

A View from Across the Pond

by Tim Morton

1/12th scale electric radio controlled car racing is catching on fast here in the United States. Many clubs are forming all over the country, which is making stiff competition in the state series races and national events.

Most all of the states are able to run outdoors during the summer months on asphalt parking lots. There are very few permanent r/c car tracks in the US that clubs can run on. All of the outdoor racing that takes place is for 6-cell cars, although many different classes are run.

The areas that are hit with inclement weather in the winter time, are forced to go indoors to race. Most all of the indoor racing is 4-cell, but there are still some clubs that run 6-cell cars indoors.

At first local clubs were running directly on the gymnasium wooden floors or shopping mall terrazo floors, with silicon treated tyres. However, the silicon was leaving visible marks and the janitors complained that they had to clean and polish the floor after the races. The mall managers were concerned that the floor looked slippery and might be hazardous to public foot traffic. The clubs were forced to buy carpeting to protect the surfaces. The carpet is 10 or 12 feet wide and can be rolled out to the length of the space available. Two rolls are placed side by side and the joint is taped. To keep the cars on the track, the perimeter is fenced with portable 2 x 4 inch boards. The layout of the track is changeable by placing 2 x 2 inch rails inside the perimeter, to the configuration desired. The cost of all this is approximately 400-500 US dollars and is paid for by assessing each driver 1.00 dollar entry fee for a day of racing. This carpet is a special carpet made with no nylon to conduct static electricity. The traction is actually better than asphalt. The cars stay much cleaner, also.

The arrangement is bothersome in that the carpet must be rolled and taped out before the races, then rolled up and stored afterwards. Transporting the track equipment to 'Feature' races is awkward; however, this is the price we pay if we want to race indoors.

Most clubs run weekly local races for their members and sponsor 2 or 3 feature races during the year, inviting other clubs to participate.

ROAR (Radio Operated Auto Racing) is the sanctioning national body of all r/c car racing. Most of the local clubs have joined ROAR, or adopted their rules and regulations. The advantages of a national organisation is the liability insurance protection, a nation-wide newsletter, race promotions and a louder voice in the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) in trying to get new radio frequencies for cars.

There are many regional organisations, such as MART (Miniature Auto Race Track Assoc.) in the midwestern US, that sponsor and schedule races throughout their area. The MART organ-

isation started out with 3 or 4 clubs that got together once a month at a different club track, more clubs started forming; and, month by month, the MART organisation grew from 4 clubs to 12. Now, MART races not only attract drivers from all over Michigan, but from several other states as well. A MART series race is said to be the best racing in the midwestern US. MART is a ROAR sanctioned organisation; therefore, to run in a MART race, you need to be a ROAR member.

The prizes for a MART race are trophies for the winners of their main; although, most everyone goes home with something. Manufacturers participation in donating prizes to the MART series has been outstanding. With the major co-operation of BoLink Industries and a few others, everyone goes home with at least the amount of entrance fee in merchandise.

Although there are races scheduled year round, the summer months attendance is usually down, because many of the drivers also have r/c boats or aeroplanes. During the winter race season, of November through to March, a regional race will average 80 drivers showing up for fast and furious action.

In some clubs, one or two drivers consistently win most of the races and walk off with all the prizes. This leaves the other drivers paying the fees and complaining they don't stand a chance of ever winning against the 'hot shots'.

We worked out a method of awarding small donated prizes, that gives every driver an equal chance to win, whether he has the fastest car or is the fastest driver. All a driver has to do is enter and he has an equal chance to win.

The idea of club racing is to get cars on the track and encourage beginners to run with the rest of the members.

Prizes are awarded on the 'MOST' basis. For example; Most laps . . . nothing different here . . . the winner wins. Most trouble . . . the first car to break down wins. Most beautiful . . . best looking car wins. Most ugly . . . worst looking car wins. Most years . . . the oldest driver wins. Most youngest . . . youngest driver wins. Most highest . . . highest car number wins. Most lowest . . . etc, etc. See? Only 2 categories require skill, the others are sheer luck. The only requirement is that you enter the race, because the category being raced for is not known until AFTER the race is over and it is picked out of the hat. Nobody has an edge, and can walk off with all the prizes.

Money is not always the answer to winning performance. Every kit car is DESIGNED by a manufacturer, not just tossed together from spare parts. When they offer a new model, they expect it to sell because it is as competitive as they can get it, both for price and performance.

As an example, the BoLink Challenger, out



BoLink's New Race Trailer has four separate pit spaces and each can be separately locked, There is a power hook-up and lights for each space run from a 280Ah battery.

of the box, is a competitive car. You actually get two cars in one; a mid-engine or a rear-engine version can be made just by changing the shaker plate and turning the wheel blocks around. The last MART series was won by Marv Thomson using the Challenger. Skilled drivers have taken the 'stock' Challenger and won races over less skilled drivers. That's why I suggest you don't do anything with a new car, except practice.

Once you do start making changes to your car, you'll start to spend money and you can waste next month's lunch money in a hurry if you're just buying goodies without considering the effect they'll have on the overall performance of your car.

Add a differential to your car and you'll probably have to change your rear tyres for a different compound. Changing the rear tyres will probably mean you'll have to change the front tyres too. Just remember that if you make any change to a 'stock' car, even a hotter motor and you'll more than likely lose overall performance until you've sorted out the changes effect on the overall car. Of course, that is part of the fun . . . experimentation! When you get a chance to race at another club's track, don't turn down the opportunity. You'll see some really exotic designs that other racers will come up with, trying to get just a little bit better. The

thing to look for are the cars that are WINNING. You'll find that most of them look surprisingly 'stock'.

Ask one of those 'top' drivers to test drive your car and you'll find out that he will go faster and turn in more laps than you ever could; then, ask him what changes you could make to your car.

We are looking forward to an exciting future for the 1/12th scale electrics. Many of the new cars coming out are results of long hours of testing. The BoLink Challenger underwent extensive testing in Florida before its release. A Florida state-wide racing series was held, in which it performed excellently. An article on the Florida State Racing Series containing more information and pictures, will be printed in a following issue.

One of the biggest breakthroughs in the area of development is BoLink's Windtunnel. By the testing done in the tunnel, we can tell the downforce a body has, as well as the drag. Also, wing angles and configurations can be tested. As the tests are completed, a full report will be furnished with each body.

[Many of the same problems as we have in the UK, but some good ideas — what do the readers think? — Ed].