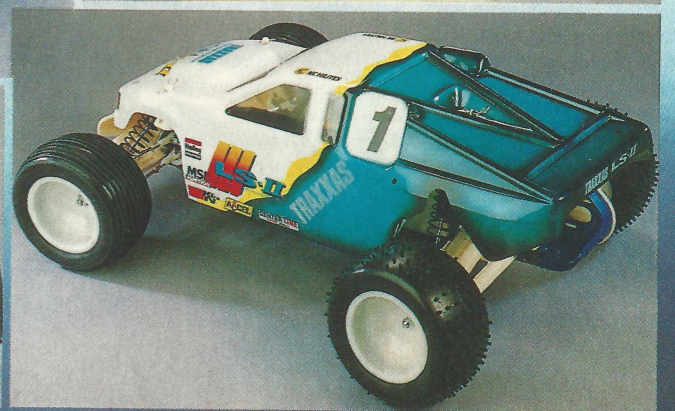
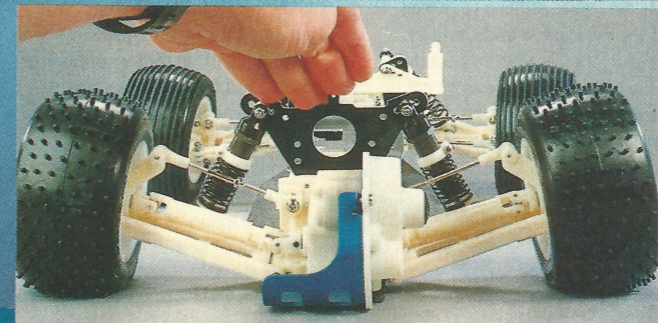
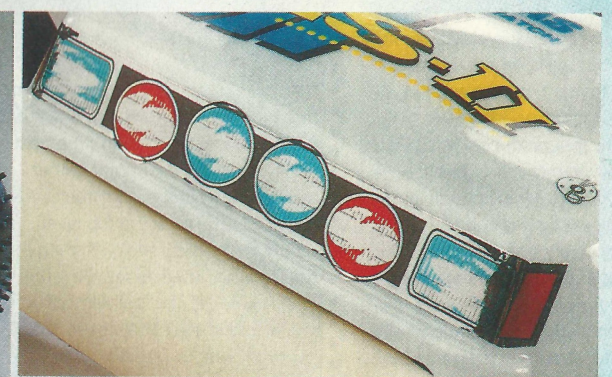
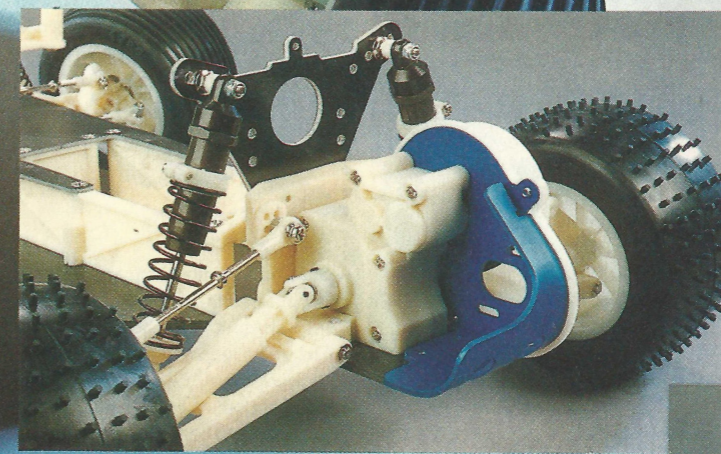
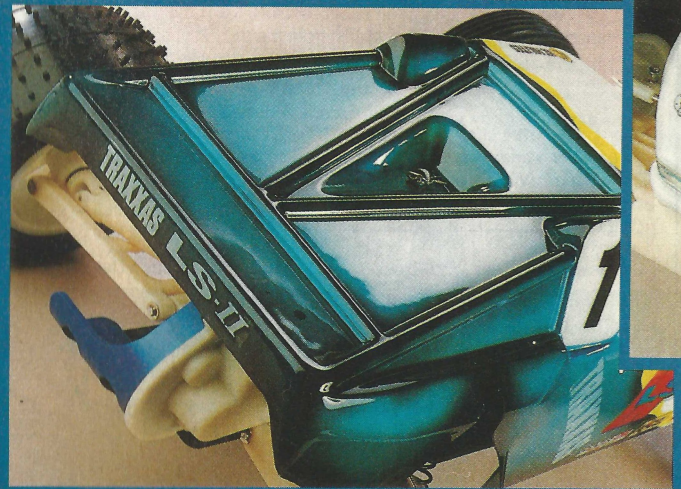
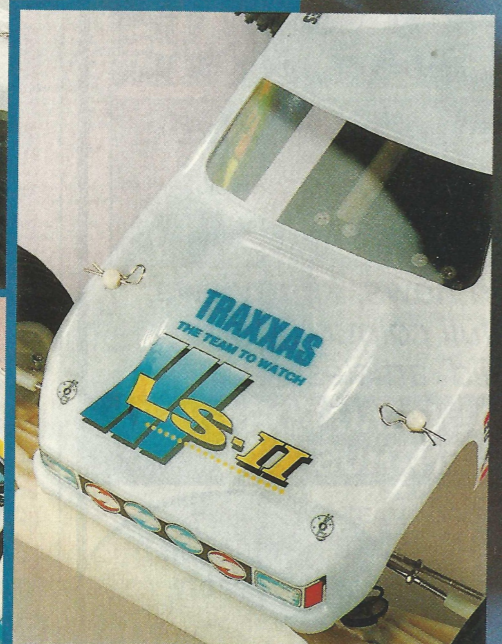


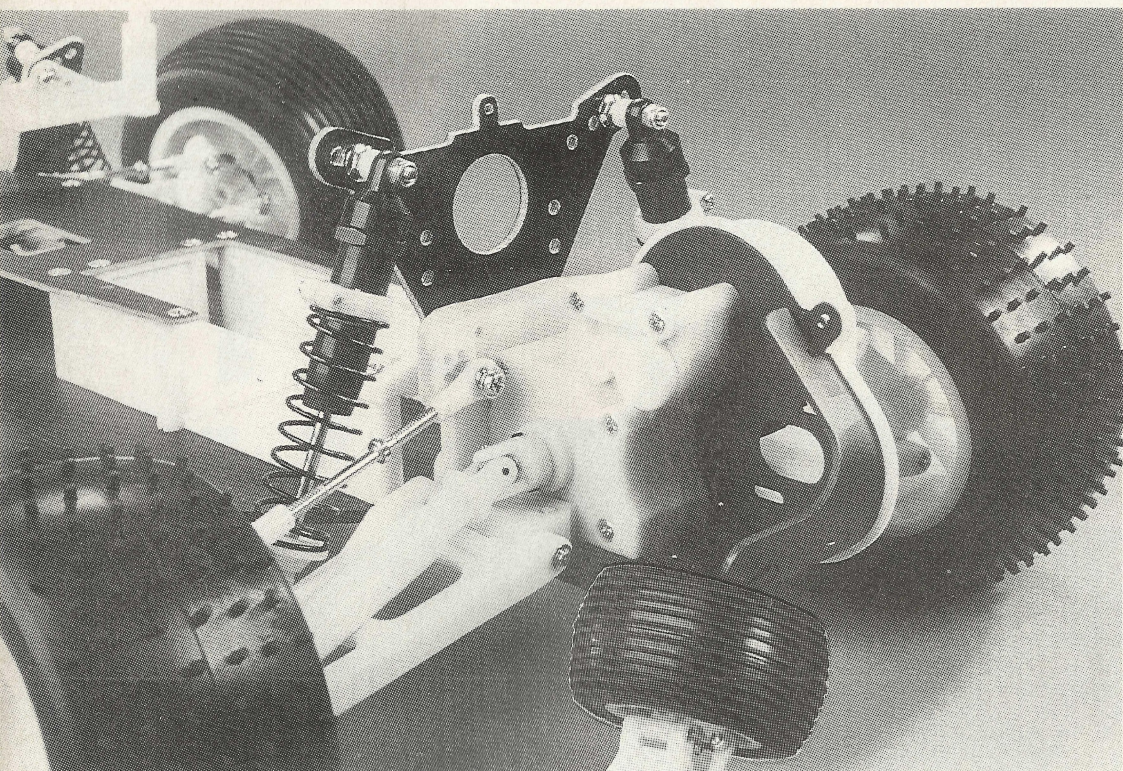
LS-II

Traxxas have taken their 1:10 off road truck ideas a little further...
Andy Carter builds the latest offering

Monster truck or Stadium truck racing has become more popular over the last two or three years and, as with many other more established classes of racing, the lead seems to have been taken by the Americans. Whilst two wheel drive is still the most popular class of buggy racing in the states, stadium trucks must now rate as the second most popular form of buggy racing with many kits and variants available on the market. Whilst it isn't so popular over here, stadium truck racing is catered for at national level and entries, whilst lower than the

- more popular four and two wheel
- drive classes, have been
- sufficient to sustain a national
- class for the past two seasons.
- At first, only conversion kits
- were available in order to
- transform your two wheel drive
- buggy into a stadium truck but
- manufacturers soon woke up to
- the fact that there was a new
- market waiting to be exploited with
- very minimal extra costs involved
- for them - You see, the
- manufacturers already had
- competitive 2WD buggies and, with
- the adaption of big wheels, long
- shocks and a bodyshell, a 'new' kit
- could be quickly placed on the
- market without investing in new





tooling costs which would have been prohibitive.

The latest offering of this ilk is from another American based company called TRAXXAS who have only found limited success over here in the last two years - most notably being winning the Regional Finals back in 1992 in Bolton.

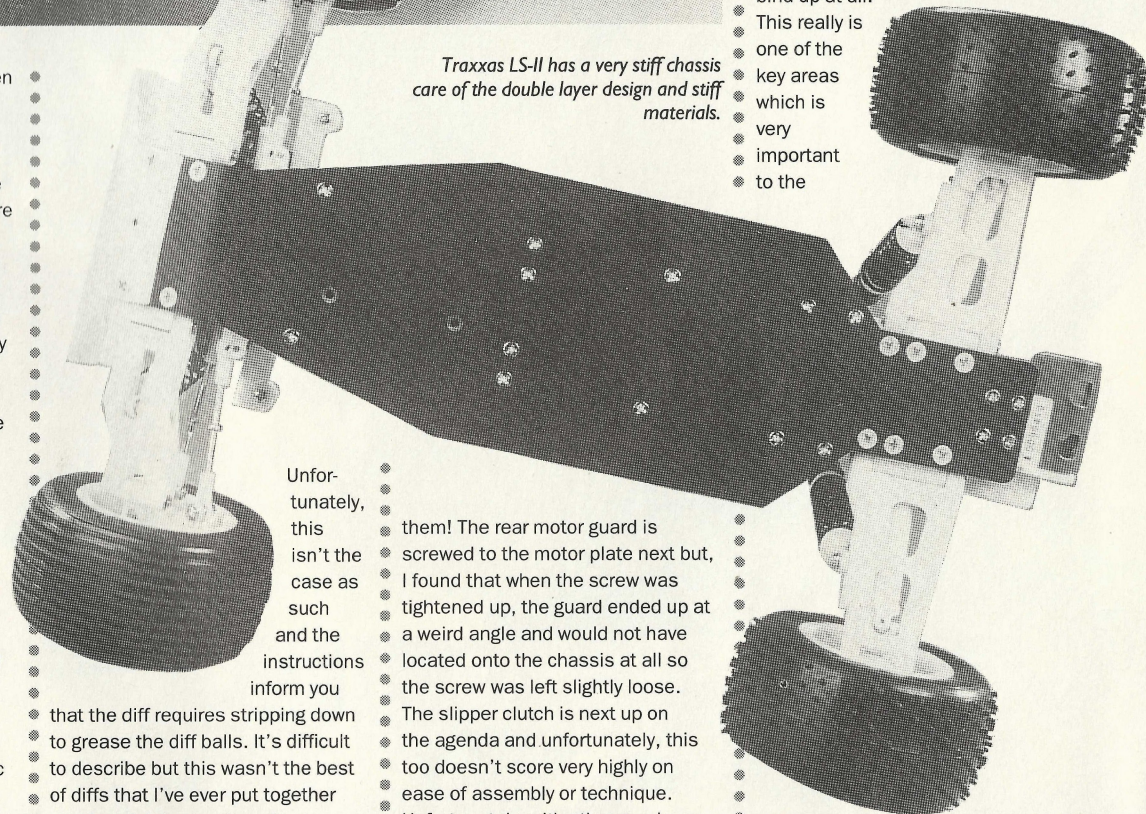
The Traxxas LS-II is aimed at the competition market which is fiercely battled for predominantly by two other American companies - Associated and Losi. It features the obligatory slipper clutch and ball differential, four long throw, oil filled dampers, a 'zero-flex' carbon fibre chassis and a full ballrace set.

The first thing that strikes you is the size of the box - it is very long. Upon opening the box, you are greeted by hundreds of little sealed plastic bags with labels on them. It seems to me that somebody at Traxxas must have shares in a company that produces little plastic bags as when you start to open them, you very soon become overrun with these little bags - be sure to have an empty bin near you.

Most of the components that you require for each assembly are in bags labelled A,B,C etc but not all the fasteners are in the same bags. The most frustrating and annoying part of building this kit was the time it took to locate all the screws. Normally, different bags for different screws tends to aid the assembly process, but in this case, it works against you. Having said that, the instructions are fairly clear and useful and are logically laid out.

Assembly begins with the gearbox. As stated before, this includes a ball differential which, at first glance, is pre-assembled.

Traxxas LS-II has a very stiff chassis care of the double layer design and stiff materials.



Unfortunately, this isn't the case as such and the instructions inform you

that the diff requires stripping down to grease the diff balls. It's difficult to describe but this wasn't the best of diffs that I've ever put together and it certainly wasn't as free running as some of the top level differentials found today. In fact, the feeling I had when assembling the gearbox was that it looked and felt like an old design and it seems overly difficult to adjust the diff to the right tension without it slipping at all. The rest of the gearbox internals went together easily although the top layshaft gear requires hammering into place - not what I would state of the art assembly techniques! and the 'box is fairly smooth if a little noisy. The housings are screwed together by long screws which also secure the smart blue anodised motor plate. Unfortunately, locating the screws took a lot longer than installing

them! The rear motor guard is screwed to the motor plate next but, I found that when the screw was tightened up, the guard ended up at a weird angle and would not have located onto the chassis at all so the screw was left slightly loose. The slipper clutch is next up on the agenda and unfortunately, this too doesn't score very highly on ease of assembly or technique. Unfortunately, with other gearboxes amongst the rivals, the Traxxas setup, although containing the correct ingredients, fails to excite and it seems out of place in a competition truck nowadays. As is the norm nowadays, turnbuckles are supplied in the kit which are quite difficult to thread into the plastic rod ends initially. However, the completed assembly is very smooth and doesn't bind up which is important so that the suspension works correctly. The rear driveshafts are telescopic hooke type universal joints which were first utilised on the Schumacher CAT several years ago.

Although some companies have gone away from this type of driveshaft, Traxxas still use it to good effect. This type of shaft is very strong and provides a positive drive over all of the suspension travel. Assembling these driveshafts is relatively painless and a tool is provided in order to assist you. The rear suspension setup is the standard single wishbone and adjustable top link which is found on all top class competition trucks and buggies. On the LS-II, the wishbones are extremely long and look very durable. Once assembled, they are very smooth in operation and do not bind up at all. This really is one of the key areas which is very important to the

handling of a model car and it is good to see the manufacturer ensuring that all the components are controlled so that a good sliding fit is achieved. The shocks are the excellent, teflon coated items that Traxxas have been making and selling for sometime. Indeed, when they were initially brought out, even some of the other factory supported teams used these shocks on their cars as it was believed that they were amongst the best on the market.

Similarly, the front suspension setup is the same type as the rear and, once again, is achieved with a good smooth fit with no binding or

slop in operation. With the front and rear assemblies all screwed onto the chassis plate, the truck starts to look complete. The addition of the battery box helps to strengthen the rear gearbox/bulkhead assembly and reduces any chance of flex being generated. The battery box sides and front are all made from the same nylon type material as the suspension arms and look like girders from the forth bridge! Once bolted onto the chassis and bulkhead, I couldn't flex the chassis at all so they obviously work well.

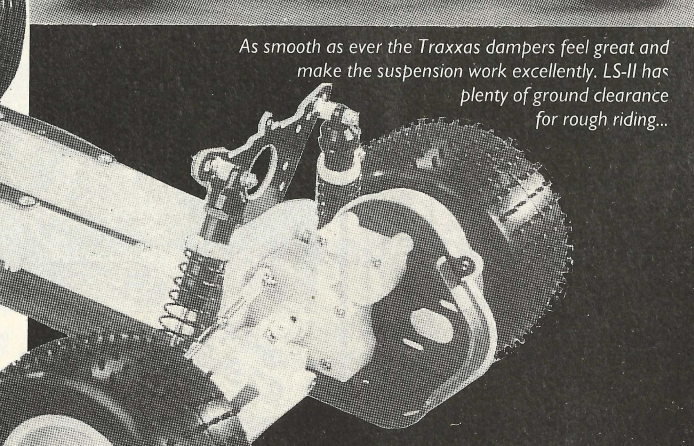
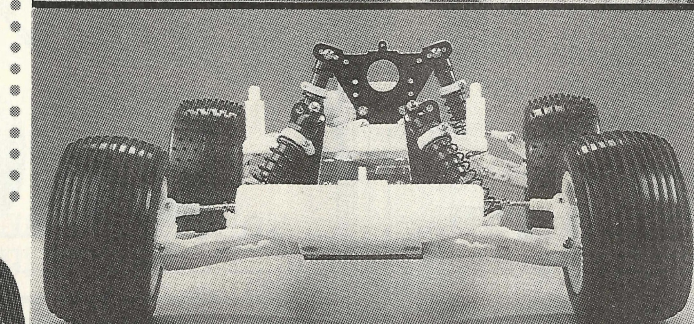
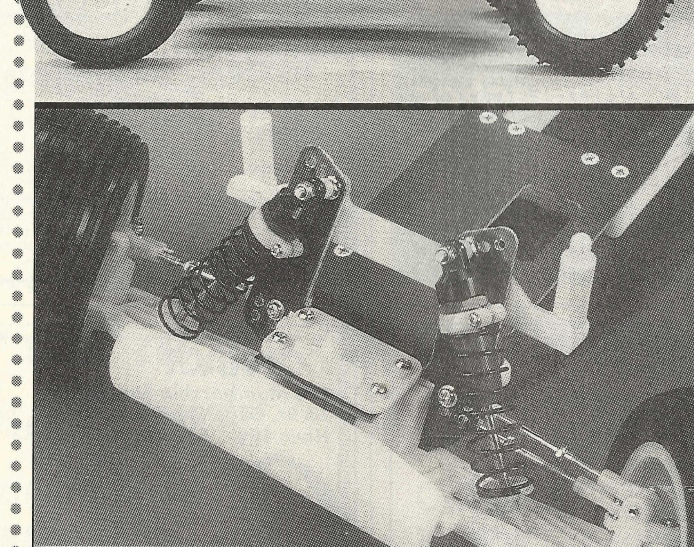
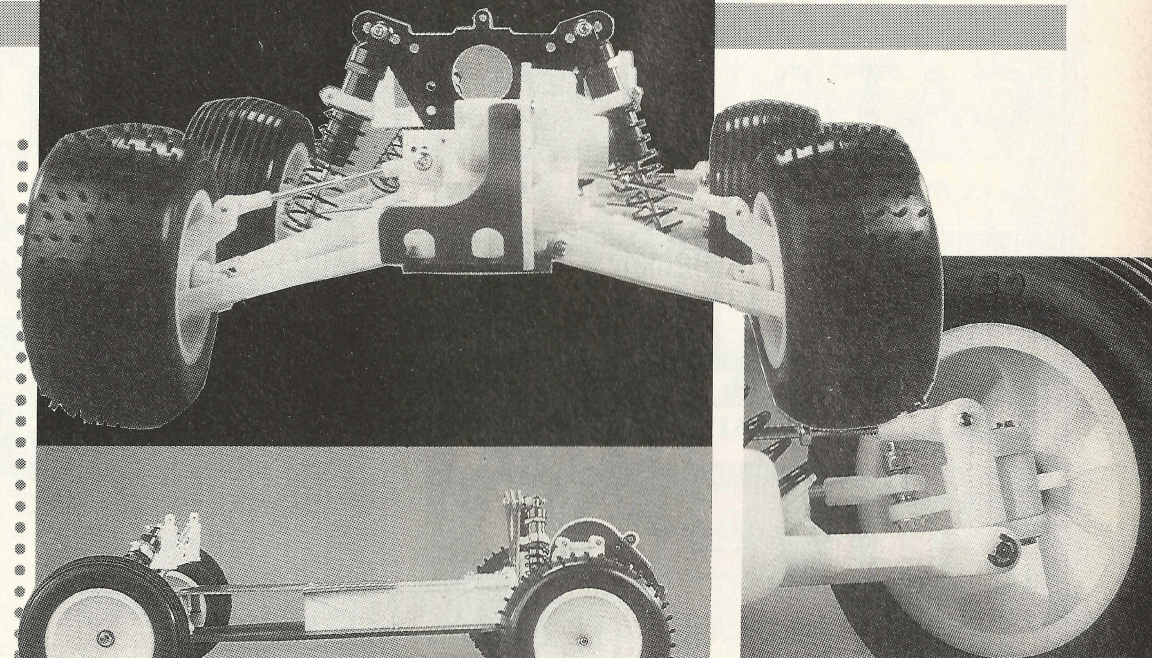
The steering assembly is a double bellcrank system with bushed inserts which can be replaced with bearings for a smoother action. Although we didn't fit any R/C gear, it is at this stage that the steering servo must be installed as a top deck is located above which would make it difficult to install afterwards without partial dis-assembly.

The instructions also show a cut down front bumper which, although it looks racier, it hardly protects anything but, if you like the look of the small bumper, there is a little diagram showing you what you have to cut off in order to achieve it.

All that remains is to fit the wheels and tyres and trim and paint the bodyshell.

The wheels are one piece plastic rims with the front one supporting twin ballraces and the rear ones featuring a hexagon type drive. The tyres supplied are big balloon type mini pin spikes for the rear and shallow ribs for the front.

The bodyshell is a slim fitting truck style, now ubiquitous amongst all racing trucks as it doesn't interfere with



As smooth as ever the Traxxas dampers feel great and make the suspension work excellently. LS-II has plenty of ground clearance for rough riding...

the suspension movement at all. The body is made from polycarbonate and is basically detailed. Lots of decals are provided in the kit along with the front grill and lights detail so you don't have to be extremely adventurous with the spray paint in order to achieve a nice

Conclusions

The Traxxas LS-II provides an interesting alternative to an expanding market of competition stadium truck kits. It will probably appeal more to those who have already owned Traxxas kits than it will to Associated or Losi drivers. The success of this kit will depend a lot on the importers and distribution of kits and spares not to mention the retail price. If the price is very similar to that of an RC10T or a Losi LXT it is difficult to see it being a great success. If the price is lowered sufficiently, then it may appeal more to the club racer who wants to race at the regional BRCA truck races which will be held across the country this year. In truth, it isn't a bad kit, the suspension and chassis setup is very good but the gearbox is only passable and the packaging is crazy and unfortunately, you have to deal with these two points first before you can get on with the more positive sides of the kit.