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QUICK SPEC

Manufacturer Traxxas USA  
Type RTR Brushless Electric  
Short Course Truck  
Price £539.99 RRP  
www.logicrc.com

Scale 1/10th  
Power 4WD Electric  
Length 568 mm  
Width 296 mm  
Height 214 mm



**FANCY  
THROWING IT  
INTO THE CORNERS?**

"The Ultimate Edition's spec list reads like a hop-up catalogue"



Main pic: TORC driver Chet Huffman's livery reproduced in perfect detail. The number 1 on the side is for a good reason!

2010 may have finished for many with gridlock and an ill-prepared snow covered UK, but for me it ended with reviewing a version of a truck that I've been itching to get my hands on and run for nearly two years. For once I wasn't at all bothered by the weather, as the truck is 100% waterproof and can take in its stride all the snow, sleet and permafrost I threw at it. Even if it was between -8 and -12 outside and the dirt track I was testing on was rock solid, with sheet ice on one corner and snow on most of the others, I was still able to run pack after pack through it for literally hours of fun. Add to that, 4WD grip levels, letting me drive it as hard and fast as I liked, jump doubles, triples (even in these conditions) and as the title of this review states: throw it hard into every corner with a wide open throttle.

You see the truck I'm talking about is the VXL brushless equipped 'Traxxas Slash 4x4 Ultimate Edition', but to rewind a little, the Ultimate is in fact an RTR version of the company's original Flagship 4x4 Short Course Truck, the Slash Platinum Edition. This incarnation originally sold out in a matter of weeks when it was first released in December 2009 and is still very sought after by some seasoned Traxxas collectors even to this day.

### COMPLETING THE 'ULTIMATE' PACKAGE

The Platinum originally came as a race (or for many a bashing!) roller, without any radio gear and a clear shell. While this may have suited many existing R/C fans, and offered them the choice of their own paint scheme and radio gear, for the majority of prospective customers it lost the true plug and play and convenient nature of the Traxxas RTR range, a concept that they themselves first invented. To this end Traxxas have re-released this model as the Ultimate Edition, tweaked it a little and added their excellent twenty-model memory 2.4 GHz TQ radio system. It also comes with a choice of fully painted and liveried shells representing all the top drivers in the TORC racing series in Pro

4x4 Class. The selling point of the original Platinum version was a full compliment of Traxxas' own option parts including an optional middle diff if you wanted to get really serious and go racing the truck. The Ultimate Edition's spec list reads like a hop-up catalogue. It features amongst other things: Blue-anodized aluminium steering knuckles and C-hubs, Blue-anodized aluminium rear hub carriers, Blue-anodized aluminium axle nuts, Hard-anodized, Teflon-coated Big Bore shocks with titanium nitride shafts and a full sway bar set with optional bars for fine-tuning the handling even further.

All that may sound great, but don't forget this is on top of the standard spec of a Traxxas Slash 4x4 that has... and (takes a deep breath) I quote: Licensed BFGoodrich Mud Terrain T/A tyres, Officially-Licensed Race Replica body, long-travel suspension, bell-crank steering system with integrated servo saver, powerful and efficient brushless Traxxas Velineon 3500 motor, VXL-3s waterproof electronic speed control, Digital, ball bearing, waterproof steering servo, waterproof electronics, Traxxas High-Current Connector, Blue-anodized, lightweight aluminium main propshaft, Revo-spec sealed, silicone-filled differentials, Patented Torque-Control slipper clutch, heavy-duty 4 mm steel turnbuckles, precision high-quality hex hardware throughout, efficient rubber-sealed ball bearings... Now that's out of the way let's get to the nitty-gritty (I love that word!)

### WHY GO FOR THE ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE?

Well it all depends on your aspirations, the stock 4x4 is a great truck to drive and successfully bridges the gap between an out and out basher and a racing thoroughbred. The extra hop-ups that the Ultimate brings to the table strengthen parts that in really hard bashing or racing use could be broken and Traxxas have the balance just right. Too many alloy parts will just transfer stresses and harder impacts to weaker parts of the construction and break parts further down the chain. By concentrating on the hub carriers and steering knuckles the Ultimate is stiffer and stronger where it's really needed, and only where it's needed.



*Above:* The Traxxas Link 2.4 GHz receiver boasts twin steering channels and has 5-channel compatibility



*Above:* The rubber seal around the perimeter of the receiver's box keeps the dirt and moisture out



*Above:* The optional middle diff and provided spur gears can take this serious basher into the realms of seasoned racer



*Above:* Bellcrank steering offers direct and precise control, the steering servo protected by an adjustable servo saver

The diff's are the same metal Revo Spec items that Traxxas have utilised in a variety of other models and are designed to take all the 4WD brushless abuse you can throw at them. They are tunable by simply altering the viscosity of the silicone oils you use. Another neat addition is that the optional middle diff is included in the box and within minutes can be fitted (there's just a handful of screws to remove). It offers more direct drive to each axle straight from the spur gear, and this is by far the best option for racing and will offer the most traction on a variety of surfaces. Depending how much grip each end of the car can generate, the power from the main prop is then sent to where it's needed most. Having the optional centre differential fitted transfers power to the front and rear differentials independently for maximum corner speed and smooth power delivery in the roughest of track conditions.

The downside to running this over the stock slipper is that the driveline can take more shocks in use and possibly the spur be damaged if you don't let off the power when landing a jump (or in the event of a crash). The torque-control slipper when set correctly would take this load and help avoid this occurring. It also allows you to fine-tune the drive in very loose, low grip or wet conditions. By setting it slightly loose and allowing it to slip a little when you punch the throttle, you stand less chance of spinning the wheels as badly and losing available grip. At the end of the day it's a simple choice really, slipper for bashing and just having fun and the diff for racing... as long as you learn to land the truck properly or let off the power in the event of a bad crash!



*Left:* The front and rear offset is exactly the same, unlike on the 2WD Slash Pro model

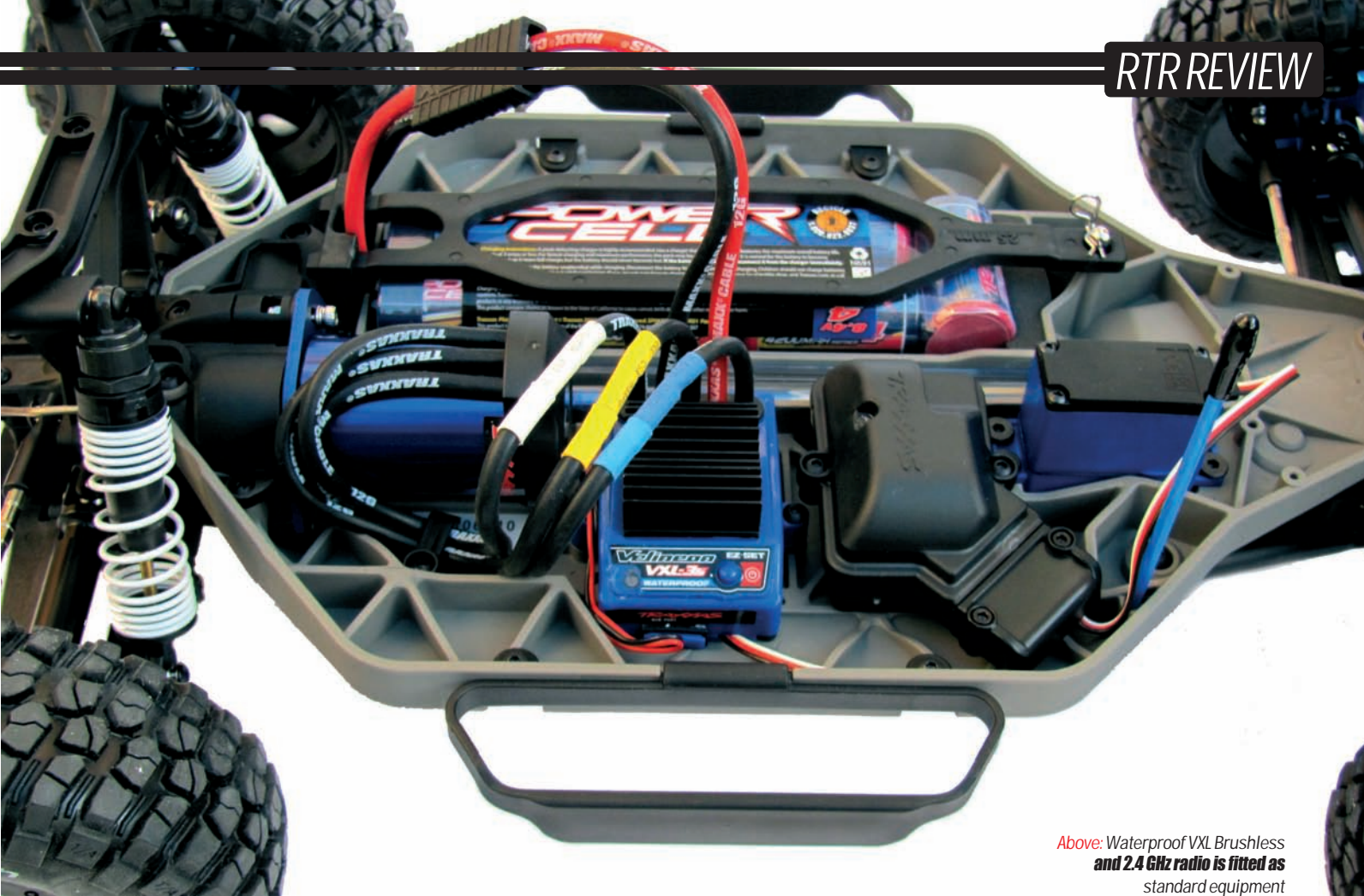


*Right:* BF Goodrich Mud-Terrain tyres are both scale looking and all terrain!

*"If you really fancy going bonkers, then 60 mph+ is easily achieved by simply slotting in a 3S LiPo pack and "gently feeding in the power..."*

### 60 MPH... YOU SERIOUS?

Oh yes, and then some! As with other Traxxas VXL equipped models the ESC is 3S LiPo compatible and will happily propel the car (when geared correctly) to well over 60 mph. The included NiMH pack is good for 35-40 mph and that's not bad performance for a 4WD truck of this size. On 2S LiPo power the speed ramps up again to around 45 mph and to my mind this is the best way to run the Ultimate. In testing I ran the provided 4200 NiMH 7-cell pack and got about 12 minutes of runtime, with a MaxAmps 6500 mAh 2S 60C LiPo this improved to between 20 and 25 minutes of full-on sideways power-sliding action. The charger included is a wall, overnight variety so remember to pick up a delta peak or multi format quick charger and avoid that 4-5 hour wait between charges. For racing and normal bashing fun this is really the sweet spot, and the perfect balance between on demand power and duration. If you really fancy going bonkers, then 60 mph+ is easily achieved by simply

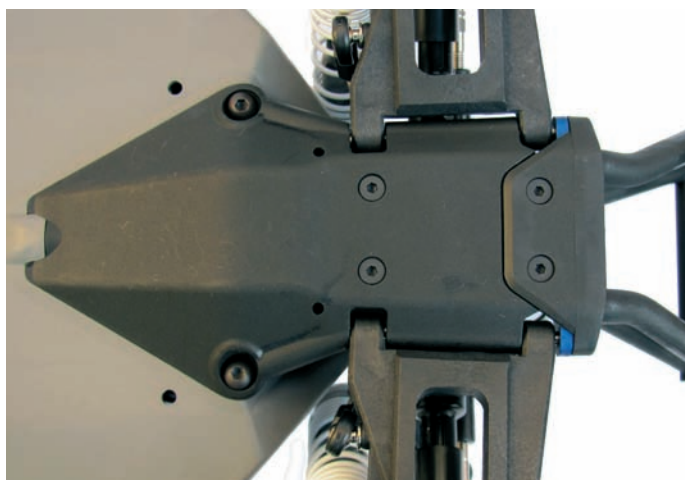


Above: Waterproof VXL Brushless and 2.4 GHz radio is fitted as standard equipment

slotting in a 3S LiPo pack and “gently feeding in the power...” I say this, as if you just gun the throttle you will end up with the stock tyres just spinning away all that extra voltage and punch! The 3500 kV brushed motor will produce a very respectable 38,850 rpm on 3S and 25,200 rpm on 2S so it’s no slouch!

#### VXL SIMPLIFIES THE BRUSHLESS EXPERIENCE

Being sensorless (and waterproof to boot!) the Velineo VXL-3s combo simplifies brushless technology with easy, built-in profiles and intuitive programming sequences. Its unique ‘Tri-mode’ operation auto detects the motor type for running either brushed, sensored or sensorless brushless motors if you ever fancy running another variation from the 3500 kV sensorless one supplied. The VXL-3s Speedo uses a Traxxas circuit design that is programmed with firmware allowing sensorless brushless motors to operate with the smoothness and precision of some of the best high end brushed systems on the market. Cogging is virtually unheard of, and in the last three Traxxas VXL models I’ve personally run, I’ve only ever been able to induce cogging if I got the gearing drastically wrong.



Above: The 4WD chassis has a lower centre of gravity than the 2WD, and smoother lines to avoid any hang-ups in use

*“The VXL-3s operates, and programs just like the Traxxas XL-5 ESC fitted to the 2WD Slash Pro model so if you are upgrading to 4WD or buying an Ultimate as a second truck there’s no tricky new procedures to learn”*

The VXL-3s operates, and programs just like the Traxxas XL-5 ESC fitted to the 2WD Slash Pro model so if you are upgrading to 4WD or buying an Ultimate as a second truck there’s no tricky new procedures to learn. Traxxas’ exclusive patent-pending Training Mode is also included to limit full throttle to 50% for young or inexperienced drivers. Lastly and here in the UK the most important factor, the VXL isn’t designed to be run just in dry conditions, the waterproof design lets you have brushless power on tap in water, mud, and oh yes even good old fashioned 2010 winter snow!

#### FROZEN 4WD ACTION

To really put the Ultimate through its paces I went to the new outdoor dirt track at Moto Arena. On the day of testing it was under about two inches of snow and literally frozen solid. As the ambient temperature was hovering between  $-8$  and  $-6$  all day, my main concern was the plastics designed and made for primarily the US market would become brittle at this temperature. Not a bit of it, in over three hours of runtime spread over a day, the Ultimate didn’t break one component. I did however think that at this temperature the shocks felt over damped and the truck would get thrown off its track far too easily by variations in the surface. I re-filled them with 35w front and 30w silicon oil rear, the stock viscosity being 50w front 40w rear.

The Teflon coated metal-bodied items are easy to remove and strip, and the whole process was completed in less than half an hour, including resting them to allow for any air bubbles to dissipate. Back on track the truck felt more planted and would float over the bumpier parts of the track with ease even at these low temperatures. The fitted (and optional on the stock 4x4) sway bars also help keep the wheels in contact with the surface for longer and aid the tyres generate grip.



*Above: Sway bars compliment the Teflon coated, Nitrided shocks, a partnership made in heaven*



***"Others may be more sophisticated, have more of a racing pedigree but are they as versatile? As much fun? Or, and this is the big one for me... are they waterproof?"***

## GOING FOR IT IS THE POINT

The driving style is more squirt and point than finesse, but it's great fun. You hit the corner entry at full speed, tap the brake to unsettle the truck then power through counter steer into the slide, wheels spinning away. I did try high grip tyres all round and while the truck was faster, more accurate and had far more pop over the jumps it actually kind of ruined the experience for me. The whole idea of these trucks is that you do drive them hard and fast, grip isn't the biggest issue in fact having too much feels like you're missing the point of the whole experience.

Over the jumps the Ultimate is predictable and very robust, it can end up getting some big front end hits if you don't judge your trajectory and throttle just right. Hitting the jump, letting off the throttle is the way to get a nice level attitude in the air. Tapping the brake drops the nose nicely, but it's easy to overdo it and then your front bumper takes the hits. Compared to my 2WD Slash the Ultimate takes the Short Course experience to a whole new level. I like both for very different reasons, the 2WD needing more forethought and is classic over-steer off the power, under-steer on the power driving. The 4WD Slash lets you forget this completely and lets the power do the talking, you don't feel scared to do it either as 1: You're not going to break it very easily, and 2: It's what it was made for in the first place.

**"The Teflon coated metal-bodied items are easy to remove and strip, and the whole process was completed in less than half an hour, including resting them to allow for any air bubbles to dissipate"**

In 2011 I will be racing the Ultimate in a variety of different settings. From indoor Tuesday night off road racing on tarmac and carpet to full on dirt track, Astro and mixed surface action at the Short Course Shootout. As an example of a well-designed piece of Traxxas' art it's nearly perfect. There are a few minor niggles though, like the slow charger included in the box, it's fine for charging the pack but a 4-5 hour wait between runs will be frustrating.

The other and my only real criticism of the whole design is the fact that even though the driveline's central prop is housed under a clear removable transmission cover, dirt and debris can get drawn inside from the front and then be pulled along its length. This then scratches and damages its blue anodized finish. It's simple to remove the cover, clean and replace, but a seal of some sort would have been a nice idea and once scratched the damage is done!

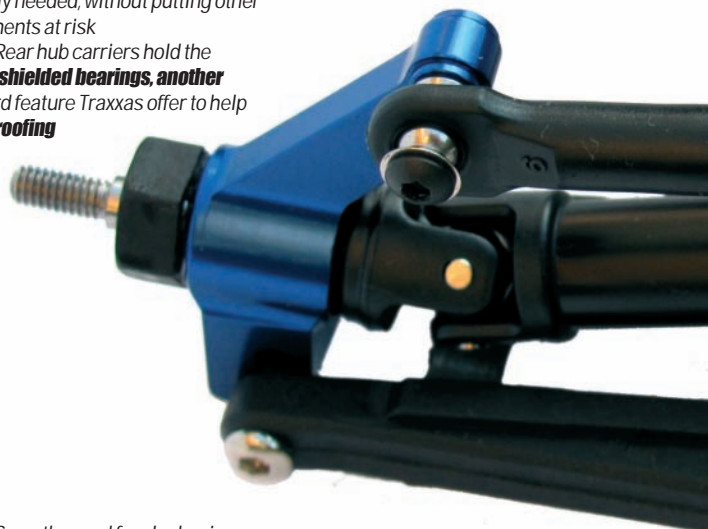
This aside the Ultimate is so far just that for me, others may be more sophisticated, have more of a racing pedigree but are they as versatile? As much fun? Or, and this is the big one for me... are they waterproof? The review truck ended up with a layer of dirt and snow over everything as you can see by the pictures in the review. A quick jet wash, blow with an airline, spray with WD40, time in a warm place and it was as good as new. Now I can't say that of all my off road cars, most of which I have to strip and virtually re-build after each run in a similar environment.

As for future upgrades and hop-ups... none are needed, run it as it is, and race to your heart's content... *RRCI*

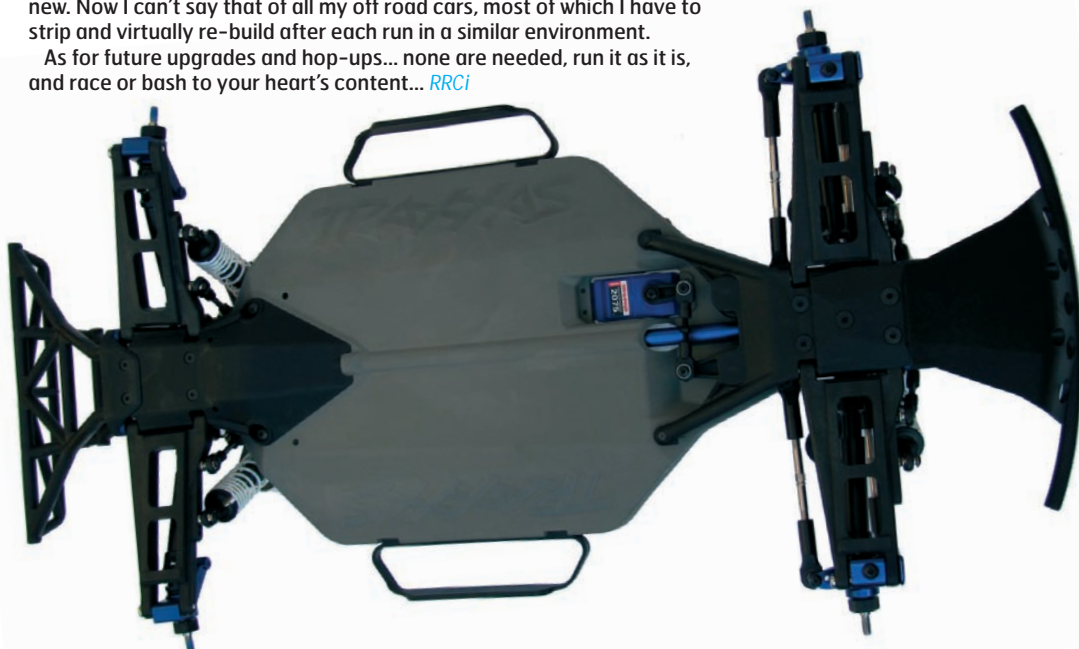


**Above: Alloy C-Hubs and steering knuckles** will take more abuse where it's really needed, without putting other components at risk

**Below: Rear hub carriers** hold the rubber-shielded bearings, another standard feature Traxxas offer to help waterproofing



**Below: Smoother and far sleeker in design** than the 2WD, the Ultimate Edition means business, even when viewed from below!



### TECHNICAL SPEC

#### REQUIRED TO RUN

4 x AA batteries for transmitter

#### LIKES

4WD handling and grip levels  
Middle diff option included  
Alloy only where needed  
Sway bars as standard  
Metal/Nitrided shocks  
Waterproof electrics  
3S compatible

#### DISLIKES

No under body to keep dirt out  
Tyres struggle in wet/mud/snow  
Only a slow charger included

#### CONTACT

[www.logicrc.com](http://www.logicrc.com)