To take the wobble out of the ball joints put a dot of superglue onto the ball and then snap on the plastic part. Spin the turnbuckle around until you feel the joint go stiff and then put some shock oil on the joint while spinning it around. The wobble will now be gone from the joint and should still be quite free. You will probably find that the suspension and steering will creak like a rusty hinge after you have done this but a five minute run should wear everything in nicely. Also put motor shims between the suspension arms and the uprights to take out the slop. You've now got a car which goes in a straight line and doesn't wander about like Jon Winter after a Saturday night out.

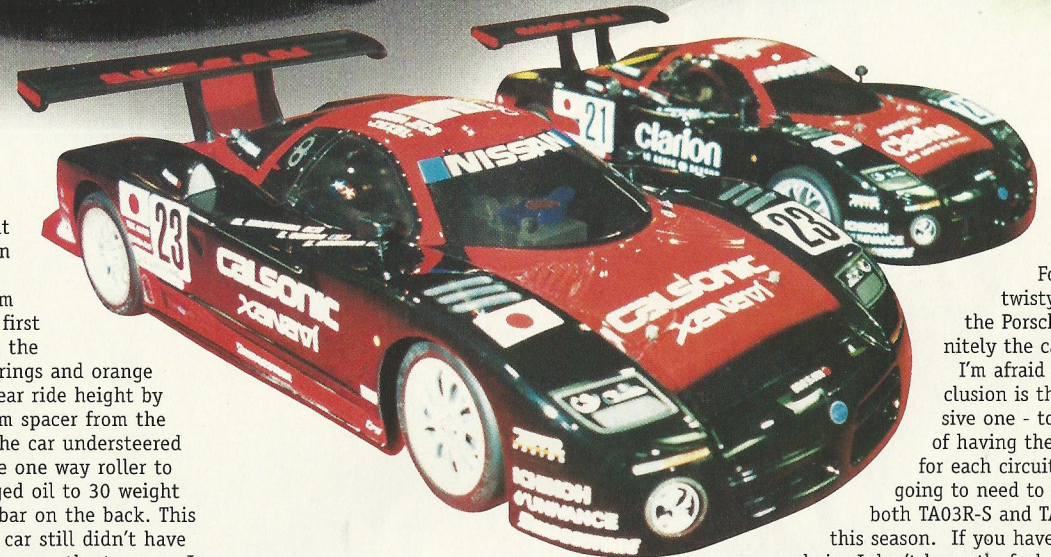


## Testing time

To test both cars I went along to the West London circuit. I used Type A slicks all round with foam inserts. I ran the Nissan first and had 40 weight oil in the shocks with blue rear springs and orange front. I also raised the rear ride height by leaving out the V11 2 mm spacer from the shock absorber piston. The car understeered badly and so I moved the one way roller to the front gearbox, changed oil to 30 weight and put a blue anti-roll bar on the back. This improved things but the car still didn't have the front end grip. To compare the two cars I took the Porsche out next on exactly the set-up I used at last year's final round and it understeered almost identically to the Nissan. However, I put this down to the cold conditions (I'm writing this in January) and the Type A slicks don't work until they reach 15 centigrade. So this first test was inconclusive.

## Test two

The next day happened to be the third round of the Chippenham indoor series and we belted down the M4 at some ungodly early hour on the Sunday morning to get in some practice with the Nissan. I had used the Porsche for the first two rounds and had it set-up just to my liking with lightning fast turn in. For the Nissan I kept the set-up the same except I used rally blocks for the carpet track with no inserts in the front with touring car hard foam inserts in the rear. Again the Nissan didn't have enough turn in for my liking so I changed to newer front tyres. Now the Nissan was right on the pace of the Porsche and I was impressed by how stable it felt when lapping quickly. In fact I was going slightly quicker with the Nissan with a 10.98 lap compared to my best with the Porsche of 11.18 seconds.



difficult to drive but ultimately quicker.

For short twisty tracks the Porsche is definitely the car to have. I'm afraid my conclusion is the expensive one - to be sure of having the best car for each circuit your going to need to invest in both TA03R-S and TA03R for this season. If you have to make a choice I don't honestly feel there will

be much of a difference between the two - certainly nothing like the performance gain of the TA03F over the TA02's. It's much more a matter of personal preference - a fast nervous Porsche over a more stable easier to drive Nissan. **RRCi**

## Conclusion

So what are my conclusions. The Nissan certainly feels very stable and the long wheelbase could be an advantage on fast circuits with long sweeping bends. It will also be interesting to see how the longer chassis handles uneven surfaces and if the Nissan rides the bumps better. The heavier chassis does not seem to effect performance - probably because the Nissan shell compensates by being 18g lighter than the Porsche.

The Porsche however is much quicker in response and changes direction easily - whereas the Nissan feels more ponderous. The shorter wheelbase allows you to set the car up on that razor edge which is more

