

World Championship

July in California. The sun is shining, the climate is hot and you've got two weeks of model car racing to look forward too. It sounds like the perfect fortnight, a chance to show the rest of the

world just how good you are at electric on-road racing. But then reality creeps in. This is World Championship territory. The stakes are high, the pressure is on and you are in for a tough time. The ability to lift your standard from National to World Championship level is one that few drivers possess. To do so requires hours of hard work in the pits, excellent equipment, intense concentration when driving and awesome quantities of natural skill. Two years ago in Paris, Britain's David Spashett proved to everyone that he had that talent. It



was the day Britain gained its first electric World Champion when David blitzed the opposition to take the coveted IFMAR 1/12th scale crown. Winning again this year would prove to be far tougher though, for one major change had altered the odds completely. Carpet may have become the preferred racing surface for 1/12th scale on-road, but this time carpet was out and tarmac was in. Yes the 1996 1/12th Worlds would be held outside, in the sunshine, on asphalt!

California's Revelation Raceway was the chosen venue, a purpose built facility situated on a street corner in Montclair, about an hour's drive from Los Angeles. For a tarmac on-road circuit it was a somewhat unusual venue as the track itself wasn't actually a permanent one. Instead there was a large area of flat, grippy tarmac into which the organisers to create whatever circuit design they

desired. The rest of the facility was permanent and a well stocked pit shop and snack bar was complemented by an impressive rostrum and a covered pit area, with the only obvious omission being somewhere for the spectators to sit. You had to like trains too. The USA has some of the largest goods trains you are ever likely to see and up to forty of these monstrous beasts would rumble past the track daily. A long, loud blast of the horn would herald their arrival; a sure way to grab everyone's attention and a great way to distract you during that 'hot' qualifying run.

One hundred percent concentration was required to negotiate the winding fifteen corner course. The use of wooden boards and metal barriers as track markers created a real street circuit, a track where a single collision could be fatal and yet risks had to be taken in order to set fast times. The biggest risk of

Winning World Championships is what Masami Hirosaka does best. He didn't disappoint in California, scooping his eighth World title as he took the 1/12th crown in style with a dominant performance



all came when negotiating the 'Esses', a tight but very fast chicane that the top drivers would actually accelerate through, running a whisker away from the boards. Making matters even trickier were the fuel lines deposited by gas cars a few days prior to the event. The track layout they had run was clearly visible beneath the new circuit, the fuel they had dropped glaring in the sunshine. The result was inconsistent grip. On some corners your car would turn in on a fuel line and grip violently, while on others it would tend to understeer.

Then there was the temperature. California isn't called the 'Sunshine State' for nothing, and all week we enjoyed some fabulous weather.

This was great for sun-tans, but it played havoc with the electrics, cooking cells and speed-controllers and sending motor brushes purple. As the track got hotter, the grip would also change significantly. Leave the set-up of your car the same and it would handle differently in each run. For many, the trickiest decision was whether to change the car to suit the track or simply wait for the track to suit the car.

Three days of controlled practice gave everyone the chance to perfect their set-up. Four ten minute slots a day gave an opportunity to experience every conceivable track condition and plenty of time to search for that all important consistency and speed.

It also gave the drivers a chance to get used to the others in their heat. These had been seeded randomly, leading to some interesting mixes in ability. One reason for the spread was the fact that this was a back-to-back World Championship event. While week one was given over to 1/12th scale, week two would be for the Pro-10 class, the big cars making their return to the USA following their Worlds debut in 1992. 1/12th week therefore saw a real mix of drivers, some who saw this as their number one class, and others who were treating the event as practice for week two.

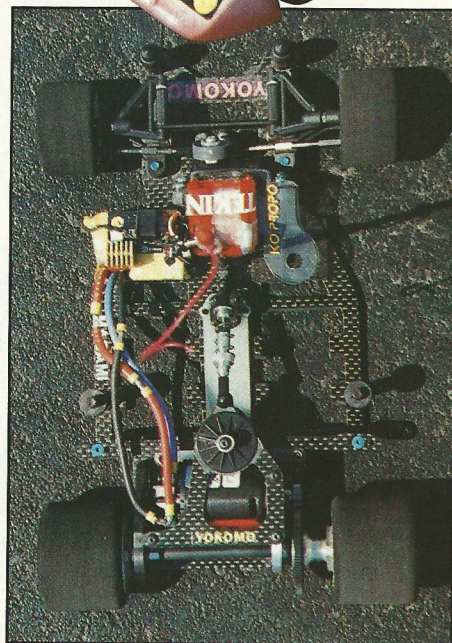
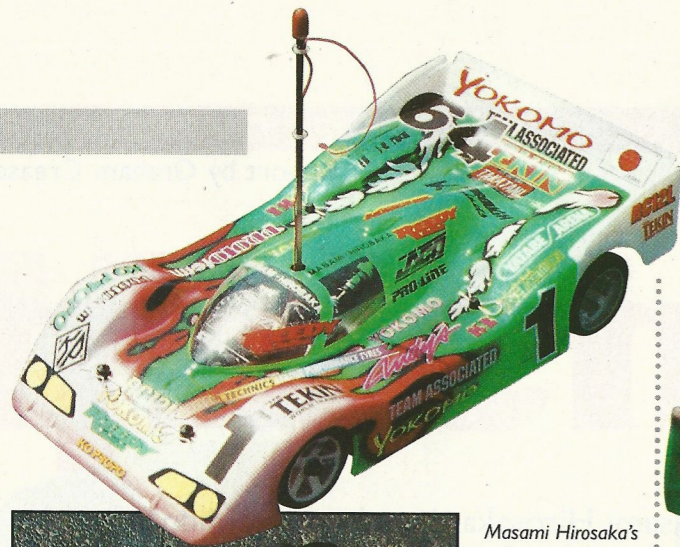
Thursday was the first pressure day as qualifying finally got under way. Round one saw the USA's Barry Baker set TQ with a 23-

8:18.90, a couple of seconds clear of Mike Swauger, Masami Hirosaka and Trinity's Brian Kinwald. These four were to set the only 23 lappers of the day as high temperatures prevented anyone else from hitting the required pace in the following rounds. By the end of the day, Mike Lufaso had moved up into fifth overall ahead of Joel Johnson, with Phil Davies sitting as 'Top Brit' in 13th.

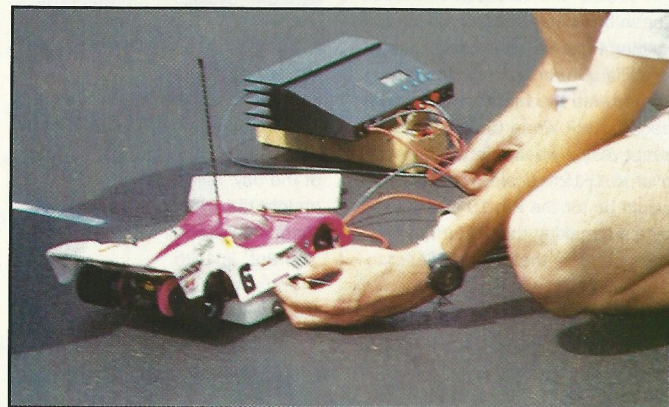
Friday got off to an exciting start, with Masami Hirosaka



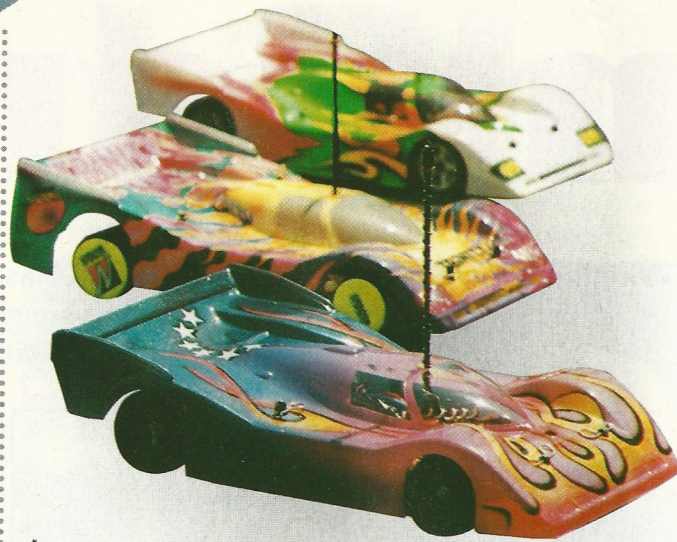
Revelation



Masami Hirosaka's race winning car that dominated the 1:12 championships taking TQ and the win in superb style. Detail shows Reedy motor, Tekin speedo and Yokomo batteries.



Above; Trinity cars were charged on the track by the Trinity team looking for the ultimate in performance from their VIS cells. Below; Perfect setting? - in reality it was too hot during the day and the race schedule too long.



setting a new TQ in the first heat, despite making a bad mistake that cost him three seconds. Three heats later the TQ changed again, as Barry Baker and Joel Johnson towed each other round in formation to set a couple of very quick times. While Joel dumped on the last lap, Barry didn't and a new fastest time of 23-8:13.25 ensured the 'Fabulous' one stayed top of the score sheets. Once again though, that was it for the day. While Masami managed to trim a couple of seconds off his best time to stay second, most of the other drivers failed to improve in the subsequent heats, a track temperature of nearly 160 degrees Fahrenheit playing havoc with battery duration.

Both days had shown that really quick times could only be set in the cooler morning run and Saturday was to prove no exception. This time Masami got everything right, didn't make a mistake, and blasted round to an incredible 23-8:08.75. It was nearly five seconds quicker than Barry Baker's previous TQ and

proof indeed that the Japanese superstar was firmly focused on another World Championship win. Associated's Mike Swauger also found some pace in this round to move into third overall, a fraction clear of Brian Kinwald and Jon Orr.

Round eight brought joy to a somewhat demoralised British camp when Craig Drescher suddenly pulled out all the stops to set a fantastic 23 lapper. Craig may not be enjoying his best off-road season this year, but he remains a World Class racer and this drive into seventh place overall proved his incredible skills are firmly intact. But what of that other British superstar, defending champion David Spashett? Not having a good time was the answer. David was sitting in 15th place, safely in the B-final and the top Corally driver, but unable to make that all important top ten.

High temperatures effectively ruined the final qualifying run and so we were left with Japan's greatest R/C racer, Masami Hirosaka, heading the field once again, with Barry Baker, Mike Swauger and Brian Kinwald sitting as the 'best of the rest'.

Finals day dawned and the scene was set for the World Championship decider. Events kicked off with a rather bizarre set of practice finals, drivers being given a handful of laps without transponders in order to check for radio interference. Time was of the essence here and the pace at which these practice runs occurred gave no chance to correct any problems that arose. The result

was a plague of interference in the finals themselves, which ruined the day for many drivers placed in the lower mains.

Victory for Jay Kimbrough in the J-main, was followed by a win in the I-final for California's Jim Walls, with Britain's Russ Giles picking up second and Kevin Creaser taking fourth. Steve La Fara took the H-final win from Jason Ashton, with the British trio of Andy Sawyer, Graham Creasey and Neil Mead finishing in fourth, sixth and seventh respectively. Vicki Carrubba came from the back of the grid to take a remarkable G-final win, snatching first place on the line when the cars of Mika Simila and Thomas Behnke both ran out of battery power.

British interest in the F-final ended early when Andrew Moore's pole position Corally lost a wheel, so victory went to Germany's Christian Wittke from Sean Cochran and Tony Raikas. Roger Wicki took a comfortable E-final win from Japan's Naoya Kitagawa, with recently married Martin Fliessbach celebrating his honeymoon with third place. A terrific scrap in the D-final between Yukijiro Umino and Juha Simila was ruined when an unfortunate collision damaged Juha's car. So it was Yukijiro who took the win from fellow countryman Masayuki Muira, with 'Carpet Knife King' Frank Calandra snatching third.

British interest in the C-final centred on Phil Davies and Andy Griffiths, but victory this time round went to Switzerland's Reto Koenig. David Jun picked up second from Markus Mober, with Phil Davies having to settle for fifth. The B-final gave one of the closest finishes of the day as Associated's Josh Cyrul crossed the line half a second clear of Cliff Lett and Peak Performance's Rick Hohwart. David Spashett brought his Corally home in sixth place, or so it appeared, but in fact it was Mark Pavidis who crossed the line, racing David's car! After colliding several times towards the end of the race, David and Mark had decided to swap transmitters and try out each other's cars. No problem you might think, but when David races with a stick transmitter and Mark with a steering wheel it's actually a pretty tricky thing to do.

Mark coped best, limping David's Corally round to sixth place, while David blasted the 'Esses' with Mark's Associated and broke it. Whoops!

So to the main event, the A-final. Throughout the entire competition the race commentary had been exemplary, proving to be both informative and incredibly entertaining, and now

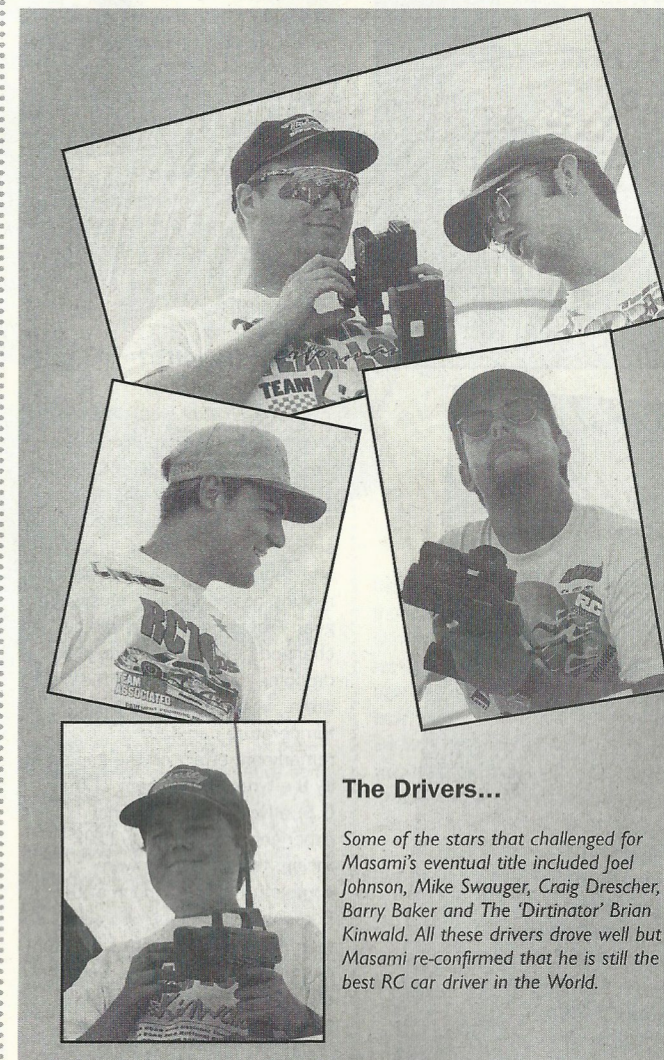
car dancing on the edge of adhesion as he gradually picked off car after car. With three minutes to go, Brian was up into second place and starting to worry Masami's leading Associated. Could he get through and take the win? Brian's driving was certainly spectacular, but sliding cars around doesn't tend to help battery duration and sure

behind him sent Barry Baker and Brian Kinwald plummeting down the order. This time Joel Johnson became the chase car, but he was soon busy fending off the Associated of Mike Swauger, with Mike eventually finding the gap he needed to sweep through into second place. Mike really put the hammer down then and by lap thirteen he was running nose-to-tail with Masami, trying everything he knew to find a way past. He was in for a frustrating time though, for try as he might, Masami was in no mood to let him by and the Japanese star firmly held on to first place, crossing the line half a second clear. The scrap for third place went right to the line, with Craig Drescher pipping Barry Baker by the smallest of margins to pick up some vital A-final points.

With the title already wrapped up, Masami stood down from the final leg and watched the race instead. This time it was Barry Baker who took the early lead from Mike Swauger and Joel Johnson, but when Joel hit the boards, it was Britain's Craig Drescher who latched onto the leading trio. These three set a cracking pace to pull away from the chasing bunch, but it took until the last three minutes for the race to really come alive. First Mike Swauger started to challenge Barry Baker for the lead and, when Barry tapped the boards, Mike dived through, accompanied by a huge cheer from the crowd. The tables were turned a couple of laps later though when it was Mike's turn to collide with the track markers. This time Barry rocketed past to take the win, with Craig Drescher also sneaking through to take an excellent second place.

A dominant performance by Masami Hirosaka then, taking TQ and two straight A-final wins to reclaim the 1/12th World title he last won in 1988. Barry Baker ended up as 'top loser' in second place, with local hero Mike Swauger picking up third place overall from our own Craig Drescher.

An excellent week of racing then and congratulations go to all of the organisers for doing a fine job. Masami Hirosaka thoroughly deserved the standing ovation he



The Drivers...

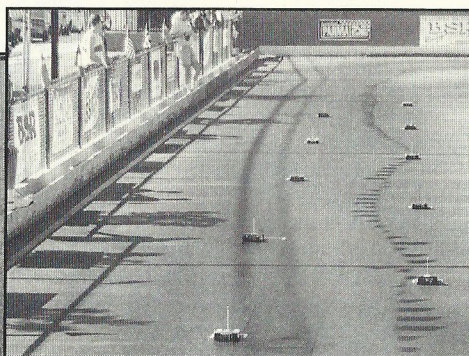
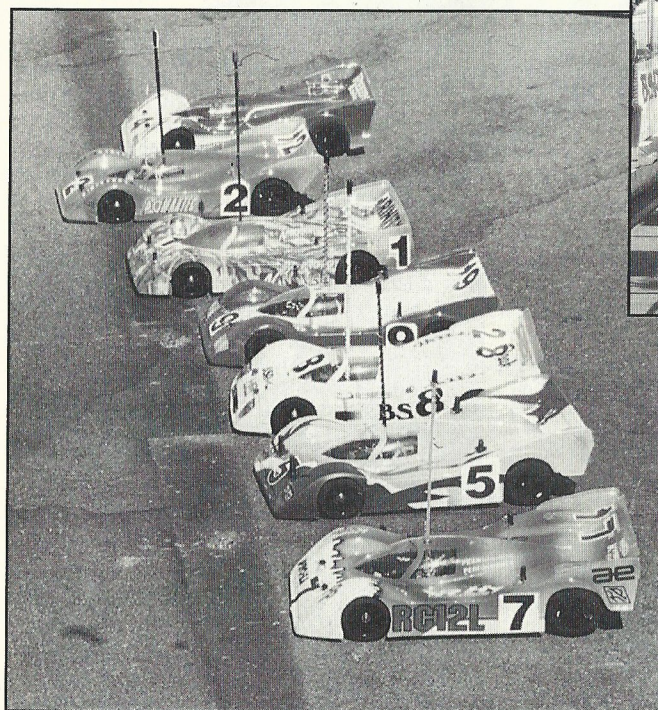
Some of the stars that challenged for Masami's eventual title included Joel Johnson, Mike Swauger, Craig Drescher, Barry Baker and The 'Dirtinator' Brian Kinwald. All these drivers drove well but Masami re-confirmed that he is still the best RC car driver in the World.

the commentary guys really went to town. With Parma's Garry Owen singing the National anthem, and spectators packing the raceway, the atmosphere was charged and the first A-main could begin.

The highlight of leg one wasn't Masami's flag-to-flag victory, but Brian Kinwald's remarkable charge up through the field. The 'Dirtinator' was in an aggressive mood and had his Trinity Revolver

enough his Revolver started to slow coming into the last minute of the race. Barry Baker dived past and kept his momentum going to close to within three tenths of Masami as the cars crossed the finish line. Jon Orr took a secure third place from Joel Johnson, with Mike Blackstock sneaking past Brian Kinwald's crawling car for fifth.

Masami got away cleanly once again in leg two, while a collision



perhaps explains why 1/12th racing has suffered in popularity in the USA compared to Pro-10. On tarmac, Pro-10 cars seem much easier to perfect; on carpet, 1/12th cars simply couldn't be more fun.

Thanks Bob!

received at the banquet awards ceremony. Five off-road World titles and three on-road prove that he really is the World's ultimate electric racer and a great ambassador for the sport. David Spashett may have had to relinquish his World Championship crown, but at least it found a worthy recipient.

Pit News

Tarmac Twelfth?

After a difficult week, most drivers seemed to conclude that tarmac 1/12th racing must be one of the biggest R/C challenges around. The cars are incredibly sensitive to both set-up changes and changes in track conditions, making consistency an elusive goal. Front end traction can be changed dramatically simply by dropping the front-end of the car by 1mm, while changes in track temperature can have a remarkable effect on the grip given by the tyres. While many of the U.S. drivers had some prior experience of tarmac 1/12th racing, the conditions were completely alien to much of the European contingent who were used to competing on a consistent carpeted racing surface. Cars that are difficult to set-up and drive tend to put people off, which

With the 40MHz frequency banned in the USA, many of the European contingent arrived in desperate need of new radio equipment just to be able to race. Bob Novak proved to be their saviour here, loaning out 75MHz modules, receivers and crystals to all who needed them. He also personally checked everyone's transmitter to ensure it hit the required frequency, helping to minimise the interference problems.

New Rules?

Look out for round-by-round qualifying in future World Championship events. Changing track conditions may have contributed to the outcome of the '96 on-road Worlds, but this could all change for 1998. IFMAR may soon adopt the round-by-round procedure, where each qualifying round is effectively a separate competition. Perform well in one run and you could be in the A-main, even if your time isn't one of the quickest of the week. Fairer for the drivers, perhaps, but it could prove confusing for the spectators too.



1996 IFMAR 1/12th Circuit World Championship Top 20 in Qualifying

1.	Masami Hirosaka	(J)	23-8:08.75
2.	Barry Baker	(USA)	23-8:13.25
3.	Mike Swauger	(USA)	23-8:17.99
4.	Brian Kinwald	(USA)	23-8:18.21
5.	Jon Orr	(USA)	23-8:19.61
6.	Joel Johnson	(USA)	23-8:19.64
7.	Craig Drescher	(GB)	23-8:20.41
8.	Paul Wynn	(USA)	23-8:20.65
9.	Mike Blackstock	(USA)	23-8:21.31
10.	Ryuzo Nakayama	(J)	23-8:21.49
11.	Josh Cyrul	(USA)	23-8:21.71
12.	Mike Lufaso	(USA)	23-8:21.77
13.	Mark Pavidis	(USA)	23-8:21.86
14.	Atsushi Haras	(J)	23-8:22.37
15.	David Spashett	(GB)	23-8:22.40
16.	Tony Neisinger	(USA)	23-8:23.15
17.	Sakke Ahoniemi	(Fin)	23-8:27.64
18.	Rick Hohwart	(USA)	22-8:01.09
19.	Cliff Lett	(USA)	22-8:01.09
20.	Oscar Jansen	(NL)	22-8:01.32

A-Final Points		Leg-1	Leg-2	Leg-3	Total
1st	Masami Hirosaka	100	100	0	200
2nd	Barry Baker	99	97	100	199
3rd	Mike Swauger	96	99	98	197
4th	Craig Drescher	94	98	99	197
5th	Jon Orr	98	95	95	193
6th	Joel Johnson	97	96	93	193
7th	Mike Blackstock	91	93	97	190
8th	Brian Kinwald	95	94	92	189
9th	Paul Wynn	93	91	96	189
10th	Ryuzo Nakayama	92	92	94	186

Touring Cars

At the worlds a touring car demo was performed by the top manufacturers, the cars race in large numbers and caused quite a stir...

