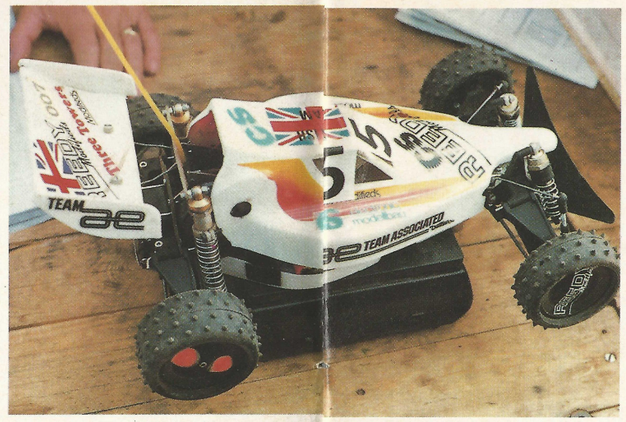
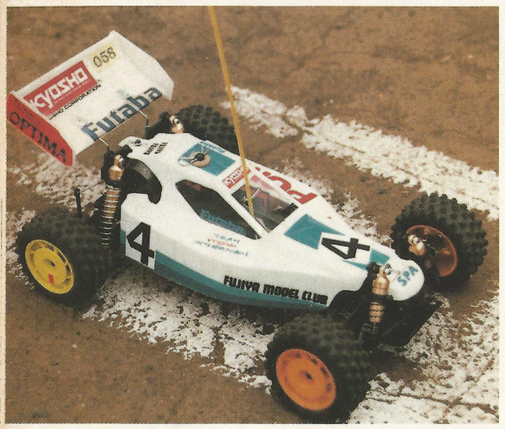
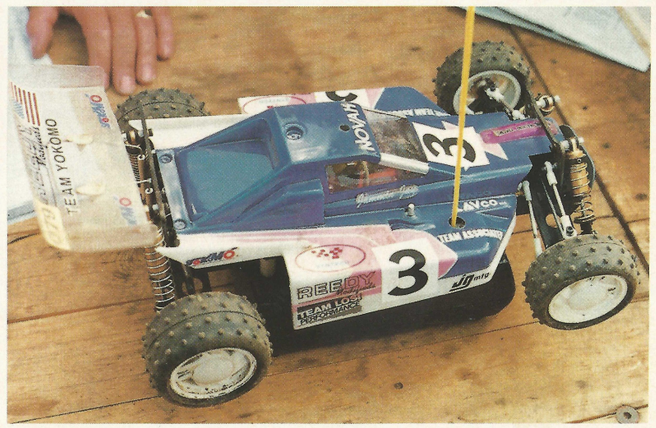














Top left clockwise: the Kyosho *pit including wine and dine! Masami Hirosaka's World Championship winning 'CAT.' Jamie Booth's 'CAT' highest placed Brit. Action from the Jump! Jay Halsey's 4WD 'Yokomo.' Mid engine belt drive 'Optima.' Left and right 2WD champions and 4WD champions. Below right: the Romsey Circuit, selection of 2WD finalists on the* Parma *stand.*

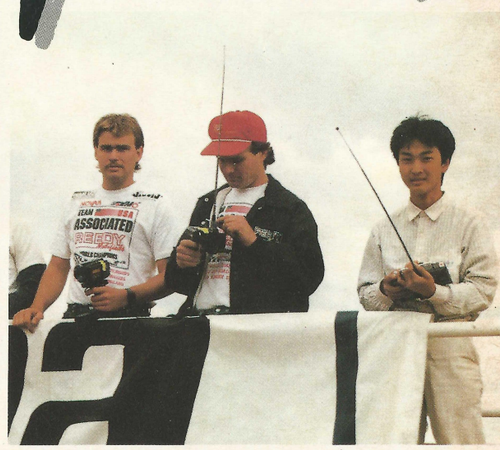
Lewis Eckett reports from Great Britain's largest ever R/C car event

We are the Champions









The great race 1987
Parma/Ifmar 1/10th scale off-road World Championships

Romsey off-road club, England, August 3-9th







Top to bottom: 2WD finalists hard at work during the first of three finals. The 'pits' where all the motors and cells you ever wanted were held. Associated and Reedy shortly before the 2WD final. Team Parma had an excellent display of goodies as well as their motor service. Start of the second of three A-finals.

Winning isn't everything — it's the only thing.' If you could sum up the attitudes prevalent at the 1987 World Championships then the above short sentence would do it. That is the bottom line — winning at all costs. Even if it means building a totally new car *(Kyosho)* or *(Schumacher)* then nothing else matters because to win is the only real justification required of effort and money spent. Everything is a bonus if you win — unfortunately not everyone gets the opportunity to test the theory.

Still even if ultimate success isn't forthcoming you can still have enjoyment trying and if nothing else the 1987 *PARMA* IFMAR World Championships will be remembered as a fun race. Even the Sun shone and for a whole week at that! It just goes to show that when the World's top drivers congregate in one place then something special is going to happen.

When the International Federation of Model Auto Racing selected the Romsey Off-Road club's circuit in Hampshire as the venue for the 1987 Buggy World Champs there were a great many sceptics who doubted it's suitability. I have to confess I was one of them but myself and all the other doubting voices reckoned without one vital factor. Bill Jones may not be everyone's choice as the most popular race organiser ever, but you have to admit he got the job done. Despite massive organisational headaches, beaurocratic hold-ups and a crippling back problem the RORC Circuit on August 3rd exceeded everyone's expectations.

Organisationally the World Champs is a difficult nut to crack. If it was only the track itself that had to be worried about then the job would be simple. Instead there's the question of finance, entries, pits, catering, toilets, equipment, lap-counting, personnel, rules, procedure, the list is endless and all of it must be sorted out before the event. Just imagine the effort it takes to organise any ordinary club open meeting, then multiply it a thousand times and you'll have an idea of the task.

The Right Track

The centrepiece of the whole event was of course the track. Despite previous heavy rain the circuit had drained well to leave a very tough racing surface which stood up to the rigours of almost six days of continuous racing. To many the track shape may seem simplistic but this is not the case. The vast majority of drivers welcomed the combination of speed and skill necessary to achieve quick times. The hard concrete-like surface looked to be a problem, particularly for the 2-wheel drive cars. In actual fact this never turned out to be a real problem as the grip did exist — you just had to make sure you could find it.

Parts of the track had been treated with a coating of old engine oil and this method looks to have worked a treat by binding in with the loose surface material to provide a very grippy topping. Everywhere else the track had been raked and rolled so that the surface would not erode too quickly under the passage of the cars.

As with every track a correct line had to be trod if quick laps were to be achieved. Through the corners the racing line had to be adhered to and right from the beginning of practice the 'line' gradually began to appear.

Other areas played a key role in the fortunes of the 120 drivers competing. In particular the two jumps entering and exiting the 'dip' in the centre of the track. On approach drivers soon learned to stay off the power just before the jump so that the car didn't fly. Those who kept the power on generally found their cars upside-down and in the way of the rest of the field coming round.

Likewise the exit from the dip which if taken at speed could produce some spectacular aerial action! Not so good for setting the car ready for the hairpin immediately afterward.

Two humps also lay across the path of the main right-tangent straight. These lay at an angle to each other and the obvious trick was to take them where they lay closest to each other. Obvious you say — but not every one seemed to share the same viewpoint.

Romsey is a quick track but only if you have the requisite amounts of skill, consistency and nerve to keep the car travelling as quick as it can for five minutes. For many this was difficult but for a few, just a few mind, it looked easy.

Around the circuit itself the normally barren appearance of the RORC had been transformed into a busy village of drivers, mechanics, manufacturers and sponsors. Activity centred on the huge pits marquee where representatives from over 20 nations tried to keep their secrets from each other.

Interest was also focussed upon the sponsor areas, particularly those of *Parma International Inc.* (main sponsors of the event) and *Kyosho* of Japan. Both companies had top level representatives attending the championships — Ken MacDowell and Yakki Suzuki of *Parma* and *Kyosho* respectively.

With the other stands in place and the track boards and drivers rostrum bedecked with advertisers banners the whole area looked positively circus-like.

The Terms

Kyosho

Nobody represented the win at all costs ethic more obviously than *Kyosho.* Aside from bringing their own drivers the Japanese Company had also recruited some big name stars from the States and Europe.

The *Kyosho* approach appears to be safety in numbers and throwing money at the problem in the hope that some of it sticks.

Even drivers the calibre of Joel Johnson (USA), Katsunori Kondo (Japan) and José Rosas (France) doesn't assure you of victory unless the right equipment is available.

In two-wheel drive their 'Ultima' looked every inch the car most able to challenge the *Associated* domination. In any event the *Kyosho* 'Ultima' had to win simply because the American modelling press had been running ads for the 'Ultima' proclaiming it to be 'the next World Champion'! Losing would mean a serious loss of face not to mention sales.

Joel Johnson of America assumed the position of number one *Kyosho* driver even above the factory sponsored Japanese drivers. His trinity powered 'Ultima' differed from the standard car in several respects most noticeably in the choice of chassis.

Instead of the 'Option House' version Joel used a *D&D Graphite,* carbon fibre chassis plate. With the Ni-cad pack mounted length ways along the car.

New 48DP gears also featured.

In 4-wheel drive *Kyosho* had taken the much loved 'Optima' and re-worked it totally. Not only belt-drive but also mid-engined with a choice of bevel gear or ball-type differentials. Only forty five examples of this car had been hand-made for the express purpose of winning the Worlds. I am reliably informed that each car cost approximately £500 to produce which just goes to show how much emphasis *Kyosho* place on sticking the tag 'World Champions' on their kit boxes.

Carbon fibre chassis plates, new gears and ball differentials all featured.

If the above description sounds familiar then that is purely intentional! Whatever the facts behind the design it struck a great many that *Kyosho* had taken a long hard look at the *Schumacher* 'CAT' before they sat down and produced their own car.

On the track the new 'Optimas' had all the efficiency, handling and speed necessary to win particularly with the numbers of drivers using the car.

Spares back up for the team stretched not only to huge stocks of gears, wheels, tyres and so on but also to two factory technicians available to build, re-build or set-up the cars. One of these was the factory's chief designer.

Aside from the actual racing machinery the *Kyosho* operation also turned out a nice line in T-shirts, stickers and even umbrellas. All this seemed available to virtually anyone interested in running *Kyosho.*

Top billing for No. 1 *Kyosho* 4-WD driver seemed once again to go to Joel Johnson although this time closely followed by Pete Stevens (UK), Katsunori Kondo (Japan) and Junichi Koma (also Japan).

Associated

Spurred on by *Kyosho's* subtle brand of advertising *Associated* of America were extremely keen to retain their World Championship status for the 'RC10' in 2 wheel drive.

Their principal hopes lay with the 1985 World Champion Jay Halsey along with Cliff Lett — both drivers from the States. As far as pedigree is concerned the 'RC10' is a pure-bred winner. Very few changes were in evidence on team cars.

There is still no firm indication of when, if ever, *Associated* will produce a 4-wheel drive car. Co-owner Roger Curtis was quite open about it stating that they still couldn't make enough 'RC10's' and that if a car was produced it could not be a converted 'RC10'.

Certainly no *Associated* prototype was seen anywhere and definitely not on the track. This meant that *Associated* team drivers were virtually able to run the car of their choice in 4-WD (although none of them chose *Kyosho*). *Schumacher* 'CATS' were the initial choice until the appearance of the new belt-driven *Yokomo.* Jay Halsey in fact substituted the 'CAT' for the *Yokomo* whilst Cliff stayed with the 'CAT' — both drivers made the 4-WD A-final.

Yokomo

One of the surprises of the race was the appearance of *Yokomo's* totally new belt drive 4-WD car. Sporting an Ultra thin belt and simple looking layout the *Yokomo* found immediate favour with the American Contingent. It would seem that the complexities of setting up a 'CAT' was too much for them so when a simpler car became available they jumped at it.

On the track the *Yokomo* displayed impressive straight — line speed but looked a bit nervous in the turns. It seems plausible that with a bit more time to experiment the *Yokomo* brigade could have been a force to be reckoned with.

Gil Losi Junior the 1985 4-WD World Champion and the aforementioned Jay Halsey both went well although Gil didn't seem as happy with it as he did with his *Ranch Pit shop* version.

Schumacher

Romsey's hard, dusty and difficult track conditions had been tamed by Cecil's 'CAT' at various times leading up to this event.

In two-wheel drive however the car was an instant disaster which just goes to show that you cannot have the best of both worlds. Phil Davies just managed to squeeze into the 2-WD championship as a late entry but not even he, the 1987 European Champion could challenge the *Associated's* and *Kyosho's.*

At one point Phil even resorted to hanging half his Ni-Cad pack on the back of the car to change the balance and arrive at a modicum of handling. It didn't work.

Interestingly the only 'CAT' that did work was that belonging to Stephen Kaske who chose to run his as front-wheel drive car. This looked good but for some obscure reason an IFMAR committee meeting banned this set-up for future events.

With Phil Davies certain to miss a place in the 4-WD championship plus the defection of previous 'CAT' drivers to *Kyosho* Cecil was probably a worried man until Masami Hirosaka of Japan stuck his 'CAT' on pole position. Not only that but both Cliff Lett and Jamie Booth scored the magical 17 laps in five minutes. Darren Harris also appeared briefly in the A final line-up but later dropped to the C-final.

Again few changes to a car that has proven to work at Romsey. Long wheelbase (or geriatric if you prefer) was again the only way to go.

PB Racing Products

Keith Plested's pre-championship testing had led him to produce a rear-engined 'Mini-Mustang' specifically for the 2-WD championship. Unfortunately only one had been made and that one had been passed to Bill Jones who found it difficult to do the car justice whilst suffering the effects of a severe back problem.

In standard trim, albeit with only 2-WD the car was a non-starter despite a number of detail changes. These included new high efficiency belts, universal joint drive-shafts and a new chassis and undertray.

In 2-WD *Parma International's* latest acquisition — Andy Dobson — found himself in the unenvious position of having to use the *PB* because *Parma* import the car into the States. This wouldn't have been so bad if a second rear-engined car had been available. In 4-wheel drive *PB's* main problem was finding drivers. Most of the good guys had left for either *Kyosho* or *Schumacher* which left *SRM Racing's* Simon McRae to champion the cause.

MIP/Associated

Although not strictly a manufacturers car the *MIP* converted 'RC10' is worthy of mention simply because it got into the A-final.

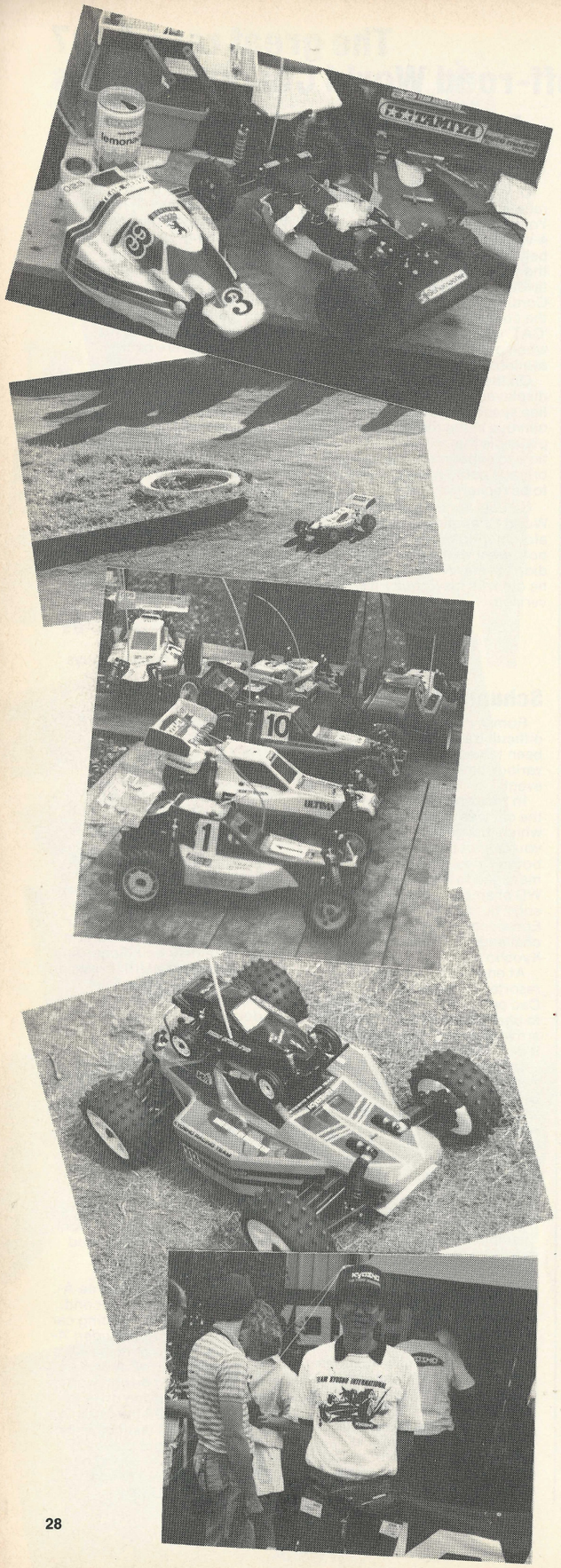
Eustace Moore has worked hard to produce the production version of his 4-WD chain drive conversion for the 'RC10'. This just goes to show that a 2-WD can be converted to 4-WD and work extremely well. According to the experts the *MIP* thrives on loose, dusty surfaces. This combined with Eustace's undoubted driving ability meant that the car drew a lot of interest.

SRM Racing plan on being the UK agents so contact them for the details.

The others

Following on from their successful outing at the European Championships *TAG Models* of Italy once again showed well with the 'Coyote 4-WD' car. Both Marco de Marchi and Umberto Pernice fulfilled their pre-race promise by making the B-final. In fact Marco just missed out on an A-final place by 0.45 of a second.

The only other interesting car on show was the new *Mugen* '4-wheel drive'. Four of these were in the hands of an all Japanese team. The *Mugen* design also had belts transferring drive to all four wheels. On the track the *Mugen* was most distinctive by virtue of it's upright mounted shocks. The speed wasn't bad either with Kunsei Takeda making it to the C-final.



Motors

The motor battle at these events seems to be the most hotly contested aspect of the entire proceedings. At times more emphasis is placed upon the winning motor than the car. Maybe this is because in 1/10th Off-Road racing the motor can be changed much more readily than the car.

Whatever the reason figures like Mike Reedy (*Reedy*), Ernie Provetti (*Trinity*) and Mike Walker (*Twister*) assume almost god-like status.

The contest between *Trinity* and *Reedy* for each and every result is now being hotly pursued outside of the States and into the Far East and Europe. Mike Walker's whirlwind success (sorry) with his *Twister* motors is giving cause for concern whilst *Parma International* through the application of modern technology are up their with the best.

All motors originate in Japan so it was a major point of interest just how well the Japanese manufacturers would match up. Everyone knows of *Kyosho* but a much lesser number hadheard of *HPI.* That was until Masami Hirosaka set the 'CAT' among the pigeons with the fastest time in qualifying.

The other interesting motor point was the *Parma* motor service principally manned by none other than Andy Dobson along with help from other factory personnel.

Commutator truing proved to be the most popular service for the racers whilst the public on the strength of pre-race adverts queued up clutching their motors for a check and a magnet zap. *Parma* fully intend to keep the service going in Britain from now on through their European Agents *Helger Racing.*

The 2 wheel drive World Championships

Despite early morning drizzle on Monday the 3rd this was the last time anyone experienced the merest hint of rain for the next week.

The damp start did very little to the track which soon reverted to it's hard, fast and dusty form. For the majority of drivers this was their first ever time on the track so practice was particularly important. Some of them had spent almost the whole week previously just looking at it! At last the chance to put the theory into practice! Unfulfilled entries provided several British drivers with the chance to have a go themselves. Amonst them two youngsters Rory Cull and Kevin Moore both of whom grasped their opportunity with all thumbs. More of which later.

What rapidly became obvious as practice and then qualifying got under way was that the 2-WD championship was going to be a tough, close and very fast race.

The skill on show was simply amazing with the top boys displaying five minutes of controlled racing. The key was to have the softest set-up possible. Raw horsepower was definitely out in favour of a smooth delivery of power in a car that was set up to understeer.

The quick times came from the drivers who kept their cars rolling through the corners and applied power in straight lines.

Almost immediately the long-awaited contest between *Kyosho* and *Associated* materialised through the two principal players Joel Johnson and Jay Halsey. However when the dust had settled after round 1 neither were sitting on top. Chris Moore (USA) took that honour with an extremely fast 15 lap time.

This only lasted for one round however when Jay Halsey posted his intentions by blasting round for the first 16 lap time. Everyone sucked in their breath at that but there was more to come.

Jay's time stood for the next round until his heat in round 4 when Joel Johnson proved it wasn't a fluke with another 16 lap time and one second faster.

Could anyone go quicker? Well yes Chris Moore could and did two heats later at the start of round 5. Three seconds were lopped off Joel's time to set the mark at 16 laps 315.45.

So only three drivers on 16 laps, all of them Americans and showing that the track was not affecting anyone's chances of going quicker.

Interest once again centred on heat 12 featuring the *Kyosho/Trinity Associated/Reedy* tussle between Joel Johnson and Jay Halsey. Sure enough another two 16 laps times but Jay's heat winning score couldn't quite oust Chris Moore from top slot.

Into the last round and the extremely consistent Chris Moore strengthened his claim to the TQ spot by cutting a second off his time. This was in heat 2 however which still meant another 10 heats of agony for Chris to see whether anyone could go quicker.

Sure enough our very own Jamie Booth in heat 7 after five wins with 15 laps finally found the extra impetus to carry him into the 16 lap bracket. His time of 16 laps 319.70 wasn't quick enough for the top slot but at that particular moment in time it didn't really matter.

Fifteen lap times were still the norm until heat 12 when all eyes focussed on the Joel and Jay showed to see if either of them could pip Chris Moore at the post.

The result was another 16 lap time but this time for the Japanese driver Katsunori Kondo with the *Kyoso* 'Ultima'. His time of 16 laps 320.11 was the slowest of the lot but with over 60 drivers behind you all on 15 laps who cares?

So first blood to *Kyosho* and *Trinity* with a World Champs TQ. However winning, as we have said, is the point and any one of the ten A-final qualifiers could do it.

Outside of the five, 16 lap scorers the best of the 15's provided some cheer for the British Supporters. Both Rory Cull and Kevin Moore must have found it necessary to prove their worth as last minute entrants by qualifying for the A-final. Despite their lack of practice both drivers had their 'RC10's' quickly on the pace.

A Final 1

To allow sufficient time between the three A finals runs each final was run at intervals between the rest of the B-L finals.

Subsequently after the 'J' final the ten A finalists presented their cars to technical inspection and climbed the steps to the rostrum for phase one of the 1987 two-wheel drive World Championships.

Chris Moore's pole position spot looked to give only the slightest of advantages particularly with Jay Halsey alongside on the outside line. Getting into the sweeper at the end of the straight would be no problem — getting out of it unscathed was something else.

From the horn, Joel Johnson's *Trinity* powered 'Ultima' managed to sneak between the two front row cars to emerge as the leader in the space of only 20 yards.

Once the dust had settled behind him it was Chris Moore and Katsunori Kondo in hot pursuit. These places changed rapidly however as Jamie Booth from fourth place on the grid had shaken off the rest of the field to chase hard for the lead. Jamie's drive through the field had the crowd cheering exuberantly but despite the encourangement there was no catching either Chris Moore or Joel Johnson. The latter's race, whether in traffic or on his own was typical of the calm, efficient style displayed in the heats. Only Chris Moore, on the limit of his capabilities could come close and only these two drivers brake 16 laps.

A Final 2

It takes at least five minutes for the proceedings prior to the start of an A final to calm down so that the race can be started. This is because of the fuss and ritual that heralds the higher heats and subsequent finals.

The mechanics carry the cars to the line whereupon much fuss is made of rolling the car along the ground to check the tracking. Then the car is placed carefully on position and any small obstacles swept from its projected path. The next second all ten cars have made total nonsense of this car and attention by blasting down the track at the first sound of the start signal to end up in a huge mess at the first corner.

Chris Moore's pole position once again evaporated as the nine other cars caught up immediately. In fact the top three cars all suffered as the middle grid positions swept forward.

Somehow Mike Christensen got through to the front from grid position seven whilst Jamie Booth again seemed to bear a charmed life picking his way through. Kevin Moore added to the British interest leaving fellow Brit Rory Cull to indulge in a private battle with Jay Halsey for a lower place.

Mike Christensen came home on a three second cushion from Jamie with the Japanese driver Kondo in third. Kondo has a very high profile away from the business of driving but once on the track his car becomes unnoticed until it pops up just behind the leader or overtaking a higher placed car.

Christensen's win kept the overall result wide open although this heat was much slower than the first with no 16 lappers.

A Final 3

The moment of truth for ten drivers assembled from around the world. Five minutes separated them from the Championship of the World.

From the start British hopes were dashed when Jamie Booth's car stopped when a servo lead came unplugged. This left the way clear for the Americans and Japanese to slug it out for the title.

Katsunori Kondo with a good third place to his credit knew he could do it by winning the third A final providing certain other drivers didn't finish as high.

Both Chris Moore and Joel Johnson had the best opportunity with no one else really in the running.

In the end Joel was quite happy to tuck in behind Kondo leaving Chris Moore to try and make it past the impeccable driving of Masami Hirosaka.

Kondo took the chequered flag with 16 laps followed by Joel Johnson in second.

Despite having to wait for the official announcement most spectators knew in their heart of hearts that Joel had done enough to clinch it.

What the result didn't prepare us for was the clean sweep of the top three places by Kyosho 'Ultimas.' Katsunori Kordo took the runners up spot and Chris Moore held third place overall.

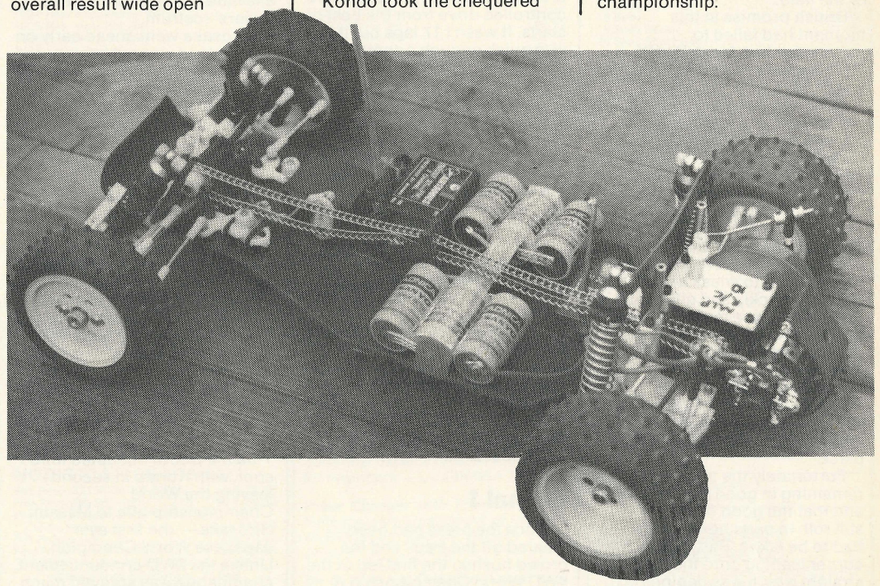
Champagne and garlands were presented but the three drivers could not be enticed to spray the champagne in time-honoured tradition, shame.

Round up

Long faces in the *Associated* pit as the advertising campaign for the next two years will now need a review.

Kyosho on the other hand are in the envious position of running ads saying "We told you so."

Part one of *Kyosho's* plan for world domination had been accomplished — only one more to go the four-wheel drive championship.



After a day of preparing cars, checking motors, matching cells, etc., etc., drivers returned on the Friday to battle for the 4WD World Championship.

Rightly or wrongly the four wheel drive championships is the one that attracts all the attention. Whereas the two championships are equal in the eyes of IFMAR, the fact of the matter is that the main interest of the week was centred on the last three days.

If you were looking for a reason why, then practice would not have given you one. The assumption that 4WD would be a great deal quicker automatically just did not happen. True, 16 lap times quickly became the standard but the difference between fast 15's (2WD) and 16 laps (4WD) is not that great. Having driven at both ends seems to give a great many drivers the idea that you can drive wildly and still get away with it. This is not and was not the case.

Friday's practising sessions (in sunshine once again) gave way to four rounds of qualifying on the Saturday.

Once again the heat was on with manufacturers, motor builders and the drivers all anxious to see which way the race would go.

As expected the 16 lap barrier went straight away with Ian Oddie, Paul Dionne and Greg Fox in Heat 1. However Heat 4 would obviously be the one to watch containing as it did Joel Johnson and Jamie Booth. What a surprise in Heat 3 when the two Japanese drivers Katsunor Kondo *Kyosho* and Masami Hirosaka *Schumacher* both hit the 16 lap mark, went through it and came out the other side with 17 laps apiece.

This then was notice of serious intention and of serious threat. Japanese drivers have always been very good but in the past have been let down by their equipment.

This is all in the past however, as the best of everything is now readily available. The threat of a serious Japanese challenge here at Romsey was not given any thought by Western drivers for reasons of pure bias. For that reason Kondo's and Hirosaka's times were a shock — unfortunately there was more to come.

What of Heat 4? Well, Joel

won it with a 16 lap time but Jamie was not far behind. More 16 lappers flowed from there on but the closest anyone could get to the TQ target was Mike Martin of the States with 16 laps 302.4.

With one round over and five more to go nobody was giving up particularly as the weather and the track condition were remaining stable.

Despite the shift of attention to Heat 3 neither Kondo nor Hirosaka could match their previous bests. Heat 4 was the Joel and Jamie show again with the latter getting the verdict.

Not until Heat 8 was Western pride restored when Cliff Lett's *Schumacher* 'CAT' overshadowed that of Glyn Peglar's to hit a 17 lapper only two seconds off TQ. Cliff's rugged good looks had the lap counters all-in-a-flutter but the *AMB* is slightly less impressionable. Still with 17 laps in the bag Cliff could virtually book his place in the final, a fact not lost in the rest of the field.

British promise at this moment had failed to materialise but Jamie Booth, Glyn Peglar and Pete Stevens were still in with a chance.

In Round 3 Masami Hirosaka put himself into another class but hitting his second 17 lap time. By now it was becoming obvious that Hirosaka was the man to beat as anyone watching him would tell you. I watched him and I could not believe his strict adherence to the racing line lap after lap. Even in traffic he managed to sneak a way through quickly and efficiently. If mistakes were made (if) then recovery was immediate and didn't seem to affect the driving.

Elsewhere in Round 3 it seemed the World and his mechanic had set a 16 lap time with only split seconds separating fourth to about 40th place.

Fortunately the track was remaining in good condition and that the good times could still roll. In parts however care had to be taken. Particularly the corner leading onto the main straight which was beginning to develop a small dip. Also the entry to the centre jump needed care and attention to avoid the embarrassment of a stranded car, upside down and at the furthest point from the marshalls.

Round 4 was the breakthrough for both Joel Johnson and Jamie Booth who enjoyed a private tussle for the lead totally divorced from the other eight drivers in their heat. However Joel's 17 laps in 316.5 was still two seconds off Hirosaka's TQ target. Nevertheless an A final score at just the right time. Fast 16 lappers elevated lesser mortals to A final status. Among them Junichi Koma of Japan and Mike Christensen of the USA. Jay Halsey also entered the frame despite having opted for a hastily prepared *Yokomo* car.

The penultimate round of qualifying and the last of the Saturday session was given particular emphasis as no-one could tell what the weather would be doing the next day and how it would affect the track. Still the elusive 17 lap target remained — a sort of Holy Grail, the attainment of which would guarantee an A final place. Anything was still possible if a good start was made, the back markers moved out of the way and no mistakes were committed!

Jay Halsey and his Reedy powered *Yokomo* proved the 'IF' factor with a near faultless run that eclipsed everyone else in his heat.

So with only 5, 17 lap times on the board and only one round of qualifying left to go it was time for some serious head-scratching overnight.

Fortunately (for the majority) Sunday dawned fine once again and the last chance was on. No-one grabbed it more firmly than our very own Pete Stevens who set the pulses of the home crowd racing with a magnificent controlled drive from the best of starts. It wasn't 17 laps but it was quick enough nonetheless to elevate him from the relative obscurity of the middle order.

Before this, however, Hirosaka had once again made it plain that complacency does not figure in this approach to winning. Yes, another 17 laps — the writing was on the wall therefore everyone to read even if it was in Japanese.

Qualifying ended and a quick scan down the order was enough to see that the difference between success and failure is measured in hundredths of seconds. Sixteen laps spanned qualifiers from seventh to 65th place. Interestingly the spread of nationalities in the A final was again split between the same three countries, Japan, USA and Great Britain.

A Final 1

Once the press had been cleared off the track and the crowd hushed the first leg of the 4WD World Championship A final commenced.

Masami Hirosaka made the most of pole position and headed off into the distance. Behind him the field fought for the job of giving chase. From fifth place on the grid Jamie Booth accepted the job along with Cliff Lett and Jay Halsey. Hirosaka, however, was not to be caught and despite the tension of the situation his lines and reactions were every bit as good. Evidence of this was given when he crossed the line. Seventeen laps — the only one of the final. Jamie came in second to keep his hopes alive whilst Eric Soderquist led the American challenge in third.

A Final 2

The tables were turned in the second leg as Jamie Booth once again muscled his way through whilst Hirosaka was caught in the first corner pile-up. Cliff Legg challenged briefly but once again fell back mid-way through only to rally back at the end. Hirosaka maintained his impetus by coming in third with 16 laps, also at this point the *Kyosho* management must have wondered what had gone wrong with the first three places going to the *Schumacher* 'CAT.' In fact unless someone did something spectacular then the double would remain firmly out of their grasp.

The likelihood was the Cecil's brainchild was going to do it. But with who driving?

Hirosaka still held the advantage with his 17 lapper but if Jamie Booth could do likewise anything was possible.

A Final 3

You could have cut the atmosphere for the third and last A-final with a knife. A last minute delay to allow Eric Soderquist time to correct an electrical fault did little to alleviate the pressure on the drivers' rostrum.

Hirosaka went ahead early on but the lead was cut back immediately by Cliff Lett and Katsunori Kondo. Jamie Booth's chances evaporated with a succession of mistakes early on. Kondo on the other hand seemed to have moved up a gear and sped off into the distance. Cliff Lett took in second but Hirosaka's CAT was not far behind.

Kondo's 17 lapper instantly elevated him to the potential winner's spot whilst Jamie Booth had possibly removed himself from the frame. The serious money had to be on Hirosaka because of sheer consistency.

In time honoured fashion the result was read in reverse order with drivers taking their places on the winners' rostrum.

Jamie Booth occupied third spot, with Kondo in second leaving the World Championship title to Masami Hirosaka — the first ever Japanese World Champion. Unlike the 2WD announcement, champagne was sprayed much to the delight of the press and spectators. Somebody should have given the winner some tips on champagne spraying technique, his approach was simply to chuck it anywhere. Still if you have just won the World Championship — who cares? The celebrations were not over, however, as Hirosaka let slip (through an interpreter) that he could drive his car one-handed. The resulting demonstration was truly amazing as one-handed he put the car round the track with speed and style. There was more to come though when Masami turned the transmitter upside down and back-to-front and drove the car that way (try it sometime)! The Coup de Grace however was saved till last when he took off his shoes, sat down and drove it with his feet. Unbelievable, just unbelievable.

Round up

Any reservations about the worth of determining the winner of three A finals on lap times instead of points were brought out into the open here.

Masami Hirosaka is the World Champion but the fact remains that if the finals had been worked out as points for places Jamie Booth would have won it.

There is no argument about this result whatever your views as the rules for this event were laid down months ago.

For Cecil Schumacher the future must look good. The 'CAT' is now the car to beat both the track and in the model shops. The only question is can Cecil supply enough of them?

Hopefully their recent move to new premises will improve the flow of production.

For *Kyosho* so near and yet so far. Despite the hand-built cars, the factory back-up and the money spent they were just pipped at the post. Nevertheless the new car is obviously a winner — let's hope we can get hold of it soon.

The interesting point is that Hirosaka must have a reputation in Japan so why wasn't he driving an 'Optima' at *Kyosho*. The answer from the man himself is interesting. He chose the 'CAT' in favour of works *Kyosho* drive. Patriotism is obviously a commodity in short supply in this game. The 2WD title was won by an American with a foreign car *Kyosho* and 4WD was won by a Japanese driver using British equipment *CAT*.

The 1987 *IFMAR/PARMA* off Road World Championships will be remembered for the keenness of the competition and the extraordinary emphasis placed on winning. There is nothing wrong with this in a world championship event particularly when the spirit of friendship among racers is such that the level of enjoyment is just as high.

By all accounts the 1989 championships will be in Australia. See you there.

Results

2WD A Final

1.	J. Johnson	USA
2.	K. Kondo	Japan
3.	C. Moore	USA
4.	M. Christensen	USA
5.	J. Booth	UK
6.	K. Moore	UK
7.	J. Halsey	USA
8.	Masami Hirosaka	Japan
9.	R. Cull	UK
10.	E. Moore	USA

FTD: J. Johnson

4WD A Final

1.	Masami Hirosaka	Japan
2.	Katsunori Kondo	Japan
3.	J. Booth	UK
4.	C. Lett	USA
5.	Junichi Koma	Japan
6.	J. Johnson	USA
7.	J. Halsey	USA
8.	P. Stevens	UK
9.	E. Soderquist	USA
10.	M. Christensen	USA

FTD: Masami Hirosaka