

WHEELIES ARE MANDATORY!



QUICK SPEC

Manufacturer Traxxas USA
 Type 2WD Nitro Stadium Truck
 Price £424.99
www.logicrc.com

Scale 1/10th
 Power 2WD Nitro
 Length 420 mm
 Width 327 mm
 Wheelbase 285 mm
 Weight 83.03 oz
 Tyre Size 105 mm
 Speed 65+ mph

Since Traxxas first moved into the realm of radio control cars they have been known for many firsts. This includes the birth of the true RTR, a new standard in true waterproofing of electrics, the virtual indestructibility of the T-MAXX range, the unique F1 inspired suspension of the REVO and the out and out speed of the JATO, that has now been given an even mightier engine!

The already well-proven TRX 3.3 engine is the latest addition to the JATO, but there are other more subtle updates to help cope with the added power turning this little truck into a thoroughbred speed machine while still keeping its roots firmly in the bashing scene. Designed to be as fast as a touring car in a straight line, but be more adept for speeding around a car park with the bumps and ruts that a slammed touring car cannot cope with. The design features of the car make it appeal to the novice and experienced hobbyist alike as it has a base chassis platform that in the right hands and with a simple change of boots, this car can be just as good a performer on the mucky stuff.



GETTING READY FOR THE OFF

The JATO continues Traxxas' RTR tradition of being out of the box, and set-up in the time it takes to charge the battery for its starting system. Even this is a simple task as the kit includes a 5-cell 7.2 V 1500 mAh NiMH battery and a slow wall charger, a few hours later (just enough time to strip and photograph the truck) the pack was nicely charged and ready to install into the hand held starting unit.

The kit includes two glow plugs and pre-oiled foam air filters, with one of each in the car ready for its first outing. It also includes a small bottle of air filter oil so you can re-use the supplied filters. This is a great touch and mostly overlooked by manufacturers, it's the simple things that make all the difference. Even during the running in process of the most Nitro engines there is a chance that you will either blow a glow plug, or running so rich, degrade its performance. Having a second plug included is a simple but very nice touch. All the tools you would need to carry out the basic tasks of set-up, repair and maintenance are included in the kit. This means that if you are a newcomer to the hobby you don't need to go out and buy expensive sets of tools to keep the car running. The included tools are also needed to open the battery box to install either 4 AA batteries or as we recommend, a 5-cell NiMH pack in stick or hump configuration.

Whatever your choice, they will be held firmly inside the box, however, Traxxas also throw you a curve ball here too, as there is an optional inboard battery box, allowing for a better forward weight distribution for say off road use. This is rather fiddly to access as it sits under the main linkages for the carb and braking assembly. Once accessed you have just enough room to fit either a 4-cell pack or 5-cell hump pack. In testing we found that the rearward mounting point for the cells works well for most situations and as we were doing just speed runs and seeing how far we could wheely it, it was perfect! When the cells are moved further inboard the truck has more positive steering, and tends to jump with a more 'level altitude'. It's nice to have the choice and if I were to race the truck off road, shod in suitable tyres and wheely bar removed, I would definitely choose the inboard option.

FEELING A BIT ROUGH

The pre-painted shell is, as with all Traxxas products of late both crisply screen printed or masked internally (hard to work out which, but done very well!) and well painted in a futuristic design. Ours came in black, blue

and white and was overall cut and finished with accuracy. The finish along the edge of the simple Lexan rear wing was a different matter as it looked like a ragged edge! This was easily solved with seconds of 'Dremel Time' to smooth off the cut. As this is a press sample I forgive Traxxas for this minor indiscretion, it must have been the wing that got away!

The supplied radio is the highly capable TQ 2.4 GHz system. The simplistic set-up procedure is easy to follow, but you need to go a step at a time so you don't get lost. After setting up end points and steering rate, I couldn't see an obvious way to exit the set-up menu in the instructions, but if you can keep track of the flashing LED's and remember which menus you've been through, it is a simple system to use. However for a kit of this type, its features, for instance EPA, servo reversing and exponential, are not to be sniffed at. The most useful feature in it though,



Below: The rear-biased cell holder and battery box make the wheely bar a 'must fit item'!



is the EZ Link system. This allows up to 20 receivers to be bound to a single transmitter, and when any one of those receivers are switched on, it automatically selects the model memory for you AND remembers all the correct parameters for trim, EPA, Dual-Rate the lot, now that's clever! This would be very useful if you already have a small collection of Traxxas models with 2.4 GHz installed and would like to run them on the same day and only take one transmitter with you.

SMALL CAR, BIG PARTS LIST

Starting from the bottom, everything mounts to a 6061-T6 3 mm aluminium chassis featuring a nice blue anodized finish with some cut outs to allow for engine and fuel

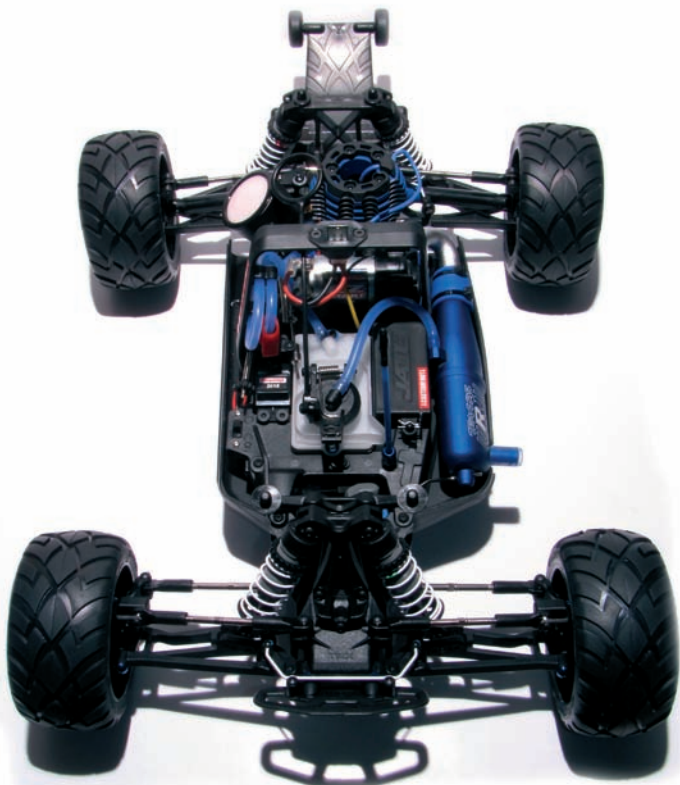
tank clearance. These are fine on road but are going to allow the ingress of dirt and debris onto the chassis off road due to their sheer size, which could be hard to remove from under the top-deck without a complete strip. As the Jato will be spending most of its time as a tarmac lover it's no big issue, but worth a mention!

However, what the Jato does have is large stone guards running the entire length of the chassis that are designed to sit right against the body with a lip for it to actually sit onto. This does help to prevent stones, grit and dust being thrown up from the front wheels onto the chassis and its components. The engine, gearbox and suspension mount directly on top with the plastic top-deck taking up the bulk of the chassis space. The top-deck houses both the 2018 throttle and 2055 steering servos in neat cut-outs and the fuel tank boasts a splash guard moulded into the top. This feature allows spilt fuel to flow out of the bottom of the chassis instead of covering the chassis and collecting dirt, again attention to detail from Traxxas. The tank is mounted central to the top-deck leaving it right in the middle of the chassis to help optimise weight distribution as the tank empties.

The top-deck also encompasses two almost totally waterproof radio boxes. One to the left of the fuel tank containing the receiver and one behind the tank used to route the servo wires and can be used to house your chosen battery instead of having it hang off the back of the chassis. Due to the way the steering servo is mounted to the top-deck, access is very limited, as it requires removing the whole top-deck from the chassis and detaching the throttle and break linkages. Although, fingers crossed, the steering shouldn't require too much maintenance, as it's the servo widely used throughout the Traxxas range of cars and it is then connected to a heavy-duty bell crank system with a built-in servo-saver to protect it.

The servo saver neatly utilises a nylock nut to adjust the setting, so it is less likely to move while it is pushing a pair of 3.5 mm turnbuckles that are used to give adjustable toe. These turnbuckles are also used throughout the car to adjust camber giving you further geometry adjustment with the camber links featuring multiple inboard mounting locations and outboard on the front and the large amounts of caster on the front that can be changed by replacing the front C-Hubs.

To help soak up anything you drive the JATO up and over, Traxxas have provided large bore, threaded body composite shocks and these combined with the robustly moulded plastic give the suspension a bullet proof look and feel. I also liked the way that the shocks are mounted to



Above: A well thought out component layout, packs a lot of technology into a very small space



Above: The 'Resonator' tuned pipe offers a crisp note and an increase of power, note the Silicon sheath

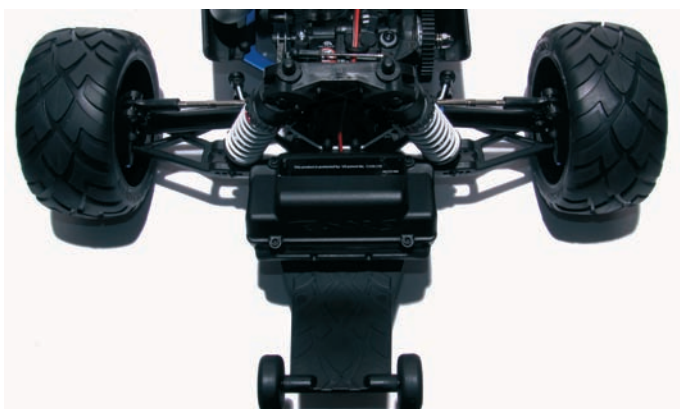
the towers and lower arms as instead of the conventional cantilever/stand off type mount; the stand off screw is supported on both sides of the ball joint. This feature offers further durability and still has a large range of mounting positions with three on the tower and four on the lower arms. All this adds up to keep the wheels firmly on the ground (most of the time! ED) whatever the speed the Jato is travelling at from the power of the 3.3 engine.

SWAY ME

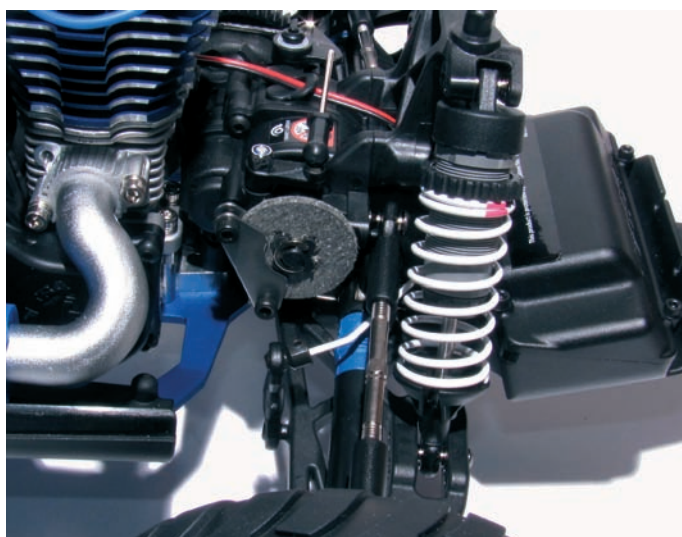
Also included (and fitted as standard) are sway bars for the front and rear. This is unusual for a stadium truck and more to keep the wheels planted at high speed and generate traction. Out of the box are fitted the white medium bars, and the spares package provided also comes with extra thick (black) and thin (silver) sway bars to be used in different conditions. The soft would be possibly better suited to off road use and the hardest straight-line speed-run use.

The traction generated by the back wheels is fed from the engine through a 24-tooth clutch bell onto a 54-tooth spur. This is bolted to a well-designed slipper clutch assembly that actually allows the spur gear to be changed without the need to re-set the slipper tension. From there, it continues to the 2-speed gearbox giving two perfect gear ratios for superb wheely popping acceleration in first and a reasonably fast 65 mph+ top end when it changes to second. From there drive is transferred to a gear diff held in a plastic casing that we then packed with grease to optimise straight line handling.

Traxxas's trademark CVJ drivshafts with neat blue dust covers finish off the drivetrain. Every rotating aspect on the car is fully ball raced with rubber sealed bearings so you

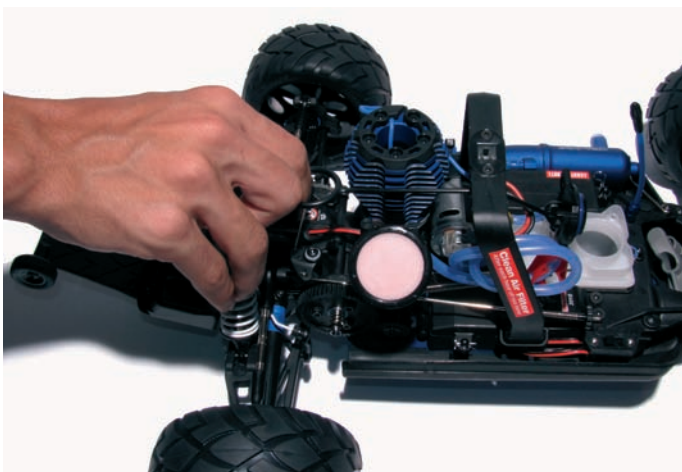


Above: 4AA cells, a 5-cell hump pack or 5-cell stick pack fit neatly inside the rear box

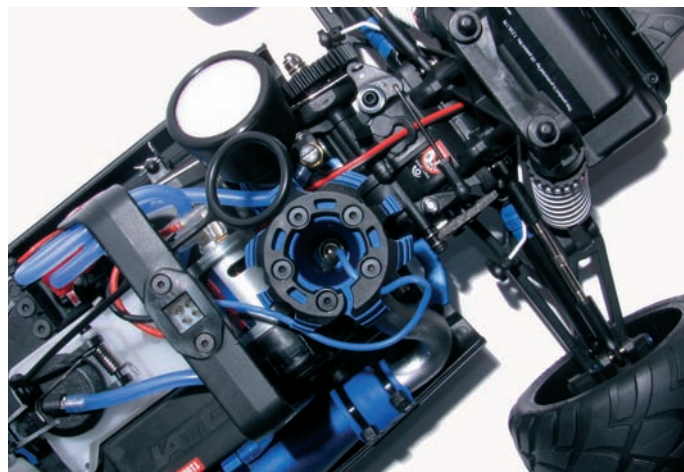


Above: The single disc brake system needed a tweak to help stop speed and heat 'fade'

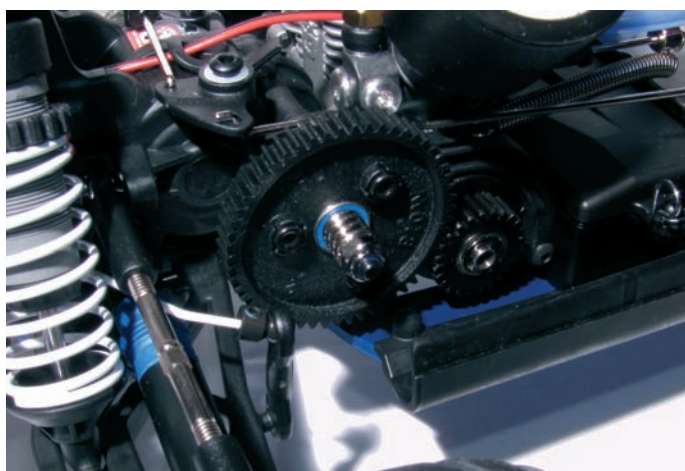




Above: Just 'pull to open' the lid and re-fuel, but make sure you watch the hot engine!



Above: EZ does it! The starting system is simplicity itself, one button turns the engine and ignites the glow plug



Above: A clever design means that the spur can be removed completely without affecting the slipper tension



Above: Big bore shocks and sway bar as standard help keep the front end firmly planted in use

get minimal resistance, have minimal maintenance and get maximum performance. Behind the gearbox and suspension is the stock mounted battery box with a skid plate moulded into the bottom. However, the lid to this box is very well secured with four cap screws as opposed to the single body clip of the inboard box. Having the batteries behind the rear wheels helps to perform some spectacular wheelies, but as mentioned before will slightly affect how responsive the steering feels. Lastly, the roll bar is bolted to the bottom of the battery box. However, if you choose to remove the battery box, and just use the inboard box for racing or off road use the kit includes an alternative skid plate.

EZ STARTING BUT ALLOW FOR STOPPING!

Starting the JATO's monstrous engine is a dream with the revolutionary EZ Start system. It's a 380 high torque motor with its own mini transmission. This actually turns over the Nitro engine perfectly and ignites the glow plug at the same time. It's no mean feat, as most Nitro heads know the power required to turn over even a .21 engine with a full sized starter box. As with starting using any other method, the fuel system needs to be pressurised prior to igniting, so a few short bursts with my finger held over the exhaust did the job. Starting the engine is as simple as slotting the hand-held starter unit into the jack on the top of the heavy-duty plastic roll-bar (its got a locating notch to get the orientation correct). You then depress the big red button, watch the two LED's light up to indicate there's power and the glow plug is OK, and it's up and running in seconds! The roll bar also has a built-in guide for the fuel lid pull, meaning that the ring comes out of the body next to the engine head. The innovation of the guide is good, but the position could mean burnt fingers so be aware if you top up after running the engine for a while!

From the factory, the engine is set to run very rich and needed the idle speed turning up to keep the engine from stalling. After a tank sitting at idle on the bench, I followed the running in guide written in the instructions and their guide was easy to follow and seats the piston and liner very efficiently in less than five tanks. And after a good six tanks of rich running, I still haven't needed to change the glow plug showing that the engine hasn't needed to wear a seat much and that the plug supplied



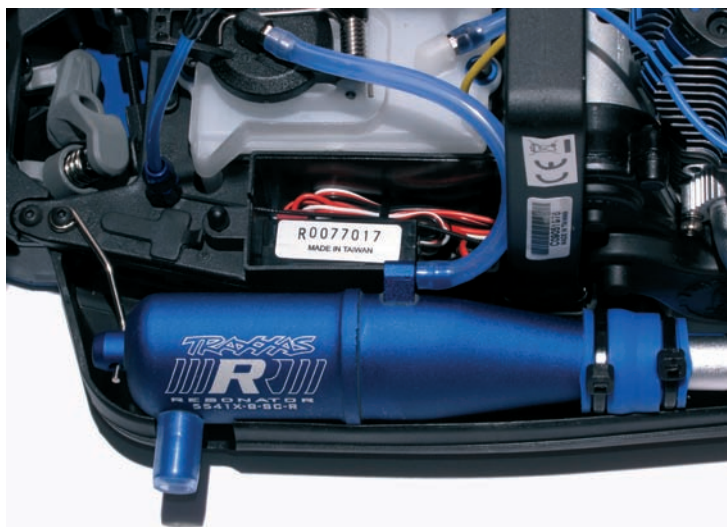
Above: A well designed chassis plate and hardened Hex hardware used throughout, again another Traxxas trademark



Left: Anaconda on road tyres have a large surface area and a tyre compound that offers bucket loads of grip

Right: A trademark sealed radio box keeps the 2.4 GHz receiver safe from dirt, moisture and impact

Below: Black chrome wheels add bling, while rubber shielded bearings reduce maintenance



is well chosen.

However, changing the glow plug is an awkward task. First you have to remove the EZ Start connector from the plug, simple enough, but it is a tight fit so it is hard to judge if you are going to pull the wire out. Then change the plug with the supplied wrench. The difficult task is putting the connector back on the glow plug. This task is almost impossible without a pair of small needle nose pliers to hold the connector, as fingers are too large to fit in the engine.

Initially brakes were not amazing and tended to fade after a couple of high-speed passes. After closer inspection, I found that the brake linkage has only a limited range of movement and at full brakes actually fouls on the gearbox casing. After making a call to Traxxas I've found that this can be tweaked a little to offer a bigger mechanical advantage and more braking power. It's an easy process and just requires resetting the linkages slightly, once done this improved things no end, but remember a car that can accelerate to 65 mph+ also needs a big run off or braking area... however good the brakes are!

LEAN ON ME

On starting the engine, you can feel the power immediately. Having it coupled to the screaming 'resonator' pipe with a silicone sheath on its final pipe to protect the bodyshell, it makes a great combination. We chose to run with Byron 25% Gen-2 fuel and use the stock glow plugs, which seem to provide good all round power. After leaning the main carb needle by 3/4 of a turn in total, the throttle felt very responsive and could tickover totally stable for as long as it has fuel. Once the engine was run in, I took to a clear tarmac area to give it some high speed testing. While running it, I found the turning circle was quite large on power and in typical two-wheel drive form this would turn into total over-steer off the power!

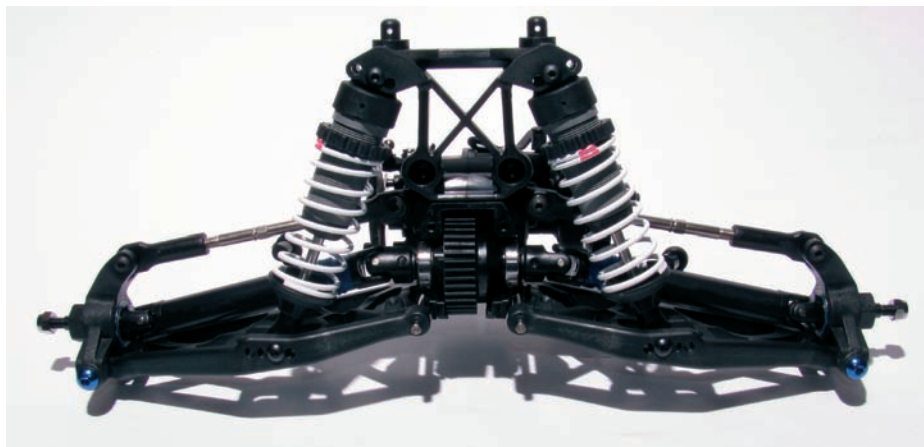
On another note, the 2-speed gearbox is set almost perfectly right from the off and is easy to adjust for change point if needed with a hole in the casing just behind the engine. The Anaconda tyres provide good grip on tarmac with minimal wheel spin from a standing start and glued up to the



Left: A hand-held starter unit, NiMH pack and even fuel bottle make the JATO almost RTR



Above: We tried 4-cells initially, but a 5-cell hump pack offered better braking force, and faster steering response



Above: The rear sub-assembly in all its glory, easy to remove to access the diff for maintenance



Above: The switch assembly is orientated to stay on in the event of an impact or as I call it 'rapid deceleration'

oversized chrome wheels make a spectacular looking combination. At a stretch they may also work well on some of the British AstroTurf tracks on a dry day, but look to be very lacking on a loose dirt top surface.

We next took the JATO with us on a visit to the new Moto Arena venue at Silverstone. While other members of the RRCi team did some indoor Touring Car testing and spent time on the simulators, myself and Madpete hit the outdoor tarmac track and huge expanse of car park to see two things: 1. How fast it really would go and 2. How far it would actually wheely (always a fun 'Test'...).

20 FEET AND TIMING

After measuring out a twenty foot distance and placing markers to indicate its start and finish, we ran the JATO repeatedly through our speed trap, using a stopwatch to record the time taken between the two points. After a few simple calculations the terminal speeds were indeed between 63-66 mph. The latter achieved by altering the change point to cut in slightly later, so gaining more momentum on the run up. It's the acceleration that's the most impressive feature, Traxxas claim 60 mph in just over 4 seconds, and as ever they are factually very correct! Speed runs are all well and good but the JATO was also fun to try and get round the track as quickly as possible. OK, it's never gonna be a touring car but the sway bars do help keep it planted and how many on road cars do you see pop a wheely on the power as you enter the main straight!?

This leads onto our last test and for me the most fun to try myself and watch Madpete performing. By gunning the throttle from a complete standstill or even a rolling start, it's easy to get the JATO into a wheelstand. What's hard though, is keeping it there on the correct amount of throttle. If you over-gun it, the JATO tends to diff-out and ends up rocking from wheel to wheel causing you to back off and lose the wheely. Over throttling the truck also causes the gearbox to change up too soon, the front wheels then drop and it's goodbye wheely yet

Below: C-Hub and steering knuckle design keeps things simple but effective!



Above: The comprehensive tool selection and optional sway bars add to the haul of goodies



Above: Standard Hex's and tough plastic mouldings widen wheel choice and increase durability

again. The twenty foot gap was a stretch but we did manage it a few times, the wheelies are more of a statement of intent for the speed that's to come and the included wheely bar a great touch. It stops the JATO doing back flips with the consequential damage to the shell (or worse) that would bring. One thing to note when doing speed runs, and that's a run-off area as big if not bigger than your run-up is also required.

To sum up, the JATO is all about having high-speed fun, preferably in a very big open space. You can take it off road if that's your thing, and it's nice to know the option is there and it's not just a one trick pony as 'speed' inspired cars can often be. Its next outing will be at the UK Speed event where I get to see how fast I can get it to really go with a bit more fine-tuning, a change of primary gearing and optimising the change further...

RRCi

TECHNICAL SPEC

Required To Complete
 4 x AA cells for 4-cell holder or 5-cell hump pack
 6-cell stick pack with Tamiya style connector
 8 x AA batteries for transmitter

Likes
 On and off road versatility
 2.4 GHz as standard issue
 Traxxas build quality
 TRX 3.3 Nitro power
 EZ Start System

Dislikes
 Inboard cell box hard to reach
 No receiver pack included
 Brakes needed a 'tweak'

Contact
www.logicrc.com