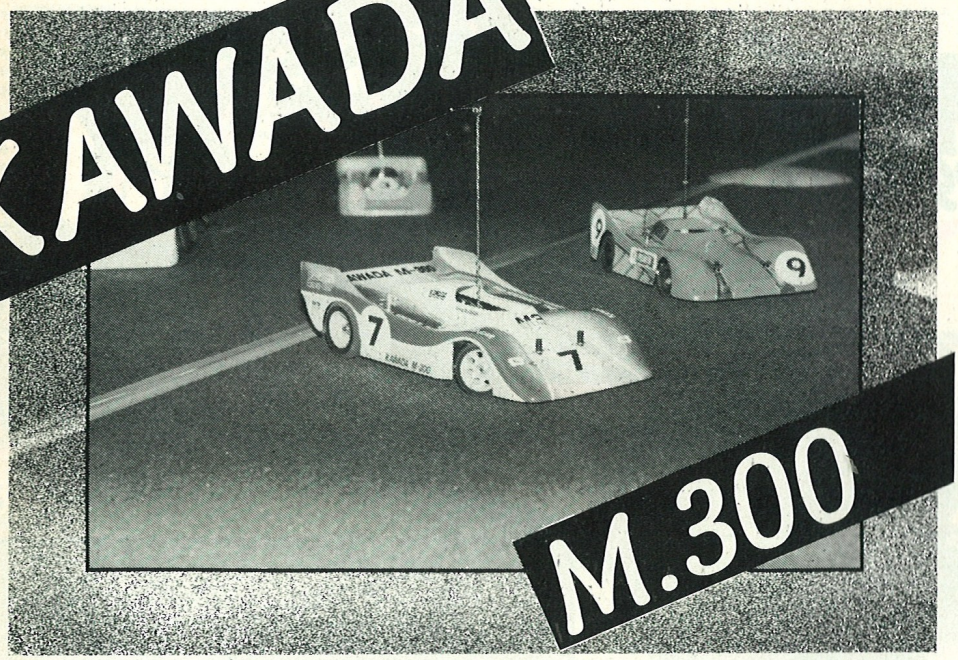
KAWADA M.300



The continuing story of the M300 draws to a close in this issue!

Bet you had a job putting it together!

The M-300 comes with a graphite chassis that Kawada warn: 'Is the best carbon fibre available, it can conduct electricity very easily. If your batteries short, it can ruin the chassis and batteries. It may even cause a fire!' So be warned, this probably could occur on any good quality carbon chassis; they say you learn something new all the time! Anyway, the way around the problem is to smear epoxy resin glue around the cell slots, after you have chamfered them so that the batteries can sit as low and snugly as possible. The epoxy acts as an effective insulator.

The car assembly itself was a copy-book exercise; not one component had to be filed, forced or eased into position. But I do have a criticism, albeit only a minor one. Along with some other manufacturers, noticeably Japanese, Kawada use umpteen different diameters and lengths of screws and bolts. I found that the only way to sort out which went where was to carry out a dummy assembly of the M-300 before the construction proper.

The final stage itself was the installation of the radio gear, motor etc. As you can see from the photographs, there is a reasonable amount of space for equipment on the M-300. I used a large old Futaba 'M' type receiver (very reliable) though!) which took up a fair amount of space, but still left sufficient room for a Firefly International speed controller.

Mind you, the shell looks nice . . .

The bodyshell, (called a 'Kawada'), is very nicely moulded in lightweight polycarbonate. All cut lines are clearly marked and the manufacturer suggests that the rear upturn section be cut down to the marked line if the car suffers from high-speed understeer. As I intended racing on carpet, I took a gamble and cut it out straight away. The shell is reminiscent of the popular TOJ BMW style, but it is sleeker, more wedge shaped, with a narrower cockpit area. I know a number of 1/12th racers who would like to buy the shell alone! I must at this point congratulate Andrew Dover for his efforts in painting the shell; he was suffering from the flu, didn't have his airbrush, so had to use spray cans, but still managed to provide a really nice job. Thanks Andrew!

Finally a large decal sheet is provided with just about every permutation you can think of to say 'Kawada' or 'M-300'!

O.K., You like it, but how does it go?

Track test time comes again! (or pudding time as your editor calls it!) The all-up weight was 1lb 15oz, right on the button, which is very good when you consider the large receiver and number of decals on the shell.

To make life interesting, (i.e. hairy!) we use 27 turn buggy motors at our club, so the M-300 was fitted with a well used 1988 standard 'Brown Dot' motor and a pack of SC's — nothing super special, but the car's bearings and alignment are so good it was easily the fastest on the track. This lack of friction was noticeable by the way the car free-wheeled, and by the comments of some drivers who tried it complaining that it didn't slow down quickly enough! You can't please 'em all, can you?!

We only had a chance to run the car in five heats and the first few were spent in getting the balance of tyre additive corect — a complete coat to the rear and 1/3rd to the front produced too much medium speed understeer, but even so by tightening up the centre stabiliser adjustment, I was still able to be on the same lap as the leaders when my cells dumped. (Probably due to over-heating the cells when making them into a saddle pack!)

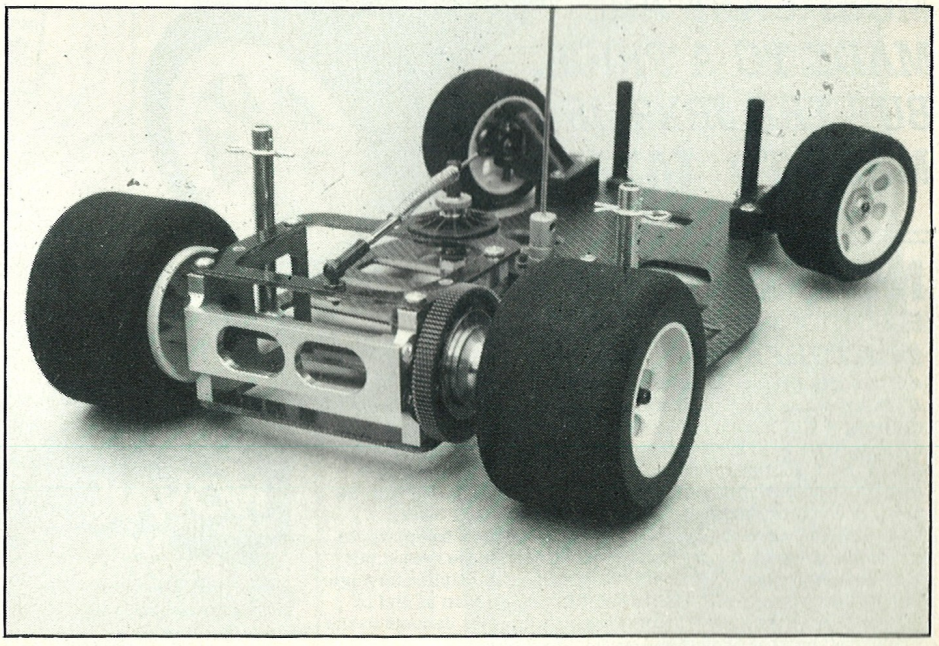
A well known 1/8th scale driver who was competed in several International events and also races 1/12th is Mark Stockford, and he tried the car out next between heats and was genuinely delighted with the handling. To use his own words: 'Very smooth, very nice!'

By now I was getting to grips with the setting up of the M-300. Track-tite was applied to 3/4 of the rear tyres and all of the fronts, with an additional washer being inserted under the front suspension spring as recommended by the manufacturer to combat high-speed understeer.

Steve Jones volunteered to guide Kawada's little missile in the next heat and was in the lead down the straight, but as he swung into the first corner another driver, who couldn't get around the corner at the same speed as Steve, took him off sideways into a very solid wall. The M-300 stopped dead.

My cars never stop due to wires coming loose because I believe in using the greatest care in preparation, therefore I did not know where to look first. I took the shell off, studied the car for a few seconds and then discovered that the force of the sideways crash had been so severe that the armature had rammed the end of the motor right out! (Something not totally uncommon in 1/12th racing I might add). This was prised back into place, the shell re-fitted and the race continued. Steve drove like a man possessed and carved his way through the field, but when the final buzzer went he was still three laps down.

So what did this prove? Well, it proved three things: Firstly, the best lap times were

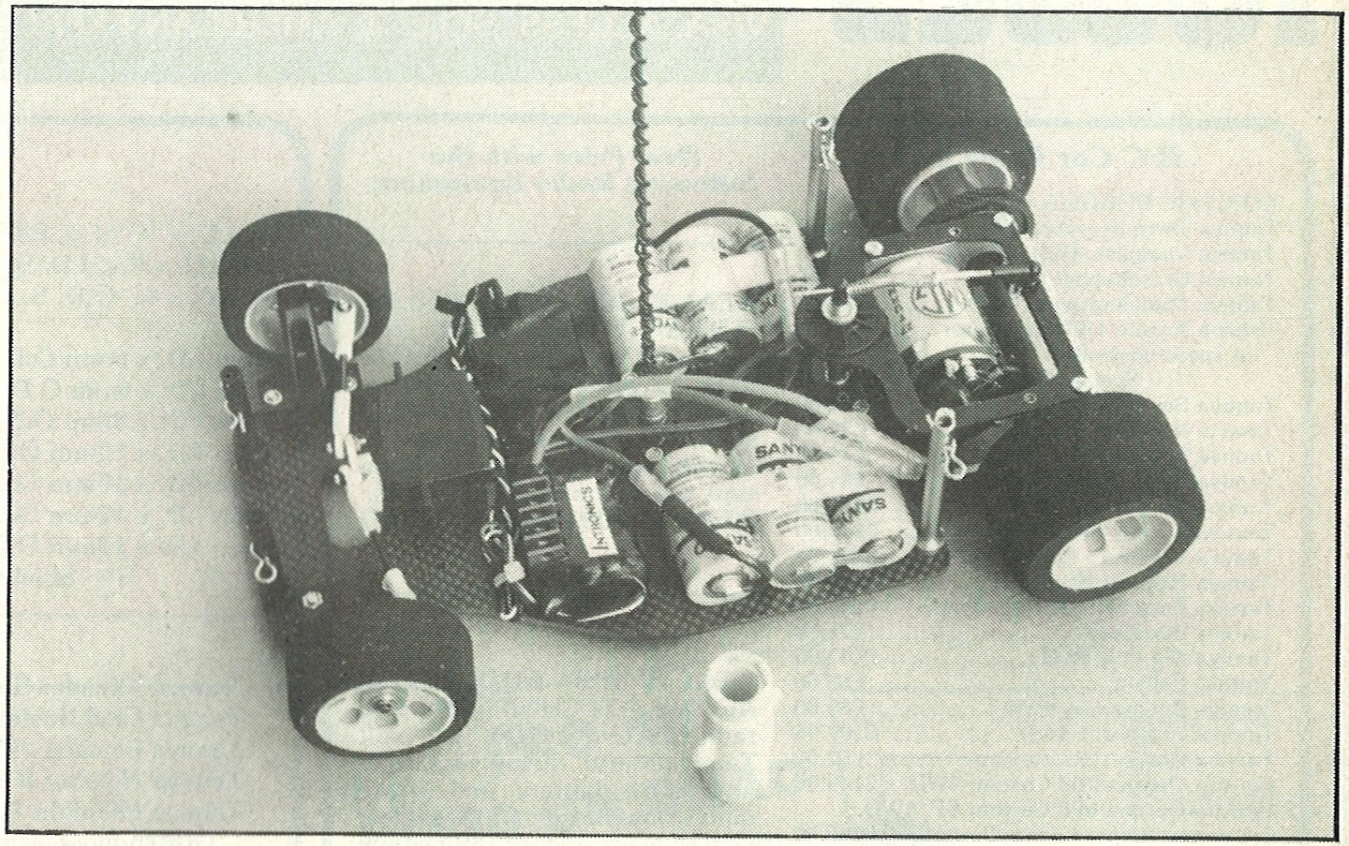


around 9¾ seconds. It took far longer than 30 seconds for a marshal to pick up the car, for me to collect it, remove four clips, the shell, find the trouble, get a screwdriver, repair the motor, replace the shell and four clips, and put the car back on the track. I infer that the M-300 would have won on only its fifth run! Secondly I discovered the end-bell had parted company again before the heat end due to the bent lugs, but the car was still fast and the large aluminium heat sinking at the back was very warm right around to the opposite side due to dissipating the heat created by the excess motor friction. It obviously works well.

Thirdly, the car is extremely tough and rugged; this was the third heavy collision the M-300 had suffered due to bad driving by people who have no hope of getting around corners at the same speed. There's no doubt the general standard of driving etiquette has dropped over the last few years. (I totally agree — Editor). Steve was obviously disappointed but considered the Kawada really nice to drive. His comments: 'Smooth and tough. I like it!'

I found the M-300 was entirely predictable, it goes exactly where you want it to, when you want it to. Several other drivers had a go and all said the car seemed very stable and positive.

The only running problems that have so far occurred are two screws and the left rear hub coming loose due to insufficient thread-locking compound being used. (I should know better, after all my comments in previous articles!) A careful examination of the M-300 has revealed one area of higher than normal wear though and that is, surprisingly, both differential thrust



washers are showing signs of grooving. Considering the quality of the car I can only assume these must have come from a faulty batch. If not, it's an item Kawada should investigate further. Other than some dents in the bodyshell from the aforementioned incidents, the car is in perfect condition.

Mmm interesting . . . so where do I get one?

I think the M-300 could well be in the 'A' finals of this years World Championships if the right driver is 'on the sticks'. But any budding British driver could have a problem because at the moment there isn't a U.K. importer. However, Kawada are keen to start selling their range in this country and are looking for contacts. If the price is right, I feel sure the car will be a competition and commercial success. Kawada can be contacted by writing to Kawada Radio Control Models, 10-47 Ohbayashi Cho, Toyota City, Aichi, Japan. (Telephone 0565 27 9355).

Let me finish by quoting the last paragraph in the instruction manual: 'You will be surprised how fast you can drive it from the start. The M-300 is for the expert driver, but is strong enough for the beginner. Now experiment on your own and find the best set-up for your track. Please love your M-300 for ever!'