

TRAXXAS

Alan "I'll Have A Go At Anything" Leighton Checks Out The 'Total Competition Package' From Texas

TCP

Total Competition Package



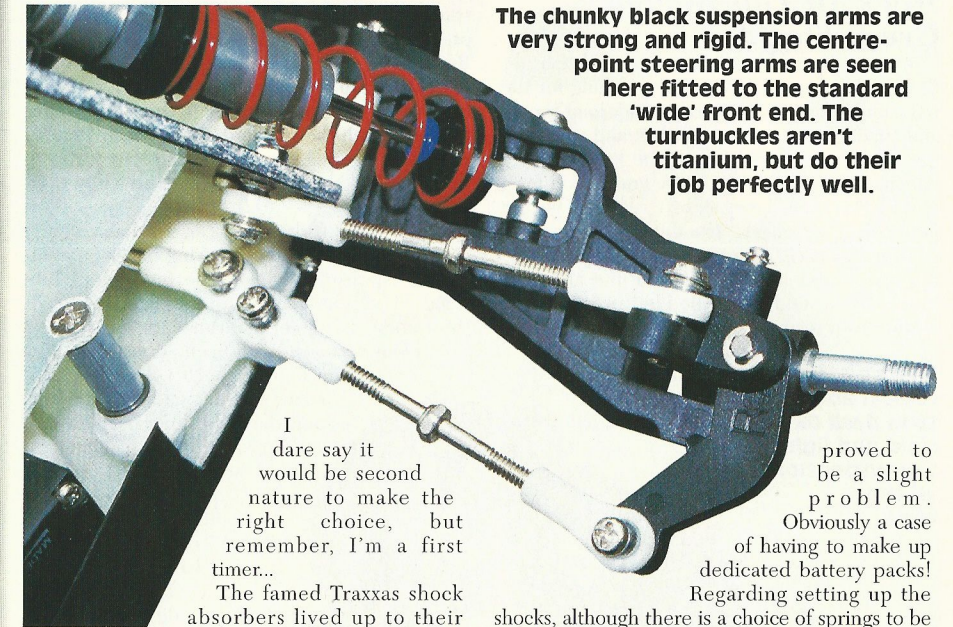
The TCP features a complete set of spare wheels plus a set of Pro-Line XTR compound tyres for the ultimate in traction.

I'd been thinking for a while about trying Off Road racing, and when Jonty the Ed suggested that I give the Traxxas TCP a try, the only thing I could really say was "Yes please!"

Never having seen a Traxxas kit before, my first impression on opening the box was how neatly packaged the parts were: Everything was in its proper place and in its proper bag. The instruction manual, however, did seem confusing at times, so it would be advisable to read it at least twice before assembling the car.

As far as the kit is concerned, as befits any kit produced in the '90's, everything fitted in its proper place without any modifications having to be made. The kit's optional 'tune-up' parts; the narrow width front arms, centre-point steering arms and shorter shocks, plus a spare set of Pro-Line XTR tyres complete with wheels are a real bonus, hence the car's 'TCP' handle. It would have been nice to have seen a ball raced steering assembly though. Being 2wd, the transmission is really straightforward, and I did like the nice little feature of a small hole in the casing to allow an allen key to be inserted into the diff to enable its easy adjustment without any disassembly, and the bearing carriers are nice and snug (but not tight), allowing the bearings to run freely. I found the joint faces of the transmission cases were very slightly distorted, so care must be taken when tightening them together to avoid a gap between them.

The tuning guide in the manual seemed a little confusing when compared to the actual building instructions, mainly concerning the fitment of the tuning options supplied with the car. For instance, the rear castor shims are described, but a spare set is also included that isn't noted, and I thought that when setting the car up there was too little information about which ones to fit and their effect. For an experienced Off Road driver,



The chunky black suspension arms are very strong and rigid. The centre-point steering arms are seen here fitted to the standard 'wide' front end. The turnbuckles aren't titanium, but do their job perfectly well.

I dare say it would be second nature to make the right choice, but remember, I'm a first timer...

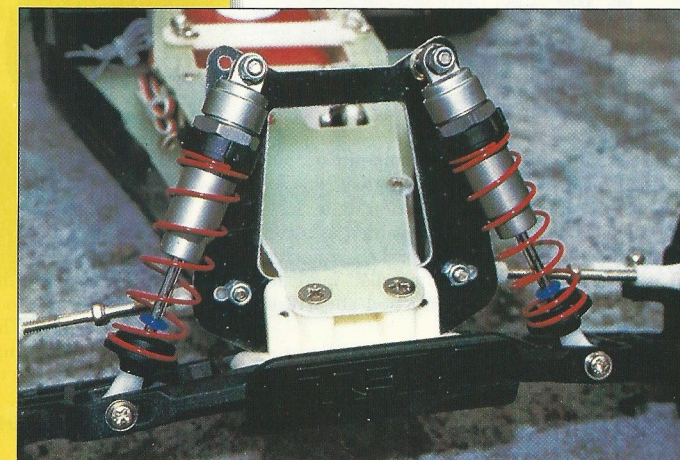
The famed Traxxas shock absorbers lived up to their reputation, their action just as noted, they were silky smooth and leak free. I did find though, that the spring cups needed opening up slightly to allow the springs to seat properly. Regarding the battery tray, it's obviously intended for stick packs, so using my saddle packs fitted with Corally connectors on the ends of the cells

proved to be a slight problem. Obviously a case of having to make up dedicated battery packs! Regarding setting up the shocks, although there is a choice of springs to be tried, tested, and the effects on the handling noted, the kit's shock oil is of an unknown weight, so although perfectly alright for getting the TCP rolling, I chose to use my own silicone oils to ensure repeatability. The locating pegs for the rear wheels are a good idea, but can slide easily out of the holes in the stub axles. Try a little



Right: The shorter arms in comparison with the standard front end.

The heart of any Off Road car is its shocks, and Traxxas shocks have quite a reputation as being super effective and ultra reliable.



Loctite to prevent them ending up in the grass when changing wheels/tyres when pitting outdoors.

The bodyshell fits quite tightly in-between the shock mounts at the front, so do take care when fitting and removing it, otherwise the body and paint might crack. I opted to feed the battery wires in through the back of the tray, coming out on the speedo's side to keep things neat and tidy. This was just personal choice really, but it takes no longer to take the cells out and disconnect them this way, so maybe it's an idea to try them this way, rather than routing them between the shock and the body to the motor.

Altogether, everything fitted together in a 'good fit, to nice'n free' way, as opposed to 'tight and needs either drilling or trimming', which is good because the car, straight out of the box, could be put on a track and raced, as nothing was tight,

sticking or jamming. The steering is very free, which means it self-centres easily from the start, something that certainly hasn't been the case with every car kit I've put together!

Wot's All This Bumpy Green Stuff?

Set up as per the manual's recommendations for those either new to Off Road or looking for the ultimate in stability (wide front end, long shocks and trailing axle steering blocks), and using the 'practice tyres' provided in the kit, the TCP understeered quite a bit on dry grass, good for a novice. This made it easy to drive, although not the fastest thing on wheels. The thing is, it's easier to dial out understeer than it is to cure oversteer! The diff was a little stiff to start with, but after one quick run around it was bedded in nicely. So, having given it a quick blast around, it

There's certainly nothing radical about the TCP, but the twin deck GRP chassis is rigid and light, leaving the suspension to do all the work.



was time to hit a proper Off Road track!

I actually tested the car on Kidderminster's multi-surface track. It was my first time here, so I went a Corally 13 double motor geared at 84/15 with the standard suspension settings as per the manual, and the 'practice tyres'. The weather was cool but sunny, and the Astro-Turf, concrete, gravel and brick surface was as dry as a bone. For the electronics I was using a KO Esprit 2 radio, a Tekin 410k speedo and a standard Futaba S148 servo for the first runs.

To further increase the car's 'adjustability', alternative castor blocks and shorter front suspension arms give the option to turn the mild mannered TCP into a very responsive car indeed!



What Hit Me?!

Being more used to flat track racing, Kidderminster's bumps, jumps and tight corners were what you could call a shock to the system! The TCP's stability proved a real bonus, because once I started to use the power a little, I began to realise just how hard a multi-surface Off Road track is to drive, but the car responded very predictably and was 'beginner friendly' to this Off Road novice. There was unbelievable grip on the Astro-Turf and then understeer like you wouldn't believe on the loose gravel. I then had some problems with the standard servo, which I knew wasn't really suitable for the car to start with, so decided to change it there and then for something better.

After a little work on the car, a Futaba S9401 steering servo was fitted. Looking for just a little more response from the steering, I kept the standard wide suspension arms on, but replaced the trailing axle steering arms with the centre-point versions. I had been advised that this would be a better step, as the narrower front end might result in the car rolling over on the grippy Astro-Turf sections.

To see just what I and the TCP could do, I geared up one tooth on the pinion, to a 16, and installed a decent pack of batteries. Straight away I noticed the difference in the

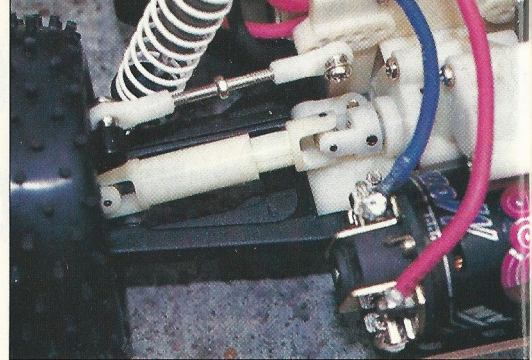
performance, and the handling was much improved having slightly tightened the diff and added an extra half spacer in the rear shocks, giving it a fraction more stability and grip at the back end.

Better Watch Out You Guys...

Now I've had more experience of both the TCP and the track, the car is now much better having geared it up even more, and I'm really enjoying myself!

I can't as yet profess to be a competitive Off Road racer at any level other than 'down the Club', but there seems no reason to me why the Traxxas TCP shouldn't be regarded as a car to match anything else on the market, a market that is, let's face it, always somewhat 'faddish' (you know, everybody gets psyched about the latest XYZ car!).

My overall impression was that the TCP was a good kit, the tyres supplied work well (the Pro-Lines if anything being too grippy at Kidderminster), and the optional parts do give



The plastic slider driveshafts are pictured here, complete with universal joints at both ends. Alternative metal dog-bone shafts are supplied in the kit. There should be a top link mounting position on the bulkhead to suit everyone!



The battery crate is really only suitable for stick pack cells.

the opportunity to experiment with the car's handling without having to either travel to a shop or do the mail-order thing.

It would have been nice if the details in the manual about setting it up were a little clearer, but then getting it right in Off Road does come down to a sense of 'feel' for a track and surface (so I'm told!) only brought about by experience. It's stability was impressive though, especially when changing from surface to surface, and obviously has potential in the right hands. A bargain!

The Traxxas TCP is imported and distributed by Traxxas U.K., P.O. Box 1128, Winterbourne, Bristol. BS17 2SH. Tel (0117) 9561002. Fax (0117) 9561121.