

WINNER'S CIRCLE

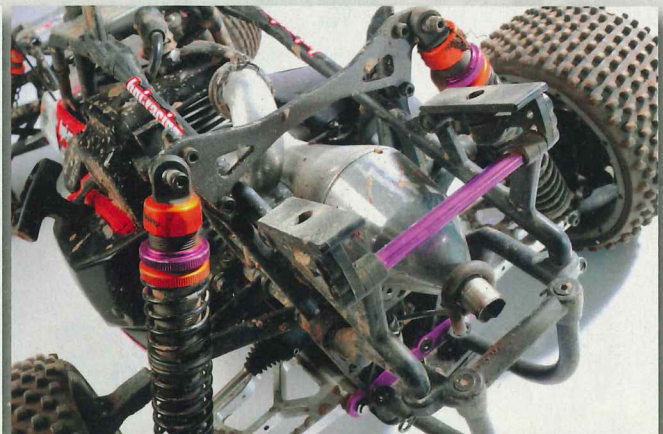
TONY PHALEN'S NATS-WINNING 5B



BY JASON YU > HPI recently held one of the biggest events that featured their biggest guns. Word of the first-ever Baja Nationals spread, and come early November, a crowd of anxious Baja racers gathered at Milestone Ranch Motocross Park in Riverside, California, to battle it out for the national championship. The track was fast, yet technically challenging. Enduring freezing weather and the hour-long main, Tony Phalen rose to the top of the Unlimited class with his unassumingly, conservatively modified 5B.

This 5B was originally Rodney Will's RTR, which he lent to Tony for the weekend. "He said if I win, I could keep it!" Tony adds. Sounds like a good deal to us! Experiencing some engine trouble his first time out, it's painstakingly evident that Tony has resolved those issues.

Surprisingly, the car doesn't have a ton of crazy mods done to it, just choice hop-ups. Tony's 5B makes use of most of the factory HPI bling including the carbon fiber front upper plate, rear upper plate, rear brace, engine mount braces, and the rear chassis plate. The only power upgrade is the aluminum tuned pipe.



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Suspension upgrades include the SS rear shock mount plate and the VVC shock set. The collars on the rear shocks were also doubled to keep them from loosening. Oils in the front and rear were swapped for 45wt and 10wt respectively.

Nearly every upgrade afterward was based strictly on increasing the car's durability. For this, Tony added the GBE front shock tower brace, the aluminum rear arms, HPI heavy duty driveshafts, heavy duty aluminum clutch mount, heavy duty pinion gear, heavy duty bead locks, Integy steel spur gear, and the Outerwears pull start pre-filter. "I don't know how many pull starts I went through before I put that thing on," said Tony. The transmission, however, was left alone.

To keep dirt off the air filter, a front windshield was added. "I made the windshield from stuff I got from Home Depot. Cost me like, seven bucks, I think."

The majority of the changes made to car were simply to make the car more durable. Tony wanted to make sure it lasted the hour-long main. Qualifying in the B, bumping up, and then taking the win in the A, it looks like Tony's plan, along with his driving strategy, worked. "I didn't really try to drive fast," said Tony. "I don't think I pulled full throttle ever. Maybe on the straight, just a blip; but the rest of the time, I just focused on keeping my corner speed up and staying smooth."

Concluding our interview, Tony sends a special thanks to Rodney Wills, HPI Racing, Hot Bodies, Pro-Line, Competition X, Gabe engineering, and Motul for the support. *R/C*

