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# Railroad Report

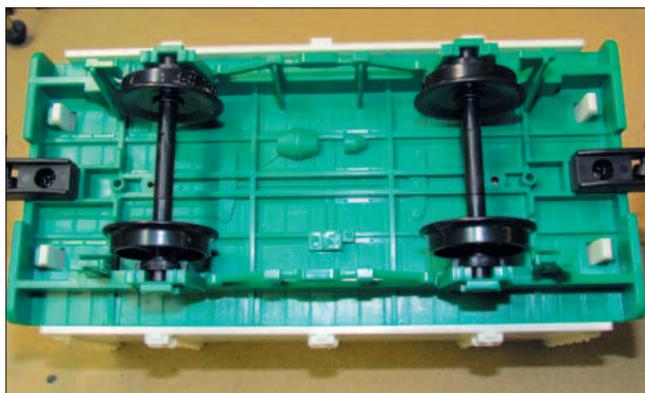
## Bachmann Lil' Big Haulers North Pole Express

*A train set designed with the youngster in mind.*



Released just in time for Christmas sales is the Bachmann Lil' Big Haulers North Pole Express set. This set was produced in Bachmann's Larger Scale line and has a few changes made just for young engineers. The set is contained in a bright blue windowed box. The brightly colored set is clearly visible through the transparent sections and the box has a fold up Bachmann banner so your customers will be quickly drawn in.

The set is supplied with Bachmann's large scale track and includes enough track to create a 4 foot 3 inch circle. It is the perfect size to go around a tree, some holiday shrubbery or in Junior's room. There is an easy to operate speed controller and power pack supplied and, of course, there is additional track available to create a much larger layout if desired.



*The rolling stock has been kept simple as this makes it easier for youngsters to correctly place a car on the tracks.*

The idea behind the Lil' Big Haulers concept is ease of use for the younger modeler. The bigger size means bigger wheels and track for easier alignment. Bachmann has taken this one step further with the couplers. Couplers have always been an issue with the young and inexperi-

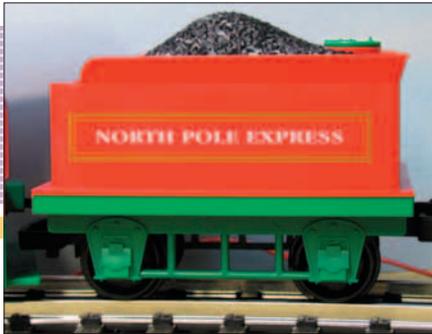
enced modeler, so Bachmann has replaced the traditional couplers with a Hook and Loop system. This greatly simplifies the process, and in-turn creates success and confidence with the result of more fun.

Featuring a large size and colorful design, Bachmann's Lil' Big Haulers train sets are the perfect introduction to large scale model railroading. The reviewed North Pole Express train set includes a simulated steam locomotive with operating headlight and tender, a festive freight car, caboose, hook-and-loop couplers on all of the rolling stock, 12 pieces of steel alloy track, power pack and speed controller, and an illustrated instruction manual



*The speed controller is a standard Bachmann analog unit featuring a large dial, and ease of operation.*

Molded in bright festive colors, the Locomotive is a 0-2-0 layout making it easy for the younger folks to place the engine on the tracks correctly. The engine's LED front lamp comes on at about 15% power and is at full brightness throughout the rest of the power range. Inside the cab there is a molded boiler door for added realism and



The featured set comes with three cars, a tender for the locomotive (left), an open top freight car (center), and a caboose (right). Like all rolling stock in the Lil' Big Haulers line, the cars are brightly decorated, simple in design, and easy for youngsters to operate.

imagination factor. And there is plenty of room for the purchaser to add a train engineer of his choice at a later date.

As previously mentioned, even the couplers are large and easy to handle. With a very simple-to-use and positive locking feature, the set will couple on straight track with an easy bump of the cars. On curves, the inside coupler will always connect, however the outside coupler may or may not. This is not an issue as they are easy to manipulate. Coupling only requires a little instruction in the form of actual physical explanation, as the intended target age group may still have some difficulty comprehending instruction manuals. *[Don't believe it, hand a toddler an instruction manual on toilet training and see what sort of results you get – Ed]*

A freight car is also included. With its open top, this will easily challenge the young engineer on what to haul around the track. As with the rest of the rolling stock in



The couplers feature a hook and loop system which, like all components of the Lil' Big Haulers line, are easy to operate.

the set, all of the graphics are well done.

The track is the standard Bachmann two-rail type. Included with the set is a supply of track locks. These are snapped onto the track from the bottom of the rail at each joint. The couplers secure the track together and help provide trouble-free use. The track tips are beveled for easy assembly and long term use.

For testing, the Lil' Big Hauler was set up exactly as would be expected during the holiday season. The supplied circle of track will easily go around a modest holiday tree or any other display of choice. There are hard-

wood floors in my residence and I wanted to determine the level of noise the train set might create, as this is a common question from buyers who live in an apartment complex. I was quite surprised that the set is reasonably quiet at low to medium speeds. Additionally, running at a very slow speed is easily accomplished and the train set continued to operate smoothly. As a final test, the controller was turned to full speed; the idea is since we are dealing with younger individuals I wanted to see if a derailment is possible. Not so, though moving at a very quick rate, the Lil' Big Hauler stayed solidly on the track.

Nevertheless, if living in an apartment or condominium complex where neighbors share common walls, just to keep the neighbors happy when Junior puts the pedal down on the speed controller, I would recommend to the purchaser that some track bed material be used. Something as simple as an adequately sized throw rug will work fine. This is a recommendation only because it will absorb any transmitted sound and vibration when running the train set at higher speeds on hardwood or ceramic floors.

Besides the North Pole Express, there are several non-holiday specific options available in the Lil' Big Haulers



The North Pole Express is brightly colored and easy to assemble and operate. What more could a person ask of a train set?

line, these include three different sets, two locomotives in a variety of color schemes and 15 individual cars.

My overall impression of the Lil' Big Haulers North Pole Express set is it is a winner. Solidly built to last for many years of use, it's great for the young engineer to learn and grow with. Make sure you have some sets in stock for the holiday season. **HM**