

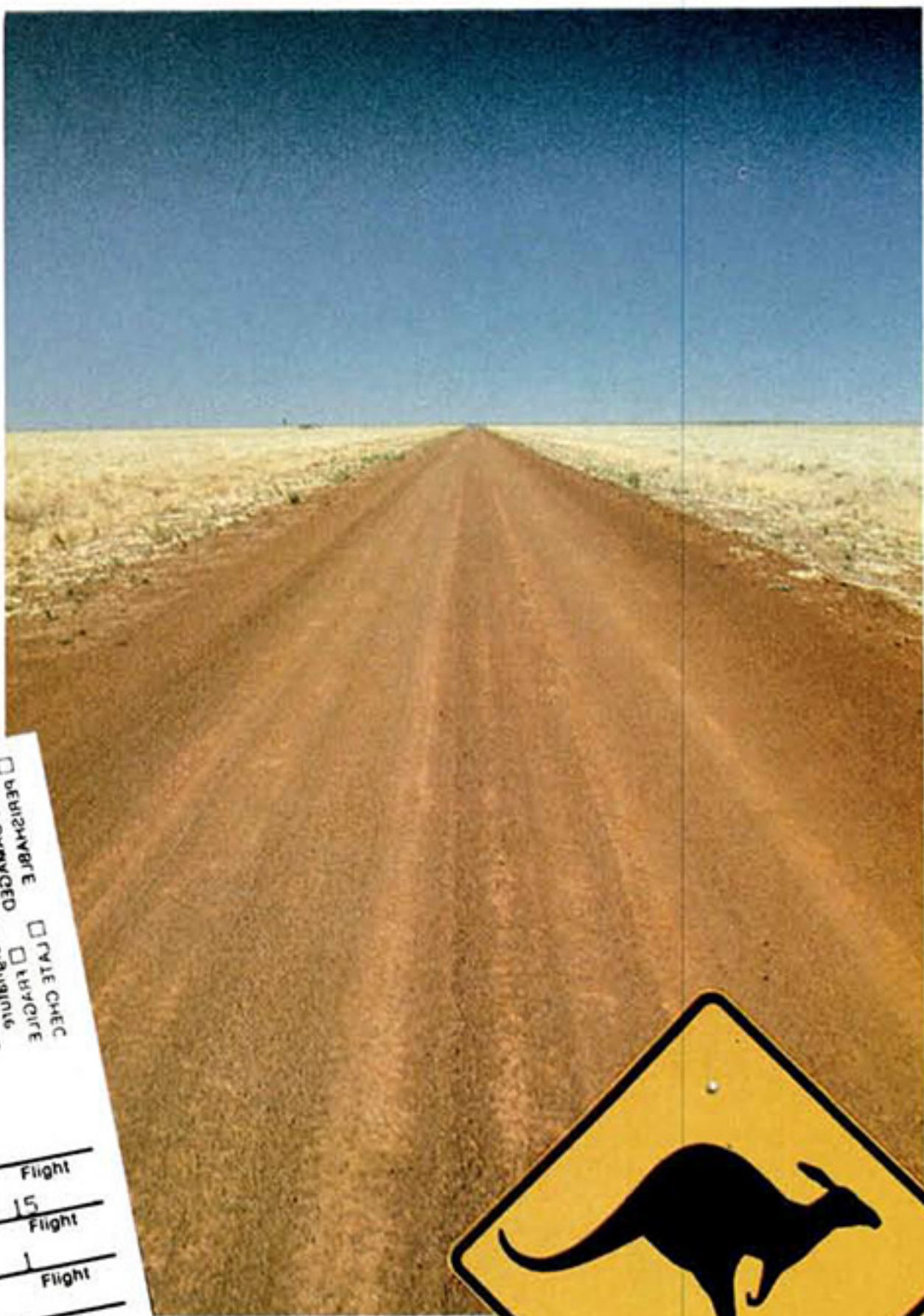
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WORLD CHAMPIONS

Australia

by RICK HOULE



Dukin' it out down under!



CO 518074

To	SYD	Flight	15
Via	CO	Airline	
To	SYD	Flight	1
Via	CO	Airline	

CONTINENTAL





Cliff Lett, Jay Halsey, and Masami Hirosaka take a champagne shower after sweeping the top three spots in 2WD!



How many dignitaries can you spot in this photo? Finals action awaits them.



This poor racer wasn't successful in staying clean, though.



Trying to get through turn one cleanly was important to a successful run.





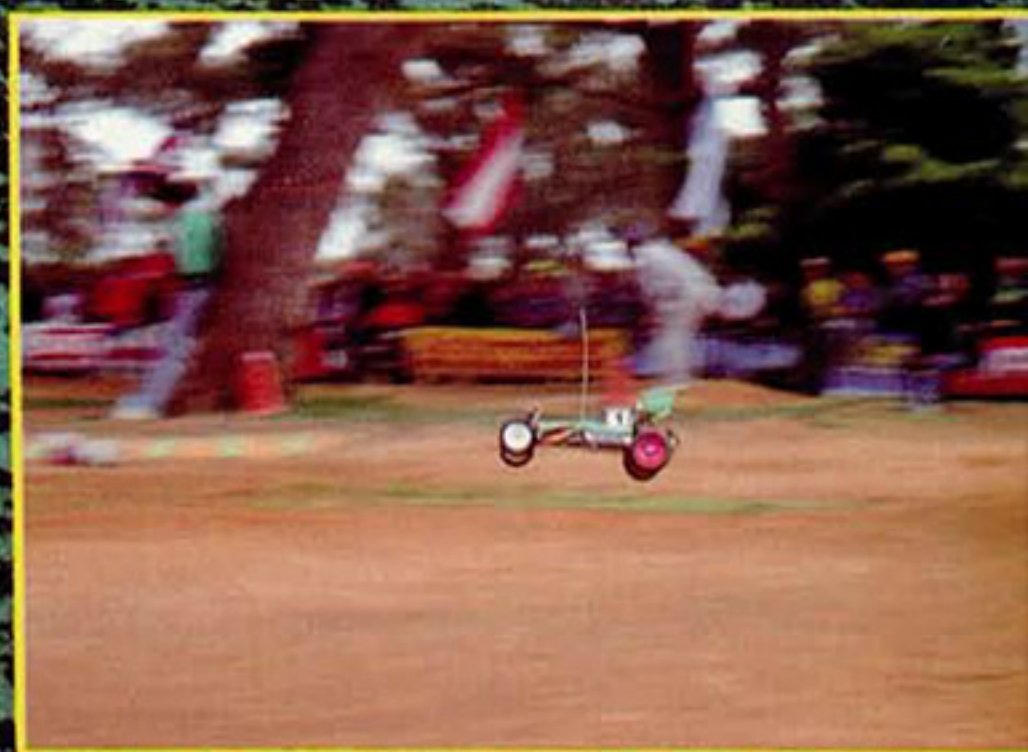
Steve Dunn takes some hot laps on the Race Prep Pit Vehicle!



No, this isn't Rick Honle, either.



A good, old-fashioned Aussie barby.



Masami's "stealth" 2WD car on the way to the 2WD crown.



- **S**YDNEY, AUSTRALIA, September 5 through 10, 1989. In an event perme-
- ated by controversy, drama and intrigue, after six days of intense competi-
- tion, the 1989 IFMAR World Championship Titles have been contested and the
- world's best drivers have been crowned. The event consisted of two days of
- timed practice and qualifying and one day of main events for both the 2WD and
- 4WD classes. The story of the "Worlds," however, began weeks before the Aus-
- tralian rendezvous and will undoubtedly continue for months to come.



Offroad WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

IFMAR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

2WD A-FINAL

Fin.	Driver (Country)	Car	Motor	Speed Control	Body	Tires (f/r)	Special Equipment
1	Masami Hirotsuka (JAP)	Associated	Reedy	KO CX3	Assoc. Protech	Yok. TR31 (f/r)	Prototype car
2	Jay Halsey (USA)	Associated	Reedy	Novak T1X	Assoc. Protech	Race Prep/Yok. TR31	Prototype car
3	Cliff Lett (USA)	Associated	Reedy	Novak T1	Assoc. Protech	CRP/Yok. TR31	Prototype car
4	Mike Dunn (USA)	JR-X2	Race Prep	Novak T1	Losi Pro	Losi (f/r)	Lg chas/slipr clu
5	Rick Vehlow (USA)	Associated	Reedy	Novak T1X	RCPS Mirage	Race Prep/Yok. TR31	Prototype car
6	Jamie Booth (GB)	Top Cat	Reedy	Nosram	Stock	Schumacher/Losi	Slipper clutch
7	Craig Drescher (GB)	RC10 Graphite	Reedy	Novak T1	RCPS Mirage	CRP/Yok. TR31	
8	Jack Johnson (USA)	JR-X2	Revolution	Tekin 600	Losi Pro	Losi (f/r)	Long chassis
9	Joel Johnson (USA)	Ultima Pro	Trinity	Novak T1	Stock	Losi (f/r)	
10	Ron Rossetti (USA)	JR-X2	Revolution	Novak T1	Losi Pro	Losi (f/r)	Lg chas/slipr clu

4WD A-FINAL

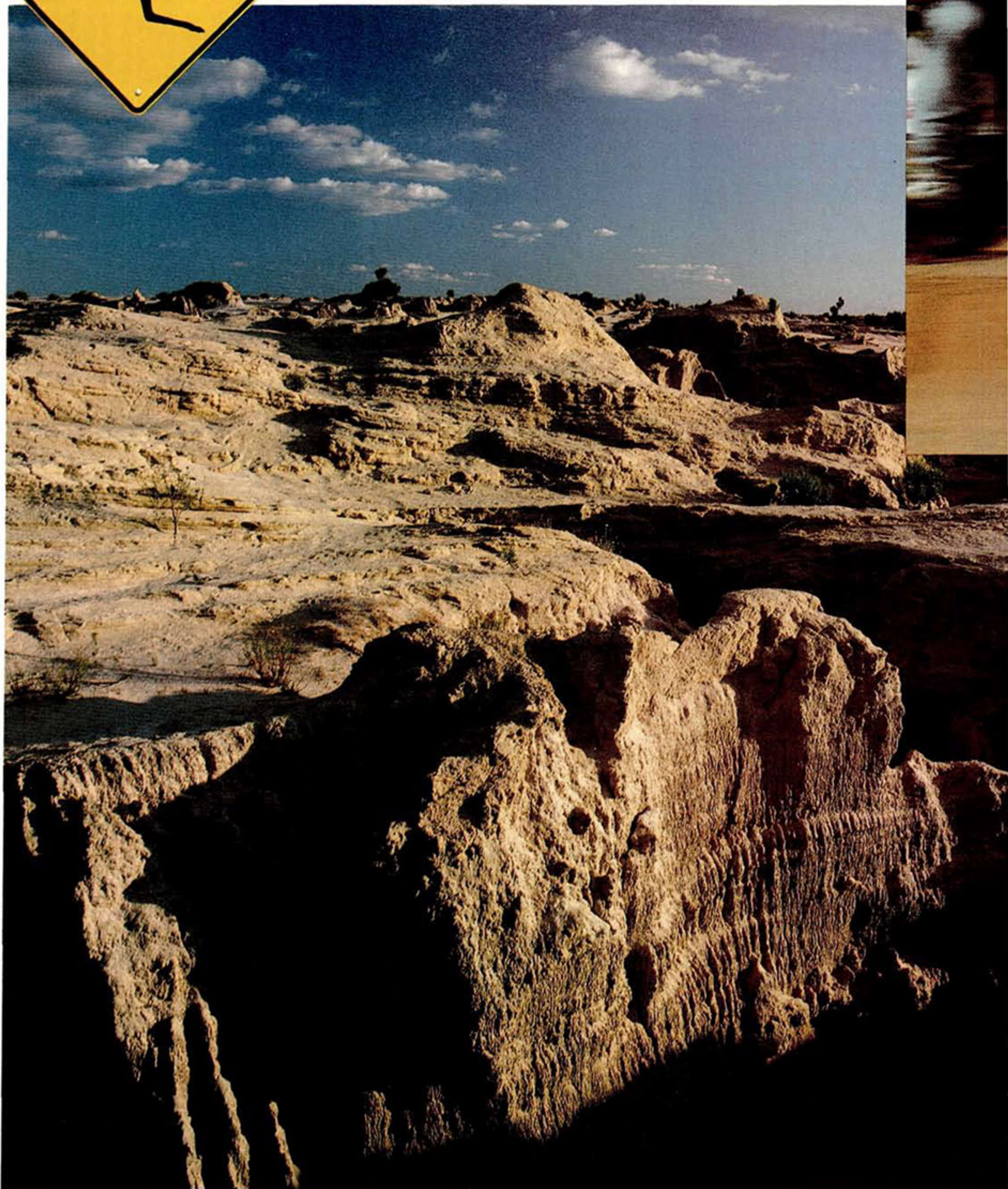
Fin.	Driver (Country)	Car	Motor	Speed Control	Body	Tires (f/r)	Special Equipment
1	Masami Hirotsuka (JAP)	Dogfighter	Reedy	KO CX3	Stock	Yok. TF330/Yok. TR31	
2	Butch Kloeber (USA)	YZ-10	Reedy	Novak T1X	Stock	Yok. TF330/Yok. TR31	Front mono-shock
3	Rich Hohwart (USA)	Lazer ZX	Peak Perf.	Tekin 700	Stock	Schumacher/Losi	
4	Cliff Lett (USA)	YZ-10	Reedy	Novak 1	Stock	Yok. TF330/Yok. TR31	Front mono-shock
5	Jurgen Lautenbach (WG)	Pro Cat	LRP	Nosram	Stock	Schumacher/TAG	
6	Phil Davies (GB)	Pro Cat	Reedy	Corally	Stock	Schumacher (f/r)	
7	Mike Dunn (USA)	Pro Radiant	Race Prep	Novak T1	Race Prep Boost	Yok. TF5/Losi	
8	Satoshi Kayano (JAP)	Dogfighter	Reedy	KO CX3	Stock	Yok. TF330/Yok. TR31	
9	Rory Cull (GB)	Pro Cat	Reedy	Nosram	Stock	Schumacher (f/r)	
10	Jay Halsey (USA)	YZ-10	Reedy	Novak T1	Stock	Yok. TF330/Yok. TR31	Front mono-shock

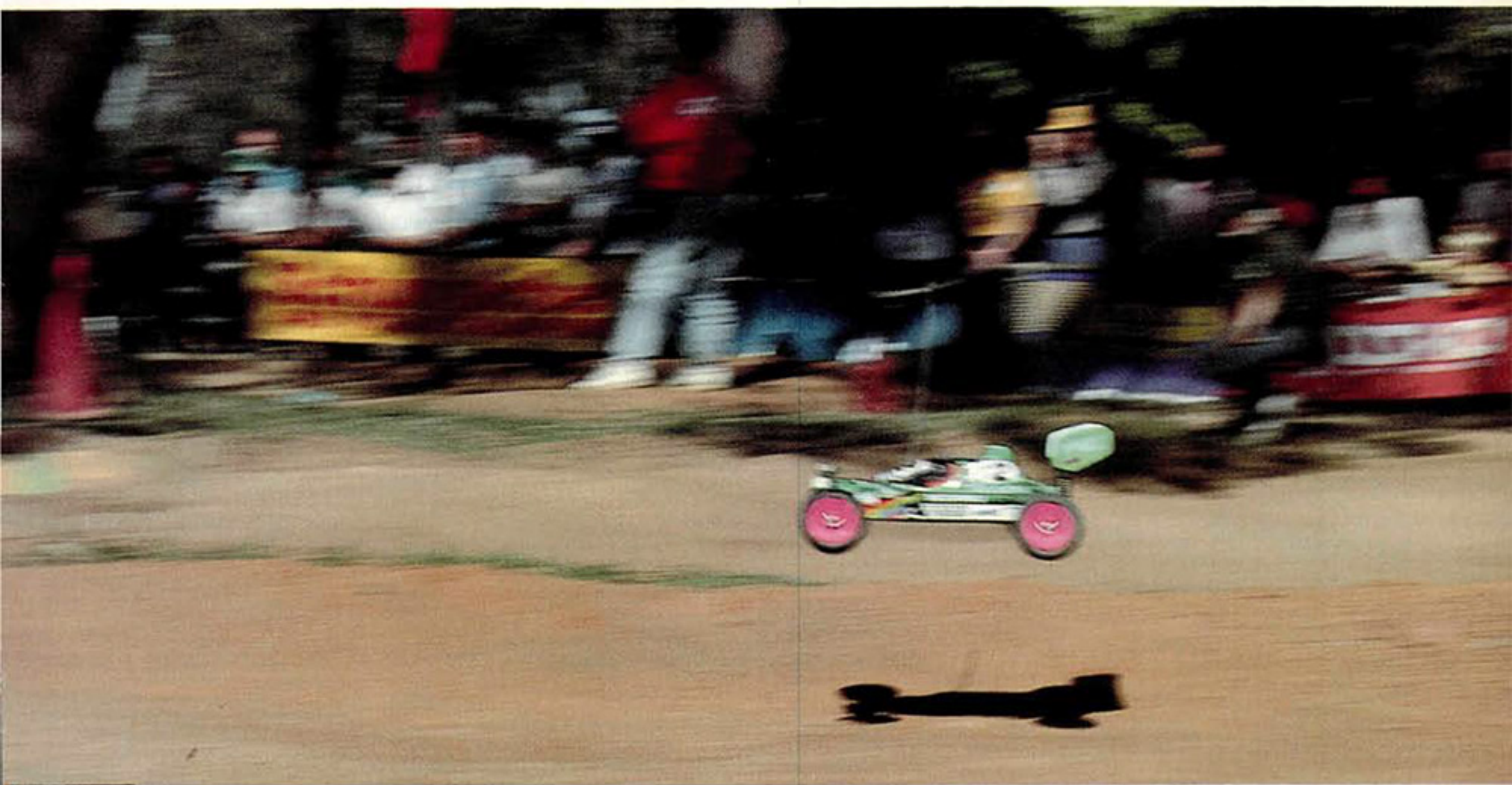




Offroad

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS





ALL'S FAIR IN LOVE AND R/C?!

The founding fathers of the IFMAR World Championships created the organization to provide an international arena whereby the world's best drivers could compete with one another in the "Olympic" spirit. The drive to build the "ultimate" machinery, however, coupled with the manufacturers' zeal to generate sales revenue from their products, has turned this event into a battleground for the largest names in the industry. I don't mean that this is solely a manufacturers' event; after all, the world's best drivers must have the world's best equipment. I do mean, however, that the drive to produce winning equipment has created a good deal of tension between the rival manufacturers.



Two-time 4WD World Champion celebrates with his dad Masaaki (left) and Tom Yokobori, owner of Yokomo.



2WD cars sweep through one of the broad turns at St. Ives.

The manufacturers who attended the event spent enormous sums to bring their respective teams to the land of Oz, and all the grumbling among the have-nots about Yokomo's new secret weapon (an oversize tire-and-wheel combo) was quite understandable. During the practice days that preceded the event, these 2¹/₄-inch wheels with custom-made, low-profile, mini-spike tires of unknown rubber compounds, were purportedly giving the Yokomo and Associated teams a distinct advantage on this particular track.

The dirt of the St. Ives track is a mixture of sandstone and clay that, when left unwatered,

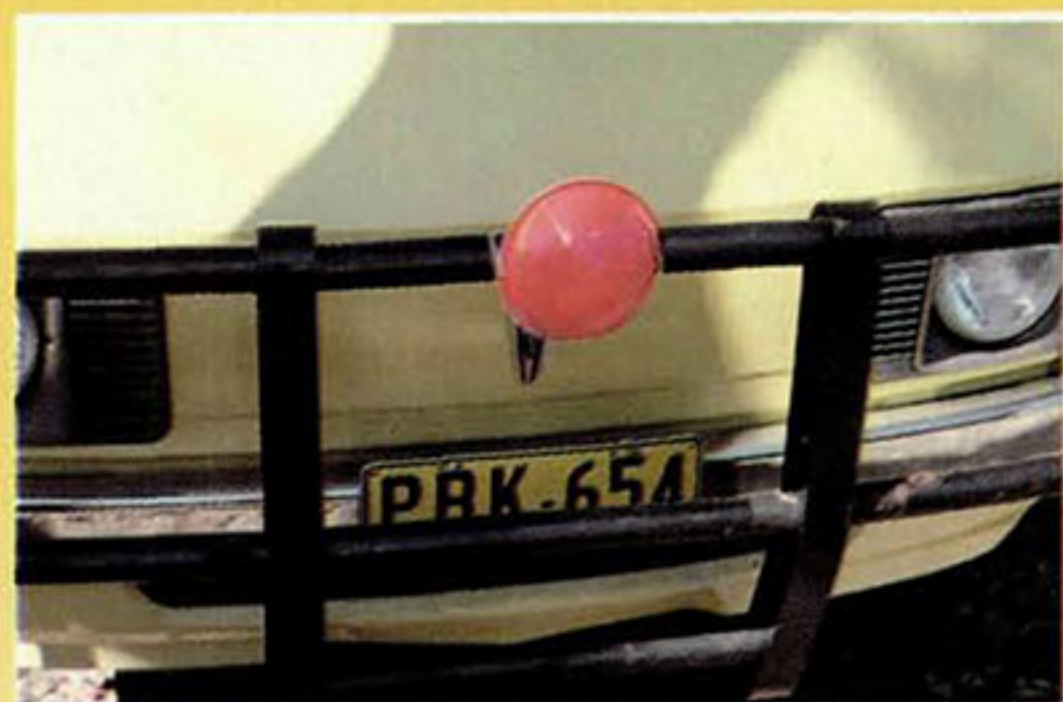
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS



Above: Masami's "stealth" Associated 2WD car hustles around a sweeper.

Above right: Standing still, you can see the wide front A-arms and long front shocks on the "stealth" car.

PEDESTRIANS FEAR FOR THEIR LIVES!



WHILE WE WERE in Australia, some of the American drivers obviously got a big kick out of driving their rental cars on the left side of the road—European style. On at least one occasion, hapless Losi team members found themselves on a "Mr. Toad ride," screaming for mercy in the back of a rental van, as they careened down the wrong side of the road with Steve Dunn at the helm! Associated driver Butch Kloeber developed a penchant for racing around the "roundabouts" (traffic circles) frequently found at intersections.

All around Sydney, we spotted red "noses" on autos. September 8 had been declared "Red Nose Day"—a day on which motorists were encouraged to buy the "noses" to raise money for research into crib death. One spectator

even had one on an R/C car!

With the steering wheel and driving controls on the right-hand side of the cars, it was easy to spot American motorists when they flicked what would *usually* be their turn-signal lever and inadvertently switched on the windshield wipers!

It was, no doubt, a hilarious sight for Aussies



when forgetful Americans climbed into the passenger's side of their cars, and then had to climb

out and walk, embarrassed, to the driver's side. "Gee, I hope no one saw that!" Fortunately, there were no reports of any major mishaps, and I'm sure all the rentals made it back in one piece!?



produced hazardous holes on the concrete-like surface. There was also a loose layer of sand outside the racing line, and driving on this was like driving on gravel! As the track's surface deteriorated, the Yokomo wheel played an increasingly large role in the traction department.

Months before the event, a team of Yokomo technicians visited the track to obtain soil samples, which they took back to Japan for analysis. According to local sources, Yokomo also mounted a video camera on a cart that they wheeled around the course to get a "car's-eye" view of the course. Armed with this data, Yokomo exactly duplicated the St. Ives track back in Japan, and this is what the team practiced on. It's small wonder that Masami gave the impression that he could drive this course with his eyes shut!

CLANDESTINE CAR CAPERS!

Another big debate centered on the clandestine activities of the Associated team, who had a new prototype 2WD "stealth" car. The team wouldn't allow the car to be photographed (apparently, under strict orders from the company's owners), unless the racing body hid the important chassis components. Whenever a camera-carrying member of the press walked through the Associated pits, the drivers doggedly threw a towel over the exposed chassis. When a member of the Australian team snapped a few shots of the car at the tech-inspection tent, Associated driver Jay Halsey demanded that the photographer turn over the film to him on the spot! This behavior struck the local Aussies as slightly odd, if not rude. According to Gene Husting, one of Associated's owners, there was good reason for this paranoia about the car's internal makeup: "We want to be able to research and develop certain components of this car without the danger of being ripped-off before we have the first opportunity to market the parts that work satisfactorily." Husting assured me that *Radio Control Car Action* would get the exclusive first photos of the car's chassis very soon, and I was allowed to photograph Masami's



Left: Cliff Lett peers out from behind a pile of the coveted Yokomo TR-31 tires with oversize rims.



Left: Associated's Jay Halsey exchanges pleasantries with Gil "Pops" Losi Sr.



Offroad WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

RC10 hybrid close up, albeit with the body on.

NEW FOR YOU

Nearly every major manufacturer of the 1/10-scale off-road cars that competed at St. Ives brought something new or improved, and with the exception of the Associated 2WD hybrid car, these machines were commercially available at the time of the event—or will be, by the time you read this.

Representatives of Schumacher Model Racing Products (the event's major sponsor) were there in force, handing out kits of the new Top Cat to any

driver who would agree to drive it at the Worlds. Seeking to retain the 4WD title without Hirosaka (who now drives for Yokomo), Schumacher introduced a revised version of the Cat—the Pro Cat, which has a new trans-



The 4WD car from Nikko was in competition at the Worlds. This entry-level car had fair results.

mission, chassis and rear-suspension geometry.

Kyosho also tried to hold on to its 2WD title with the Ultima Pro, which is an upgraded version of the '87 2WD car (the Ultima Pro has a longer wheelbase and a graphite chassis). With its recently released Lazer Z-X, Kyosho also went after the 4WD title. Team Losi managed to put three of its JR-X2 cars onto the 2WD A-Main grid.

Only one Yokomo made it to the 4WD A-Main in '87, but Yokomo did better this year by putting five Super Dogfighters into the A-Final. Yokomo's American partners, Team Associated, call their Yokomo 4WD the YZ-10. The most noticeable difference between the two cars is in their shocks: The Americans used a mono-shock system (developed by Jay Halsey), and the Japanese car has an upright shock arrangement.

The 4WD A-Main grid was, for the most part, made up of exotic machines driven by Kevlar or polyurethane belts. A notable exception was Team Race Prep's AYK chain-driven Pro Radiant with Mike Dunn at the controls. Widely recognized in the States by production-class racers, Tamiya took

CONTROVERSY! CONTROVERSY!

MOST OF THE COMPETITORS I talked to at the Worlds felt that there was something improper about Yokomo's use of the over-scale tires (designated "TR-31" by Yokomo).

Those who weren't close to the Associated and Yokomo factory drivers' inner circles were simply denied access to these tires. Team Twister driver Joe Schmitz (who was only *half* joking!) said: "Unless something is done about the rules, we may have to change this class of racing to 1/9 scale. These 2 1/4-inch rims would scale up to a 22-inch rim on a full-size car, and when was the last time you saw a wheel *that* size on a full-scale off-road race car? Not only are tires getting taller, but chassis are also getting longer and wider." (IFMAR rules only require that a car be within 18 inches long, 9.84 inches wide, and 8 inches high. Some think these specs are too general and should be more defined.) As Schmitz says, "These cars are just plain bigger!"

Though his teammates didn't seem to be as concerned about the larger wheels, Kyosho driver and 1987 2WD World Champion, Joel Johnson, would have liked a set of the TR-31s to "make this race fair for everyone." Johnson added that "any track with decent bite wouldn't need the taller wheel."

Associated's Gene Husting was quick to point out that, at the 1987 Worlds, Kyosho played the same game with a tire design that gave its team an edge over other com-



Mike Reedy, left, felt that the spirit of the rules wasn't compromised.

petitors, and Kyosho was also very picky about who was allowed to use them. Other sources report that the Kyosho tires were, indeed, available to anyone who needed them.

The prevailing mood among the majority who had to do without the TR-31s was that the evil Yokomo empire had secretly developed these tires with the intention of introducing them at this event to enjoy a distinctly unfair advantage. When I talked to the Associated and Yokomo teams, however, I was given an entirely different impression. According to Husting, "We weren't even aware of this tire's existence until we came to Australia."

Yokomo's Assistant Team Manager, Bunzo Iizuka, told me that the success of these tires at the St. Ives track was just as surprising to him as to anyone else! According to him, the tire was taken to Australia as a possible *rain* tire! Yokomo planners must have expected a lot of foul weather for the beginning of spring in Australia, because they ap-

Hi Rich.
With all the problems I
had getting here, things
are going very well now.

The race is very exciting.
Lots of controversy.
Associated and Yokomo are
taking full advantage of a
loophole in the IFMAR rules and
are using wheels that are 2 3/4"
in diameter giving them an
advantage on the rough track.
Associated won't let me photograph
their 2WD car. Bye for now

Sydney and the most beautiful harbour in the world.
B 11

AIR MAIL
PAR AVION



Rich Hemstreet
RCCA
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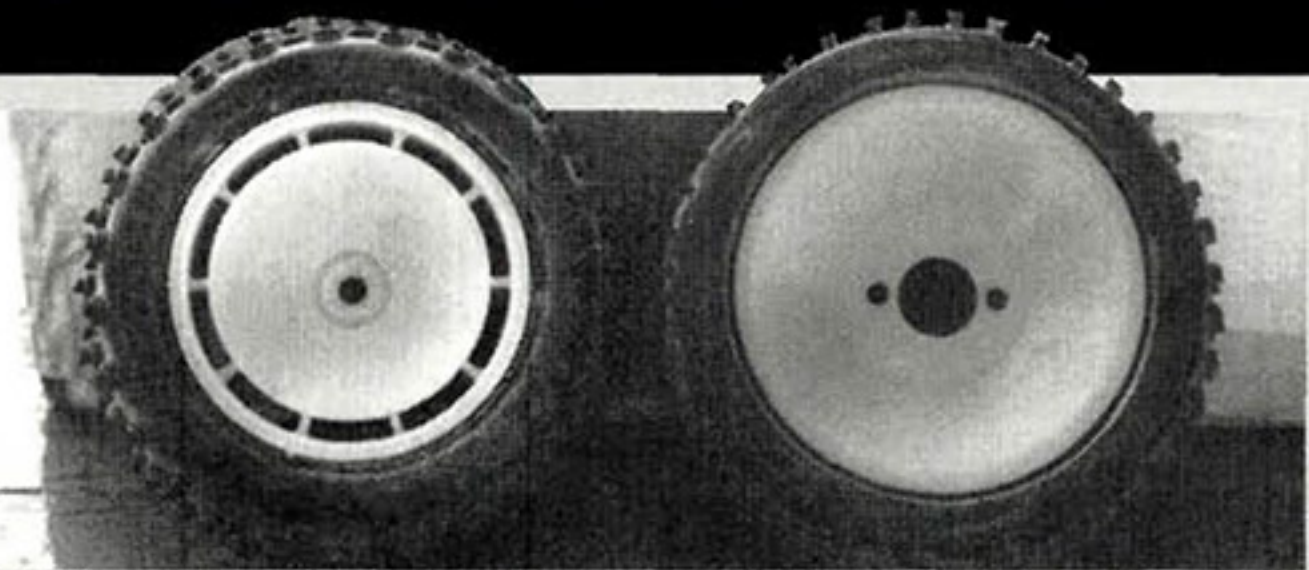
SPY SHOT!

Even though Associ-
ated wouldn't per-
mit photos, Rick
"007" Houle was
able to get some
undercover shots of
Associated's
Roger Curtis
with the
"stealth"
car.

the I-Final win with its Egress, which
was driven by Singapore's Lin
Shikai. Nikko's results were fair.

TECH TRICKS?

Faced with the secret weapons of As-
sociated and Yokomo, manufacturers
tried every trick to counter the threat
of these two dominant teams. The
closest any team came to matching
the performance of Yokomo's tires
was Team Losi. Extremely disturbed
by the discovery of this oversize, out-
of-scale wheel, Team Losi called on
its States-side resources to create, in
record-breaking time, a wheel-and-
tire combo that would counter this
unexpected threat! Within 48 hours,
Losi craftsmen had produced about
100 pairs of oversize front tires, 200
pairs of rears and five sets of hand-
machined aluminum rims.



At left is a conventional size tire and wheel, next to the infamous, oversize Yokomo TR-31.

parently brought about 30 boxes of these
treasures from Japan.

Though the IFMAR rules governing
1/10-scale tires and chassis have re-
mained relatively unchanged since the
first World Championship in 1985, they
have never come under as much fire as
they did at this event. According to
IFMAR's President, Ted Longshaw, the or-
ganization intended to limit the speci-
fications as much as possible to avoid "overburdening" the
rule book with specs. While this philosophy may have been
adequate four years ago, rapid technological advances in
manufacturing may necessitate a return to the drawing
board for the development of a more defined set of rules.
After all, if you took the existing rules to the limit, you could
theoretically enter a multi-wheel vehicle (the rules don't
specify how many) that's 18 inches long and has 8-inch
tires, as long as this contraption was only 9.84 inches wide.
This fictitious vehicle could have four motors (yes, the book
reads "motors"—with an "s") as long as they're approved
motors.

IFMAR guidelines allow rules and/or procedures to be
altered during a race if they're contrary to the "interest of
the sport." Most of the racers I talked to felt that Yokomo's
and Associated's use of these over-scale tires was unfair.
In every case where protests were made to the Interna-

tional Jury and ORRCA, the host organization seemed re-
luctant to act without the guidance of the IFMAR VP, Mike
Reedy, even though he wasn't technically allowed to vote
on these issues. Reedy maintained a high profile through-
out the fracas; this was his duty, in the absence of the
organization's president. Reedy, who owns Reedy Motors
(the ones used by Team Associated and Yokomo), thought
that the spirit of the rules wasn't compromised. On the
issue of track maintenance (refer to last month's story),
again, Reedy was unwavering, and pointed out that ev-
eryone was informed, well in advance, that the track
wouldn't be groomed between heats; it would be just as it
was at Romsey at the 1987 Worlds, and just the way the
Aussies like to run their races. Objections had been raised
at the '87 event, however, and many racers had assumed
that things would be different in 1989. Look for a change
in these rules before the next Off-Road Champs in 1991.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Though the oversize rubber tires and rims they tried didn't work out as well as they would have liked, team member Ron Rossetti took a standard-size Losi X-pattern tire and



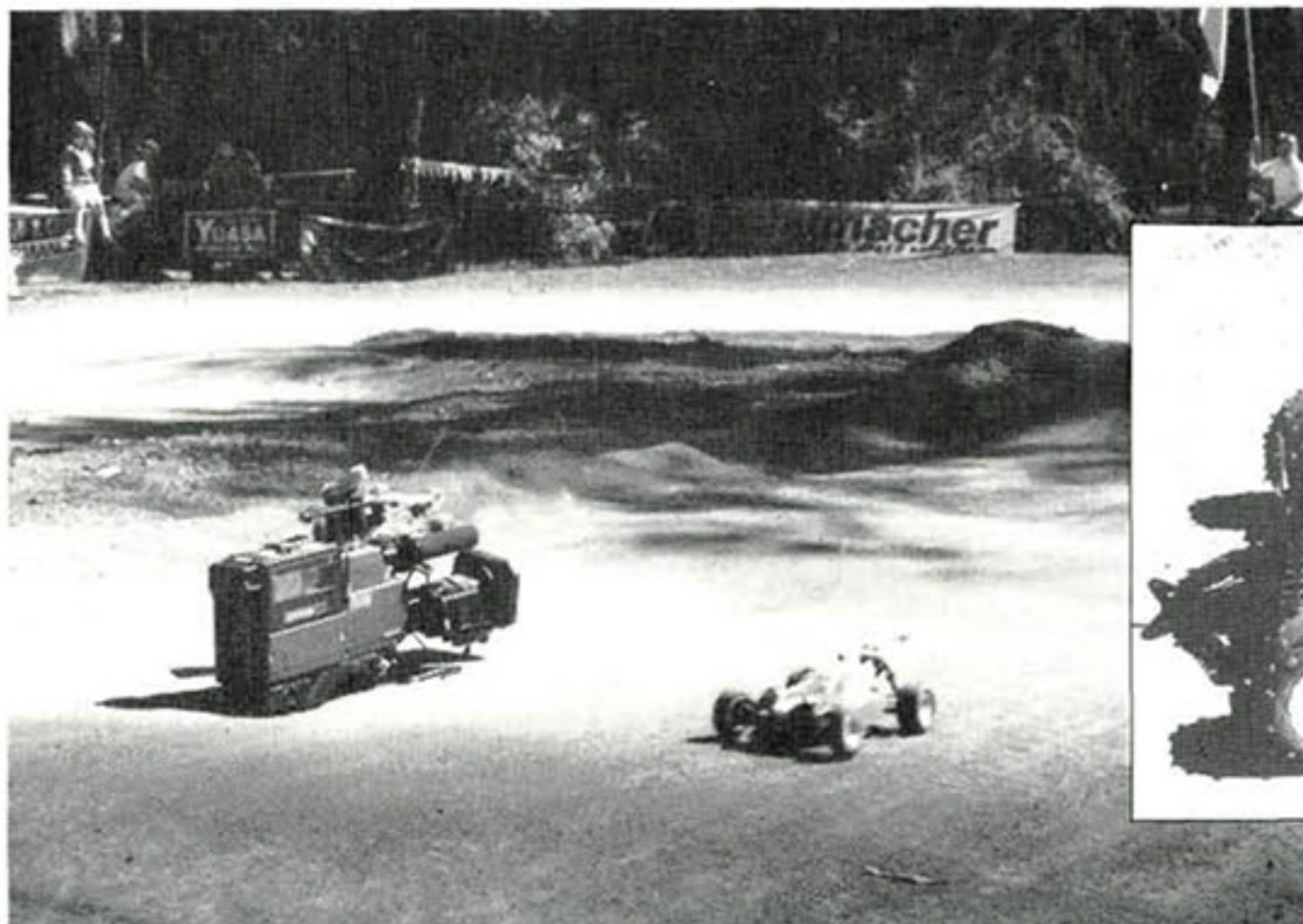
From left: Team Trinity's Ernie Provetti and Joel Johnson enjoy the awards-banquet refreshments with Team Associated's Jay Halsey and Butch Kloeber and Yokomo's Satoshi Kayano.

trimmed the in-side bead to fit over the oversize aluminum rim. The experiment looked promising during practice, but the hand-made rim tended to bend

out of shape and was scrapped in favor of Losi's standard wheels and tires.

Early in the game, Losi was also moderately successful with an experimental two-speed transmission, but they opted for their more conventional tranny in the Finals. This two-speed tranny was actually a better-kept secret than Associated's "stealth" car. Losi informants claim they were given misleading information about the track's dimensions, and they brought this tranny because they'd been led to believe that the course was considerably longer.

Many drivers used slipper-type clutches to counter the effects of the "loose stuff" outside the driving line. In particular, Schumacher seemed to be more successful with its new Top Cat that was modified with a slipper designed by Team Pit Stop's Steven Miniea. (He also supplied slippers and chain-drive trannies to a number of A- and B-Main finalists.)



A local TV crew records the action. With the help of Race Prep's Mike Dunn, a mini-cam was able to capture a "car's-eye" view (inset).

Some experiments were quite daring: Gary Miyakawa (a Kyosho mechanic) mounted two front tires on a rear Kyosho rim to form a set of "dualies" for driver Mike Burnette. This setup produced great traction on the loose surface, but turning was less than satisfactory.

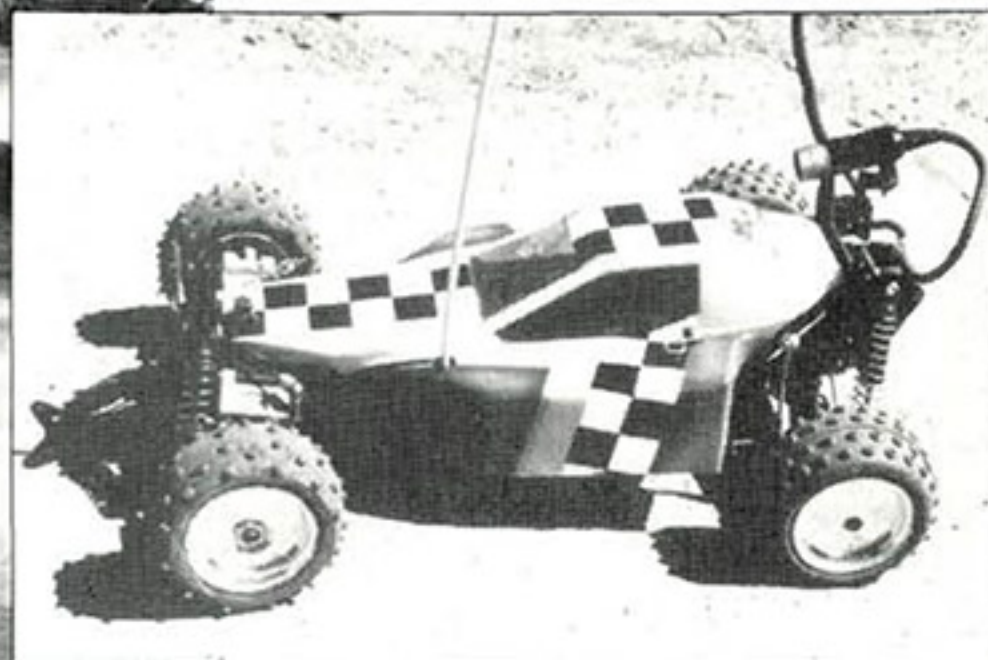
THE BEAUTIFUL LAND OF OZ

Beyond the controversial overtones (see sidebar), this event was a grand affair, embellished by international pomp and circumstance. The beautiful country surrounding the St. Ives track is an outdoor racer's Valhalla. Set in idyllic bushland, the track is about 35 kilometers from downtown Sydney. The track is permanent and was extensively upgraded for this event with an 8-foot-high steel-and-concrete drivers' stand. The Aussies went all out on this event and were very gracious hosts. The program was very well organized, and the dual AMB scoring system was extremely efficient. Instead of the customary buzzer, each race ended with a polite announcement: "Thank you, drivers."

The prime mover among the Australian organizers was the venerable Jack Grenenger. He was the chairman of the 1989 World Title Committee, and he worked tirelessly before, during and after the event to make this the pinnacle of R/C racing in Australia. No praise is too great for the grand effort of the ORRCA staff and the local racing clubs that helped out. Even the weather cooperated—sunny days and cool nights with just a dash of rain during the evening before 2WD qualifying.

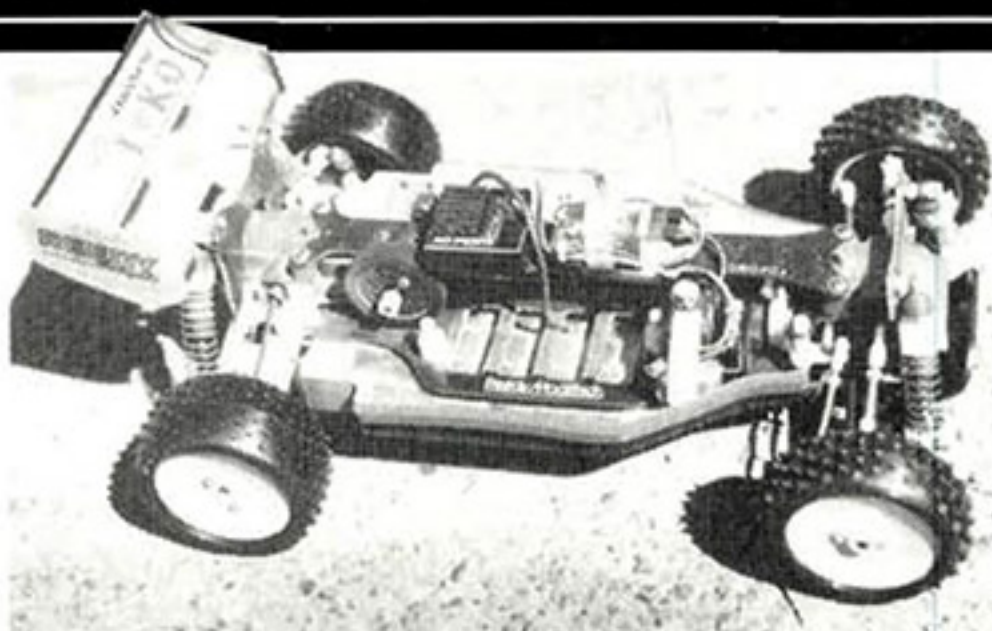
The picturesque track winds through tall trees; there's one major jump at the entrance to the 130-foot straightaway; and there's a mild double jump on one of the infield turns. The soil is clay and dolerite (a dark, porous, sandy, igneous rock). The grassy infields were dyed a deep green, and they contrasted smartly with the golden-colored lanes, which were bordered by 18-inch berms.

Though many of us were a long,



long way from home, the accommodating Aussies have a way of making you feel really welcome—more like a guest than a foreigner—though they do speak a strange

form of English! Many words have entirely different meanings in Oz dialect, and, when conversing with locals, I really had to be careful to avoid misunderstandings. My favorite expression is what Aussies call someone who hammers them on the racetrack: "Ya bloody barger!"



Masami's Yokomo Super Dogfighter sports upright front shocks, while most of the Americans' Yokomo YZ-10s used a mono-shock setup.



Mike Dunn's JR-X2 was the top production car in 2WD, with a 4th-place finish in the A-Finals.

AUSSIELAND ACTION

The official racing action began on Tuesday, September 5, with timed practice for 2WD drivers. The 120 drivers were divided into 12 heats, and the next day (Wednesday) was the most important for qualifying, as five of the six rounds

were run. American-made cars were dominant in 2WD: Nearly all the A- and B-Final grids were made up of the Associated 2WD hybrid, RC10 Graphites and Losi JR-X2s. Of the 30 drivers who made up the A-, B- and C-Finals, 23 were from the U.S.

Masami Hirosaka was the only Japanese driver in the top three Mains, but he made up for the rest of his countrymen by qualifying 4 seconds faster than second qualifier Mike Dunn (who drove a JR-X2) for the pole position (Hirosaka, 16/512.5; Dunn, 16/516.4); and that was only a taste of things to come!

Defending World Champion, Joel Johnson, barely made the A-Final with his Kyosho Ultima Pro, and he didn't pose a serious threat to the rest of the field. In 1987, Johnson's Ultima stole the crown from the RC10, but it was a very different story in '89.

Great Britain's Jamie Booth put his Schumacher Top Cat on the 7th starting position in the A-Final grid. Associated's Jay Halsey, Cliff Lett and Rick Vehlow qualified 3rd, 4th and 5th with the stealth car, followed by Craig Dreschler (GB) in the 6th spot with a conventional RC10 Graphite. Qualifying in the 9th and 10th positions were Team Losi's Jack Johnson and Ron Rossetti (both with JR-X2s).

Team Losi driver Jack Johnson summed up what it was like to drive on this track: "The base goes away quickly, and the surface gets more and more slippery," he explained. "In other words, loose dirt forms on top of the hard surface, and it's like trying to drive on marbles. There's only one decent line to drive throughout the entire course, and if you get outside of it, you're history."

In 4WD, the Yokomo tires didn't give as much of an advantage as they had in 2WD, and there was a wider range of cars and some different faces on the drivers' stand in the top finals. In a surprising reversal of the 1987 results, Yokomo placed five cars on the A-Final grid (at Romsey, only one qualified), and Kyosho managed to place only one car in the A-Main at

T I M E O U T !

DURING THE TWO WEEKS that the 120 international drivers spent practicing, qualifying and competing in the Finals at St. Ives, racers and mechanics concentrated so intensely on their craft that it was as if they all had blinders on. The competitors came from 20 nations (many leaving their countries for the first time), but most saw no more of Australia than the view from their hotel rooms and the St. Ives Racetrack. This was partly owing to the tight racing schedule and the fact that, with such stiff competition at a world event, these guys (and girl!) couldn't think of anything else.

I had a tough time trying to convince some of the drivers to do a little sightseeing: "What! Are you crazy? This is a world event man!"

Fortunately, on Sunday, when the excitement was over, I managed to talk a handful of racers into an excursion to Darling Harbour in Sydney. Our small group included Cliff Lett, Don Jones, Rick Hohwart, Christian Keil and Chris McElroy.

The tour started at the Harbourside Shopping Mall, and from there we moved on to the underwater Sea Aquarium and Maritime Museum.

After a walk through the town, we took a hydrofoil ride from Circular Quay around the harbor and past the world-famous Sydney Opera House. From there, we went to the historic site of the first European settlement in Australia—the Rocks. After a much-needed breather and some refreshments at the Pumphouse, we went to the top of Sydney Tower, which is the tallest public building in the eastern hemisphere. A round-trip ride on the city's monorail brought us back to our starting point and was a great end to a wonderful day in one of the most famous and beautiful cities in the world.



CONTRIBUTORS WANTED

We think many of our readers have ideas that are worth sharing. How many times have you read an article and said, "I could do that!" or "That's not the only way to do that; my way is easier!" Could be!

Here's your chance. We're expanding *Radio Control Car Action* and are looking for additional contributors to help us accomplish this objective. Of key importance are good photographs; the writing we can help you with. Interested? It's much easier than you might think!

Let's hear from you. Send in your article ideas and a few sample photographs. We're looking forward to seeing them.

Rich Hemstreet
R/C Car Action
Air Age Publishing
251 Danbury Road
Wilton, CT 06897

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WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS=

St. Ives (they had five at Romsey).

Again, Hirosaka was unbeatable: He put his Super Dogfighter on the pole with a time of 17/512.22—a scant 0.9 second ahead of Associated's Cliff Lett, who drove a mono-shock YZ-10. Just behind Lett came fellow Americans Rick Hohwart, Butch Kloeber and Jay Halsey. Hohwart had the only Kyosho car (the Lazer Z-X), while Kloeber and Halsey piloted YZ-10s. The 6th- through 8th-place starting positions were held by Schumacher Pro Cats (revised versions of Schumacher's 1987 champion car) in the hands of Jurgen Lautenbach (West Germany), and Phil Davies and Rory Cull (GB). Satoshi Kayano (Japan) qualified with his Yokomo Super Dogfighter in the 9th spot, while Race Prep's Mike Dunn started from the 10th position driving his AYK Pro Radiant.

MAD 2WD MOTORING!

Thursday, September 7 and Sunday, September 10—the most hectic days! The sixth (final) rounds of qualifying, final practice (with transponders) and all three legs of the finals for both 2WD and 4WD were crammed into these two days. Only the A-Finalists raced three heats, and the results of the best two runs determined the overall results. Following recent IFMAR rulings, the racing format called for 6-cell batteries and 5-minute heats.

At the start of round one, Hirosaka blasted off the pole for the holeshot with Halsey and Dunn in tow. Halsey went a little wide in a turn and Hirosaka pulled away.

Hirosaka took the holeshot ... pitching his car into the turns at will!

Meanwhile, Lett was drafting Dunn, waiting for him to make a mistake, but it was Lett who rolled and dropped back, so allowing Dreschler and Booth to get by.

With Hirosaka driving as though his car were on rails, Halsey couldn't get any closer to him than 30 feet, and Dunn held on to the 3rd position, as the three leaders slowly pulled away from the rest of the pack. In these positions, they "freight-trained" to the wire, with Hirosaka taking the win, Halsey in 2nd and Dunn in 3rd—all three with 17 laps (a lap up on the field).

The relatively reserved performances of the first round weren't repeated in round two, when the drivers were obviously more aggressive. At the start, Dunn made an awesome inside move on Hirosaka, and he made it to turn one in the lead! Hirosaka repeatedly charged up to Dunn's car and lightly tapped it on the rear as if he were biting off bits of the wing! Hirosaka made a clean inside pass on Dunn as Halsey came up on the leaders to join the fray. Halsey flew past Dunn over the low doubles only to get out of shape shortly afterward, causing the two cars to collide and Halsey to lose valuable ground. Meanwhile, Lett and Vehlow appeared out of nowhere and began to put pressure on the leaders.

Dunn held off Lett's charge until he rolled, and Lett went past to assume the runner-up position. Vehlow made a bid to get past Lett in the final seconds of the race, but Lett shut the door on him! At the wire, it was Hirosaka in 1st and Lett in 2nd—both with 17 laps—followed by Vehlow and Dunn.

The excitement that had started in the first two rounds increased going into the third, and final, leg of the race. Hirosaka took the holeshot and delighted spectators by pitching his car into the turns at will! Dunn couldn't hang on to the runner-up position for long, as first Halsey and then Lett snuck past.

As Dunn slid out on the "marbles," Booth stole past him for the 3rd spot! Dunn charged back up to the leaders and nudged Booth out of his line to reclaim his former position. Meanwhile, Hirosaka continued to kick out the rear end of his car around the turns as Halsey began to put pressure on the young hotshot. Recovering from a bad start, Johnson moved up into the 4th position when Booth rolled, but then he rolled, too, and this allowed Booth to regain his position. With only seconds left in the race, Halsey, turning up the pressure on Hirosaka, forced the young Japanese to make a rare mistake, and he literally flew over Hirosaka as he rolled! Halsey took this win with Hirosaka in 2nd and Lett in 3rd.

To the delight of the scores of spectators surrounding the track, the ever-colorful Eustace Moore provided the race-action commentary. (I swear the man has a different hat for every day of the week!) Moore was also interviewed by a local TV station that was reporting on the event, and when asked how seriously the competitors took this sport, he replied, "If one of these guys thought he could win by slitting his opponent's throat, he would!" When the final scores had been tallied, Hirosaka was declared the new 2WD World Champion with Halsey 2nd and Lett 3rd. The three victors had floral wreaths placed around their necks, and each was handed a toy

"If one of these guys thought he could win by slitting his opponent's throat, he would!"

koala and a large bottle of champagne—of course, they showered one another!

Between the 2WD and 4WD events, some of the half-time jitters were relieved when D&R Productions—a local video crew that was filming the event—mounted an extremely small camera on the top of Mike Dunn's car to capture a "car's-eye" view of the racing action as three other cars raced around the track. The quality of the playback was excellent and very enlightening; in fact, some of the footage was shown during the evening news report with Formula 1 sound effects dubbed in! (Very creative, these Aussies!)

No sooner had the last 2WD Final race been run, than drivers started to pack up their 2WDs and to crank on their 4WD cars to prepare for the next three days. Considering all the beautiful sights to be seen in Australia, it was a shame there wasn't a break between the two classes to allow the drivers (some of whom were abroad for the first time) to do a little sightseeing.

4WD FINAL FRONTIERS

During the final 4WD practice run (to make sure the transponders were operating correctly), Hirosaka didn't seem to be as dominant, and he only managed to place 4th. Butch Kloeber won the practice ahead of Halsey and Howart, but Hirosaka had other plans for the Americans going into the Finals.

At the start of round one, Hirosaka took the holeshot into the lead, put the pedal to the metal, and was gone! A note of interest here is that Hirosaka's chosen control was a KO CX-3, stick-type transmitter! Meanwhile, Lautenbach was in the runner-up spot with Halsey, Kloeber and Lett in hot pursuit—like hungry dogs! When Lett passed Lautenbach, the West German driver found himself in the untenable position of being in the middle of three of the most aggressive U.S. drivers. Halsey's car broke on his 13th lap, and this left Lautenbach to the mercy of Kloeber, who gave us a brilliant driving display as he fought his way into the runner-up position. For a few laps, he really put pressure on Hirosaka, and then Lett stole back the runner-up position from him in the final seconds of the race! Hirosaka held on for a wire-to-wire win.

In an encore performance in the second A-Final race, Hirosaka again blasted into the lead, while Kloeber had him locked in his sights! Bad luck struck Halsey again, as something in his car went south after only five laps, and he had to pull out of the race.

A determined Lautenbach desperately fought to protect his 3rd-place position from Lett's charges. Lett did manage to get past Lautenbach briefly before he had to give the position back to the Pro-Cat driver. Meanwhile, Hirosaka switched on the afterburners and blasted across the finish line, a full lap ahead of the field, and he upped the pace to 18 laps in the process!

In the third—and final—race, as expected, Hirosaka shot into the lead with Lett and Kloeber in hot pursuit! Kloeber moved past Lett and seemed to hook onto the rear of Hirosaka's car. Lett began to lose ground as Hohwart moved into 3rd. Having better luck in this race, Halsey was posting some of the fastest lap times as he

(Continued on page 56)

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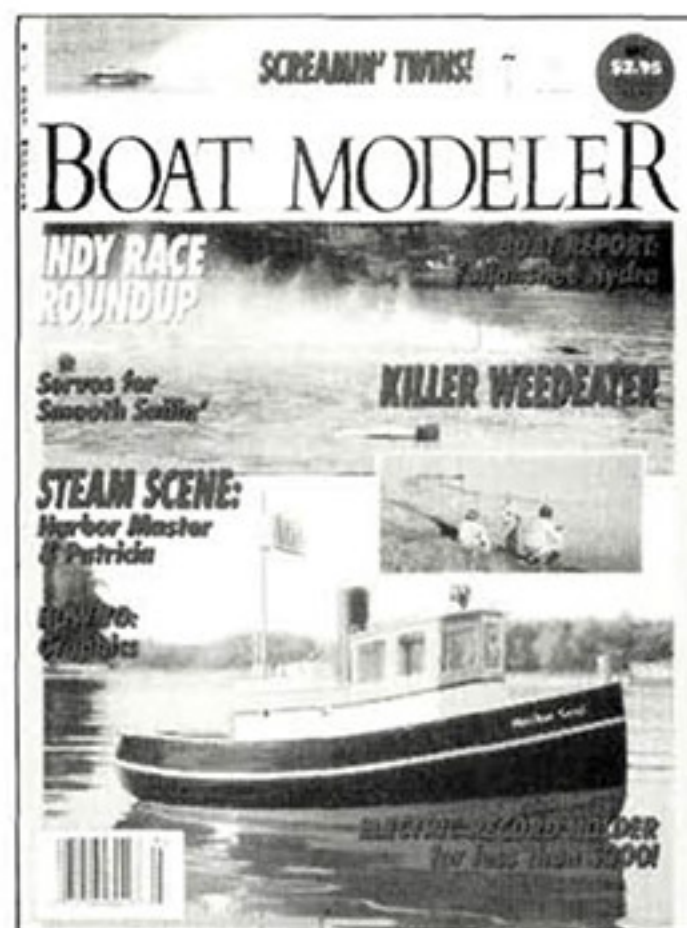


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WORLD CHAMPS =

fought his way up into the 4th position.

Dunn's car broke a rear wheel when coming off the main jump on his 9th lap, and it was out of the running. On the dry track, the cars kicked up clouds of dust, and we could barely see from one end of the course to the other.

With less than a minute to the finish and Kloeber climbing all over him, Hirosaka rolled just past turn one, and Kloeber went past him in a flash! In an exciting dash to the wire, Hirosaka charged up to the new leader and tried every move he could think of to pass the American, but Kloeber held on as they both charged across the finish line, racing door-handle to door-handle. (Yes, I know off-roaders don't have door handles!) Kloeber finished just 0.22 second ahead of Hirosaka, and both drivers posted 18 laps.



At the awards ceremony immediately after the scores had been tallied, Hirotsuka was declared the 4WD Champion for the second consecutive time, while Lett was 2nd and Hohwart was 3rd. They were given the same spoils as the 2WD winners, and they took the customary champagne bath, then posed—soaked!—for the photographers.

That evening, our gracious Aussie hosts held a barbecue awards banquet where dignitaries gave closing speeches and all the drivers were given plaques. The top three drivers in both classes were awarded large, silver-and gold-plated trophies.

The international competitors, anticipating long return trips to their respective countries, made their farewells to old and new friends and expressed the hope that they'd all meet again in 1991.