



Having raced for a whole season now in the Tamiya Eurocup Championship in the new Tamiya front wheel drive (FWD) Class, I jumped at the chance of reviewing Tamiya's latest FWD offering; the Renault Clio Williams. Although the Clio uses the same chassis as Tamiya's previous FWD cars, there are actually two major differences, both of which are to be found at the rear, but more on these later.

The Clio arrived in a box similar in size to that of a large shoe box, with a distinct lack of the usual 'blister' packaging which has become the accepted norm with Tamiya kits. Quizzing Colin Spinner of Riko about this brought forth the reply that this form of packaging is an experiment for the American market. Will we see the more familiar large boxes again?

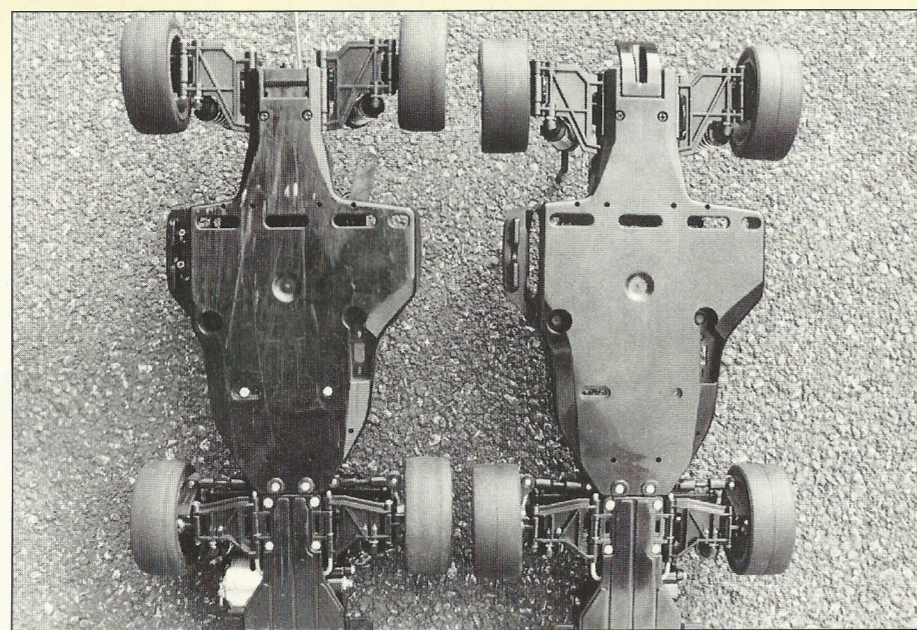
For those of you who have never built a Tamiya Touring or FWD car before, the usual order of assembly is as follows: Differential(s), gearbox(es), wishbones and steering, shock absorbers, the radio installation and then finally the bodyshell and wheels/tyres.

The Front End

As you would expect with a front wheel drive car, the front end is the interesting bit! The differential is the same type of ball differential as found in the 4wd Touring Car range, and is quite straightforward. Taking care with the assembly of the differential should result in trouble free running for quite some time: The diff in my Honda Civic has only been dismantled once (for inspection purposes only) in the whole of a season's racing, and still runs very smoothly.

The next stage in the comprehensive instruction booklet is the assembly of the gearbox and wishbones, the gearbox consisting of three moulded plastic sections. The bottom one doubles as a skid plate and wishbone anchor point. The middle section is the largest and incorporates the motor mounting, and finally the

top piece is a cap over the spur and idler gears. The differential simply fits in from below whilst the spur and idler gears drop in from above, then the three sections are clamped together with self tapping screws. One point worth mentioning here



This shot clearly shows the 13mm shorter wheelbase on the Clio's chassis (right) in comparison with the earlier (and well used) chassis on the left. Note that both have toe-in on the rear wheels.

is that ballraces aren't included in the kit, so should you wish to fit them (essential for racing purposes and a good idea in terms of longevity) it's at this point that they need to be installed before continuing with the Clio's construction.

Moving on, the next step is the steering assembly. This is of the same type as the wide front end kit available for the Touring Cars and fitted as standard on the Alfa

Although not a photo of the review model, this scene from the European Finals at Apledoorn illustrates that Tamiya wet weather tyres really do work very well!

155. Phosphor bronze bearings are provided for the inside of the hub carriers, and whilst these are OK in the short term I would recommend the fitment of ballraces, especially if the car is to be raced.

The Rear End

As the Clio is pulled around by the front wheels, the rear end is very simple indeed. The first stage is to bolt together the shock absorber tower and lower wishbone mounting block, then this assembly provides a very rigid support for both lower wishbones and the upper links when attached to the chassis. Next come the wishbones, links and the hub carriers, which brings me to the first of the changes previously mentioned. On the earlier FWD cars the rear hub carriers were set to give toe-out, presumably in an effort to reduce

understeer. Most of the Tamiya Eurocup drivers found that the toe-in resulting from swapping the hub carriers over made the car more stable and easier to drive. Obviously Tamiya's designers found the same thing, so the Clio kit features rear toe-in as standard! Stub axles are used with two plain bearings (or ballraces) and the usual hexagonal wheel fittings as commonly used at the moment on most Tamiya cars.

Shock Absorbers

The shock absorbers provided in the Clio are of the same design as those used on the majority of Tamiya's Touring Cars in the past: An injection moulded black plastic body, into which two O-rings (to act as the piston rod seals) are pressed then a cap screwed on at the lower end. A number of different pistons and spring spacers are provided, which allows for lots of adjustment to the damping etc., although the settings recommended in the instruction manual work extremely well in my experience. The method of attaching the shocks to the car is by means of self tapping screws through brass bushes. For normal use this method is fine, but when they need to be removed quickly, for instance when setting the car up during practice at a race meeting, the kit's fixings can become tedious, so many drivers replace them with 5mm ball connectors, as found on the steering assembly (Rob's racing tip of the month!).

Radio Installation And Final Assembly

As with most of Tamiya's kits, a wide range of radio equipment can be used, and the instructions give very clear details about installing the servos, receiver etc. For example, a couple of examples of how to fit speed controllers are included.

Having fitted the steering servo and bellcranks, it is now possible to bolt the front and rear sections to the chassis, the front requiring five self tapping screws in total and the rear four. This is where the second of the changes made to the Clio kit is to be found, as the wheelbase of the Clio is 13mm shorter than that



additional holes in the wishbone mounting block, a simple modification which can be made to existing (pre Clio) cars.

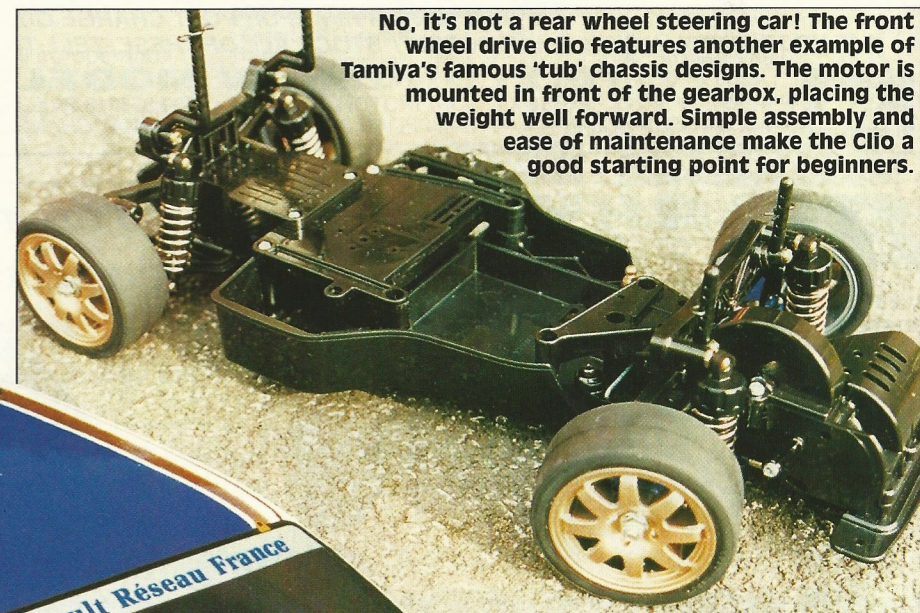
Body Shell & Wheels

The body shell is of Tamiya's usual high standard, an excellent reproduction of the Renault Williams Clio, complete with the air duct on the bonnet. The sticker sheet provided allows the car to be finished in the Diac colour scheme of the Group A competition special (rally) car driven by Jean Ragnotti. The colour scheme chosen for the review kit however, was the all British design used on the Williams F1 cars. I mean, after all it is a Williams Renault! When fitted with the eight spoked one piece wheels

sprayed in gold, the result was one very tasty looking Clio indeed.

Conclusion

Once again Tamiya have come up with a winner with stunning good looks, and I'm sure we will see plenty of them next season taking part in the Tamiya EuroCup. For rank beginners to tarmac On Road racing, or indeed for those who just want to play in the car park at lunchtime, front wheel drive cars like the Clio offer a good opportunity to drive around on a none too brilliant surface without suffering too much from a lack of traction, the moulded tyres actually giving quite a lot of grip (try warming them up first!). For those with a mind to take up racing,



No, it's not a rear wheel steering car! The front wheel drive Clio features another example of Tamiya's famous 'tub' chassis designs. The motor is mounted in front of the gearbox, placing the weight well forward. Simple assembly and ease of maintenance make the Clio a good starting point for beginners.



previous cars. How has this been achieved? The rear wheels have been moved forward by simply turning the rear shock tower around and using the

the FWD Class offers close, competitive sport without breaking the Bank. What more can I say?!

The Tamiya Renault Williams Clio is imported and distributed by Richard Kohnstam Ltd, 13-15a High Street, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. Tel (0442) 61721, and is available from all good model shops.

The Tamiya Renault Clio Williams

EuroCup star Rob Marshall reviews Tamiya's latest FWD Flyer!