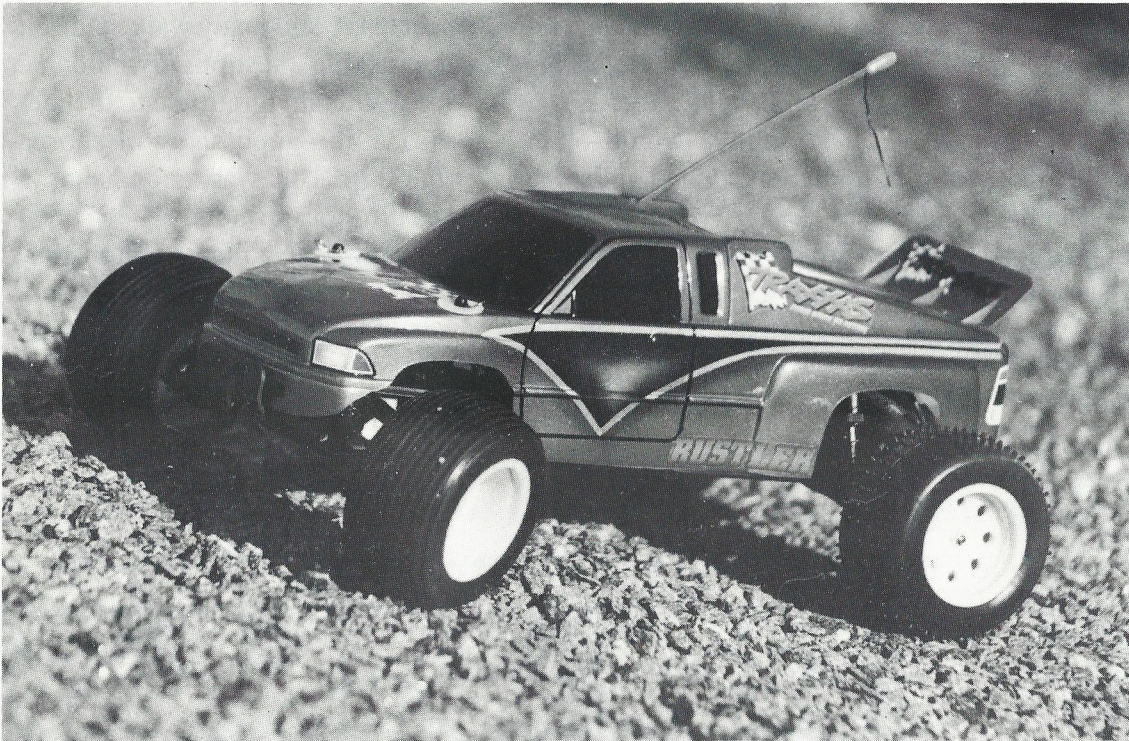


*By Jack
Wright*

Traxxas has paved the way for many of today's racers with their line of entry level car and truck kits, now Traxxas has introduced a new line of kits that combines much of the performance of high end race cars and at the same time making assembly and maintenance simple. The Rustler comes in two versions, one is assembled with a radio system, and the other is an unassembled kit. I chose the latter because I would like to see what



*Left: The Traxxas is
one hot looking
machine in
action!*

Traxxas Rustler

makes up the Rustler. The Rustler features a three gear tranny with a planetary gear differential for a smooth yet strong tranny, also the Rustler rides on a four wheel independent suspension with oil filled coil over shocks to smooth out the rough stuff. Now

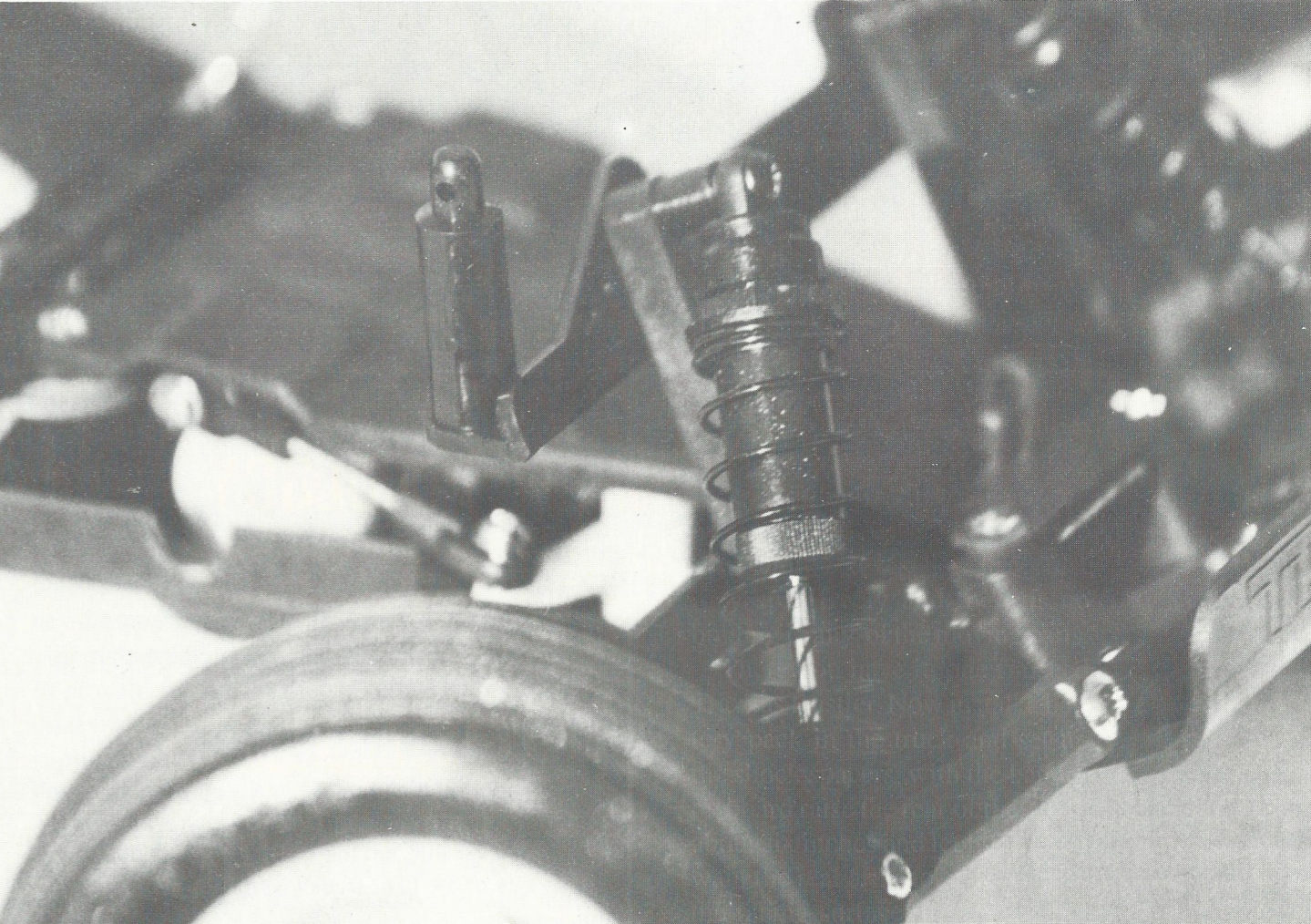
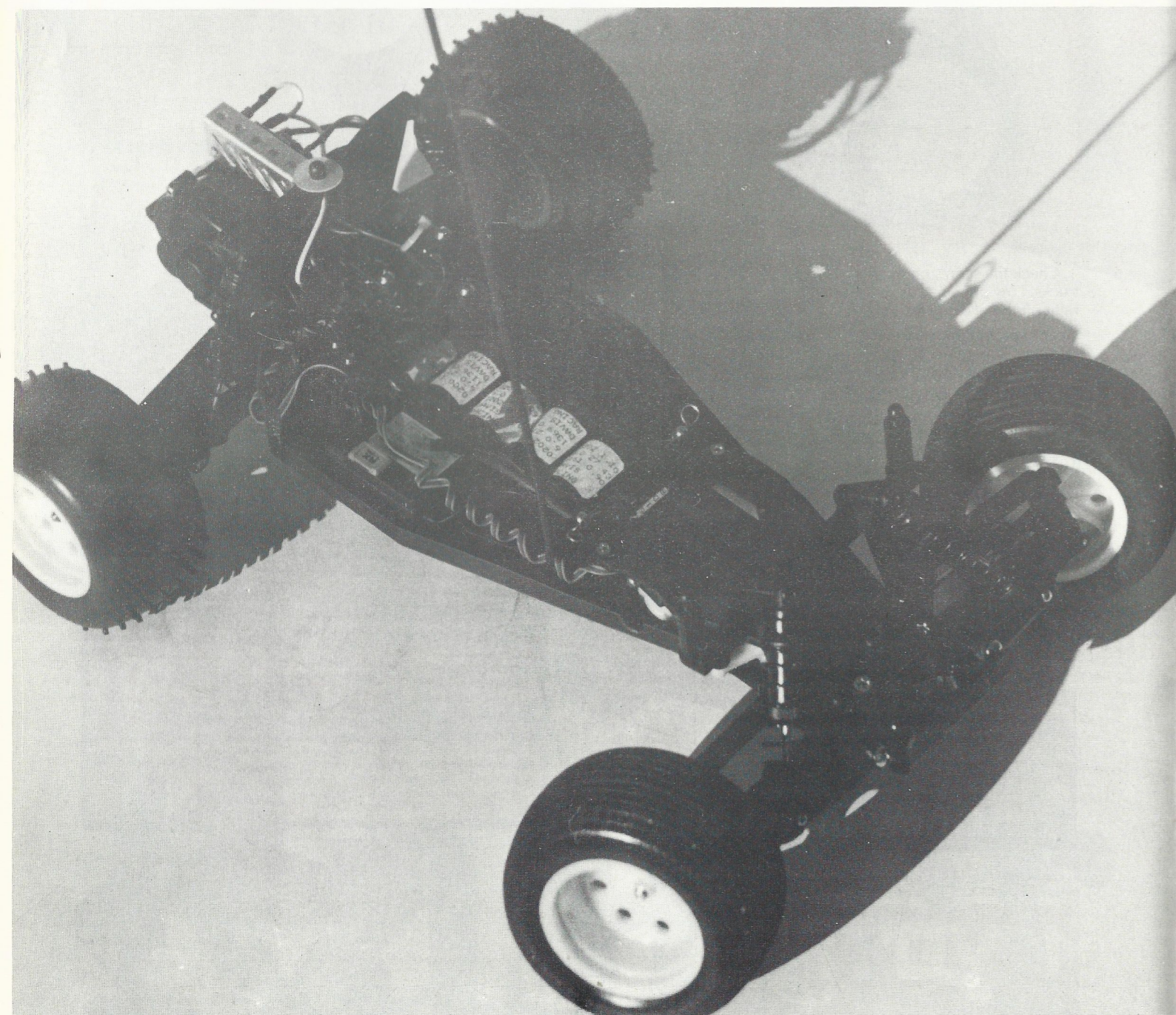
to complete the Rustler you will need a 2 channel radio system, battery pack and charger, of course, you will also need some hand tools and paint for the body.

LET'S RUSTLE US UP A TRUCK!

Now let's open the box and see what's going on, as in all of the kits produced by Traxxas all the parts are packaged in clearly

marked bags that coincide with the manual. The plus to this kit is its manual, very clearly written with lots of photos to help you along the way. Now before getting started you should lay a towel over your work area, since many of the parts for the tranny are very small and easy to lose. And speaking of the tranny that's where we're going to start first, the things to watch

Right: An above look of the completed Rustler chassis.



for are to be sure to apply grease to all of the gears and do not over tighten the screws on the diff case.

The rest of tranny is a snap but as mentioned before don't over tighten the screws on the transmission case, once you have the tranny completed check to see that it spins freely, if not loosen the screws on the case until it does.

At this point we'll install the drive gear and drive shafts on to the tranny, the gear is a snap but

Above: Traxxas took a simple yet strong approach to chassis and suspension design, note the added bracing at the front end where the truck will most likely be hit.

the shafts can be a bit tricky although Traxxas does include an installation tool for the U-joints to make the job easier. The last step in building the tranny is installing the 20 turn closed end bell motor that's included in the kit, once you have the motor installed and the dust cover on, you can move on to assembling the rear suspension.

SOAK'IN UP THE BUMPS!

The suspension on the Rustler is far from high tech but does a fine job of handling the abuse dished out by most beginning racers, assembly is simple, just be sure to check to see that the A-arms are mounted on the proper side of the bulk head. The arms are marked left and right so you

can tell which is which, also you want to install the suspension pins with the screw heads toward the rear of the chassis, this will make maintenance easier by letting you remove the pins without taking apart the bulkhead. Once you have accomplished finishing up the rear suspension we'll now repeat the process up front.

The front suspension assembly is similar to the rear with the exception that its up front (just kidding) actually the A-arms can be mounted on either side of the chassis as they do not have a toe in built in like the rear arms. Here you have to ensure you look at the caster blocks as they are marked left to right, and, like the rear be

sure to install the suspension pins so they're easy to remove for maintenance. As for the rest of assembly of the suspension it's a snap as long as you follow the manual, once you have your suspensions completed set them aside as were moving on to the shocks.

A SHOCKING EXPERIENCE

I have to give a big hats off to Traxxas for the much improved shock design, as the new units are easier to assemble due to there improved lower o-ring assembly. The older shocks used the dreaded C rings to retain the o-rings which took longer to install than the whole kit was to assemble. The new assembly uses a thread on retainer to hold the o-rings, a big improvement. As for the shocks, I used the two hole pistons with the supplied shock oil, even though these are plastic dampers I did find they were quite smooth. Although you will want to wait to install the shock spacers after the shocks are mounted on the completed chassis, this way you can see how many you will need to set ride height properly.

TURNING THEM OUT

After you have the shocks finished up we'll move on to the steering bell cranks and servo mounting, the Rustler uses a bell crank style steering system that helps to eliminate bump steer and provides a very strong steering system. When assembling the steering assy be sure not to over tighten the screws on the drag link, as this will cause the steering system to bind up and make sure you install the bell cranks in the right order on the drag link as shown in the photos. Once you have the bell

cranks assembled then mount the steering linkage and servo saver to the bell crank, to finish up the steering assembly simply mount the bell crank and steering servo to the upper chassis support.

For this article I went with JR's Python 2ch Radio system, I found at this point it is a good time to set up the radio system to check and set the steering. Because once you have the steering assy mounted to the chassis it's impossible to center the servo saver, from here you begin to mount the radio receiver and front and rear suspensions to the chassis.

NOT VERY MECHANICAL

To be honest I'm not much for mechanical speed controls. From past experience I have found them to be more trouble then they're worth, but at first glance the unit supplied with the Ruster looked to be a pretty stout unit. Unlike other forms of entry level controllers this unit's wiper arm is enclosed to help keep out dirt and debris, also instead of a sloppy linkage from the servo to the speed control the Traxxas rig mounts to the top of the servo directly.

It's a little tricky to set up at first but if you follow the manual closely you shouldn't have much trouble, note if you are not using a Traxxas or Futaba radio you will need to change the servo horn that is on the speed control in order to work with your radio. At this point I finished up the chassis, installed the shocks, and did the final trim on the radio. From here on out it's just mount the tires, wheels and paint the bod!

JUST PLAIN TIRED

Now we're in the home stretch,

TRAXXAS RUSTLER

Traxxas Rustler kit.....	\$109.99
JR Radio Python.....	\$99.99
Dynamite Super Sport batteries.....	\$42.95
Dynamite Mega A/C D/C charger.....	\$59.99

(all prices are suggested retail)

MANUFACTURERS MENTIONED IN THIS ARTICLE

Traxxas
12150 Shiloh Rd. #120
Dallas, TX 75228

Dynamite - Dist. by
Horzion Hobbies
P.O. Box 6029
Champaign, IL 61821

JR Radio
Dist. by Horzion Hobbies
P.O. Box 6029
Champaign, IL 61821

mounting the tires are tricky due to the offset in the wheels as well as both sets of wheels mount the same way on a hex hub. You will want to mount the front tires on to the wheels with the deep offset, and mount the rear tires to wheels with the shallow offset. Also to prevent the tires from rolling off the rims under hard acceleration, you will want to put a few drops of super glue around the bead of the tire where it meets the wheel. At this point install the wheels to the axles with the hubs, pins, and nuts provided. Once you have the tires mounted check to see that they spin freely and there is no binding in any of the moving parts.

There you have it, one finished Traxxas Rustler. Now install a battery pack in the truck and set up the shock spacers, with the battery on board raise the rear of the truck about six inches and let it fall. You want the rear arms to be level with the racing surface, if they are not just add more shock spacers until the truck sits level. As for the front end use the same procedure as the rear with the exception, that you want the front arms to be slightly above level. Since the rest of the chassis is fixed the shocks will be about the only area of adjustment you have without modifying the kit. Of course you can replace the upper control arm links with turn-buckles, and add other Traxxas accessories to improve the Rustler's performance as your driving skill increases.

The last step in building the Rustler is painting and mounting the trick Dodge look a like Stadium body that's included in this kit, the only real advice I can give

you on painting the body is take your time, as body prep is the key to a great looking paint job. Also spray your body in light coats to prevent runs and bleeding under your taped out areas, once the body is dried trim it out and mount up and head for the track.

WHO NEEDS BARRIERS

Well it's that time again. I had planned to take the Rustler over to the local off road track, but on second thought I figured since this is an entry level kit I would let my nephew take the controls to get a beginner's view point. So I charged up a few Dynamite Super Sport 1800 packs with Dynamites new Mega A/C D/C charger and turned the Rustler over to Chris. I figured if he couldn't kill it nobody could and as expected off Chris went and hit the first fence post he could find. And to my surprise the Rustler was able to continue with no damage, even though he hit it square on the A-arm. After a few packs Chris was driving

much better, but what I noticed most was he was having fun.

Well he had played with this thing long enough, it was my turn to see how well the Rustler handled for an entry level kit and as advertised the Rustler was very stable even over the roughest of terrain and landed on all fours every time. The steering was very positive and could bring it out of a hard acceleration slide with ease and control, overall I found the Rustler to be a lot of fun. Now mind you this rig won't TQ the Nationals, but then again it's not supposed to. Actually this would be the perfect kit to use for Spec off-road racing. Now the trick is to get the tracks to give the beginner a place to start. Then again who needs a track, the Rustler is plenty of fun just bashing around the yard or chasing the neighborhood cat. Actually, I do not condone chasing cats with R/C cars, and no cats were harmed in the production of this article (ha-ha!).

As in the front suspension Traxxas has bullet-proofed the rear end with extra bracing and with the use of universal drive shafts.

