



For some people stadium trucks are just not big enough

bigger wheels

As an extremely keen Trucker I race in both the 2wd and 4wd categories, but I also have a third truck, a Monster Truck, the forgotten category! For those of you who don't know, monster trucks used to race. When I began this sport around ten years ago, the club where I went to had a fair few trucks, the majority of them being monster trucks. The only truck that wasn't, was a Tamiya King Cab - possibly the first stadium truck! Try to imagine half a dozen or so of these beasts racing round a track not more than 3ft. wide, those big balloon tyres trying to grip the wood - interesting. Most of the trucks raced were the smaller trucks like the Monster Beetle, Midnight Pumpkin, Blackfoot, and Vanessa's Lunchbox, although there did used to be one Clodbuster but he didn't really stand a chance.

Isn't this what it's all about, having fun, not really caring whether or not one lap is completed or ten, just five minutes of pure and simple FUN.

What to do with a 5½ lb Sledgehammer

Although I have fond memories of ten years ago, it wasn't until last July that I actually purchased my first monster truck. While the obvious choices for buying monster trucks would be the King Blackfoot or even Stampede, or maybe even a nitro Stampede. Me, I like to be a bit different, I liked the look of eight



We have lift off!



Yahoo!

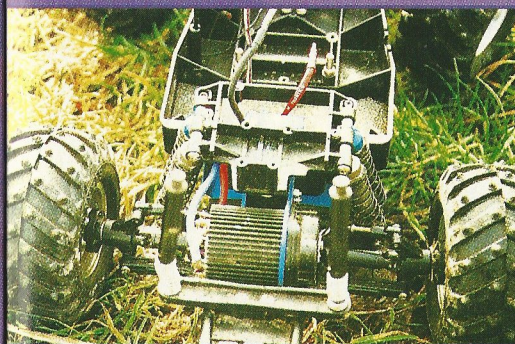
shocks, a motor mounted very high and far back, and if that's not enough, you've all that chrome (really plastic!). The motor position really helps with those fantastic wheelies, a trade mark of this truck.

Since its introduction in 1989, the Sledge has had some minor, though, important changes. All the plastic parts are now made from the newer black material rather than the creamy nylon that used to be used. This is even

stronger, and looks a heck of a lot better. All the black aluminium, that gives the truck its rigidity, has been replaced with a nice blue version.

The building starts with the geared diff that consists of six metal gears encased in the plastic main diff gear. The instructions are easy to follow, and it all goes together fairly easily. Once completed the diff goes into the rather unique gearbox. This gearbox holds only two gears, the diff, and the brass drive gear. Most models these days have an idler gear within the gearbox, but on the Sledge it is on the outside, and attaches to the shaft of the drive gear. Before the gearbox is fastened together, the half shafts are inserted into each half of gearbox. Make sure the 'e' clips are used to hold them in place. I, in my usual haste, forgot them, and when I ran the truck they kept dropping out. The next step is to fit the side plates, but before doing so, the drive gear shaft is screwed on to the right hand plate. May I suggest using thread lock to hold the screw in the shaft, as mine loosened after a couple of runs. After installing the drive gear on to the shaft, and 'e' clipping it in place, it is time to install the motor. The kit item is fine for the beginner and extra long run times, but being brave I went for a 21 Double. This was a little better than the kit motor, but not quite the performance I was looking for, so in went a

'Monster Truck, the forgotten category!'



The kit heatsink certainly helps with a hotter motor

B.R.M. 18 single, not for the faint hearted, I can't keep the front down. On to the motor I fitted the heat sink provided (nice touch Traxxas), and then on went the gear cover. This is a brilliant design, a rubber seal to keep out the muck, all held into place with a body clip, no more screws to lose.

All the suspension components are attached in a straightforward manner, including the adjustable camber links. Then it's on to the eight shocks. I thought it was going to take forever to build eight shocks, and I wasn't wrong. It took about an hour, it was quite straightforward, although they were of a slightly different design to those in the manual. The rubber 'o' rings are held in place with an 'e' clip, in the old type of shocks, whereas in the new ones a plastic cap screws on to the bottom holding everything in place. This is by far a lot easier, especially for the less experienced. All in all, they built up easily and, as usual for Traxxas, felt very smooth.

All the front suspension components fit together easily and quickly due to the fact that the hinge pins are of the screw type. Again we have adjustable turnbuckles, and camber links, although I'm not sure whether they are really necessary in a monster truck, mainly aimed at beginners.

The gearbox is now attached to the rear blue skid plate and the whole assembly is then screwed on to the chassis. The rear shock mount and shocks are then added. A nice blue front skid plate is screwed on to the front assembly before joining on to the chassis. After installing the nose cap, the front shock mounts are screwed on to it, then the shocks are put into place. Almost complete, just add the front bumper (yo' might need it), the sprung loaded body mounts, and the radio (the truck is designed to take Traxxas radio gear. Careful thought has to be put in to work out the best locations for non Traxxas gear. Once sorted the 5 1/4 inch monster truck tyres can be fitted to the rims, then all that is needed is a painted body and a charged battery. So lets have fun!

Come on and Hammer it

The first trial was at a club meeting at my local track (Sharley Park Auto Racing Klub S.P.A.R.K., which incidentally, I run). With a fully charged 1700mah battery, and the 21 turn motor which I used initially, off I went across the grass. First impressions, I was 'wheelie' impressed. I ran it for a couple of minutes before deciding it would be a good idea to lay the track. After laying the track, and booking in the drivers, it was time for another play, around the track this time. Although it isn't a very bumpy track, what

bumps there are, were soaked up well, and it looked very good over the jumps as well, it also cornered better than I expected, as long as you remember it's a monster truck and not a stadium truck. During lunch break I had another play. Next to the track there was a 60 degree bank with a few hidden holes and ruts, I thought this would make an ideal test area - I was wrong. With all the weight being at the back, it would get half way up then tippie backwards down the hill. It is at this point I realised what the first problem was (no, not all the weight being at the back, after all it's designed like that for the wheelies), the body is made from a brittle Lexan, and bits kept breaking off.

For the next meeting I strapped a 2 lb weight to the front to keep the front end down while climbing the bank. With the 2 lb weight attached the front end still lifted high off the ground, this is before I tried the bank. Conclusion, although the Sledge is capable of gear ratios as low as 30:1, it will not climb steep hills.

Before taking it out again, I swapped the shocks for proper racing ones, taking them off an old TRX1 and LSII. I then replaced the motor for the 18 turn, still using the 12 tooth (32 dp) pinion, as supplied in the kit. The kit body by now had, had it, as luck would have it a friend gave me an old Ford F150 body he used to use on his Clod.

Off on a 75 mile trip to Brandon for the first of their winter series. I arrived quite a bit earlier than normal so I could have a play, and it wasn't long before the playing turned to tears as the drive gear shaft worked loose. As it was an extremely cold morning, I left fixing it until I went home, where I thread locked the screw in place, which hasn't come loose since.

On my last run to Brandon I found another potential weakness when the rear camber links broke loose and became unattached. Two bits of plastic stick out at the bottom of the chassis, and into these screw the screws which hold the camber links in place. I don't know if it's because of the cold weather, but on my truck, these plastic bits broke. No real problem though, I removed what was left of the plastic and screwed the screws directly into the chassis

Conclusion

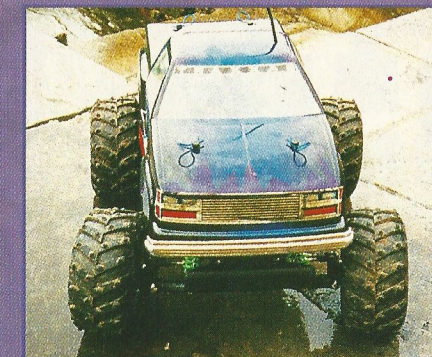
Considering how little the Sledgehammer costs, well under a £100, I think it is excellent value for money. During the time I've had mine, the only money I've spent, was for the Parma F150 bodysell that I have just bought. I made a dreadful job of painting it. It's a good thing Traxxas supply a very comprehensive set of decals. It would be wise to fit a set of ballraces when building, and as they are the standard 5 by 11's, they are pretty cheap. I got mine from the same place as the shocks, my old LSII and TRX1(I knew they'd come useful for something). Don't go out spending loads of cash on new shocks, if you've got some spare by all means use them, but the kit ones work adequately. If using longer shocks at the rear, some sort of spacers will be needed in between the shock mount and chassis. Remember this is a fun truck, so don't expect to go out and compete in the truck nationals with it (although I'd probably do better). Saying that, I wouldn't mind racing it against other monster trucks - anyone interested? If so give me a bell on 01246 208193.



The well used under shields

During testing, I gave the truck more hammer (excuse the pun) in five minutes than most people would give it in a week. Often jumping from heights of three or four feet, sometimes landing wheels first, sometimes body first.

Just recently, as I was taking the photographs, I took the truck to a different location where some of the hills are around ten feet high. After about an hour of jumping from these hills, and, more often than not, clearing the downslope, as well as wrecking my brand new bodysell I found the diff. had expired. On stripping the diff. I was amazed to see that the metal gears inside were broken and bent! **ARC!**



Starting to look a little 'used'

Tester Kit

Full ballrace set, Eight aluminium shocks, M-tronics 350 PB speedo, Hi-tec 27 meg receiver, KO PS712 servo, Acorns transmitter, and a BRM 18 single motor, fitted with a twelve tooth (32 pitch) pinion. 35 wt. shock oil was used all round.