



Dennis McFarlane

On the Surface

Traxxas Blast

The Traxxas Blast is a small, eye-catching model boat for small ponds

Boats are big business in our area, the west side of Chicago. The local system of parks and recreation encourages all forms of outdoor activity, and that allows radio control boats to be operated in any of the larger area ponds. This wasn't always the case, and I'm sure a number of situations may have presented themselves in your market.

For example, glow and gasoline-powered boats can be a little loud. In fact, mufflers were mandated by our county parks department on all gasoline and glow-powered boats several years ago. Unfortunately, this made the situation worse. Modelers, in their ever-increasing need to find more speed, began to attach tuned pipes to their boats. This led to complaints from the public, which is looking to go to parks to relax and ended up being disturbed by the noise.

Anyone who has ever attended a radio control boat regatta knows to bring ear plugs. The boats are simply that loud. This is not a knock against gasoline or glow-powered boats. They are great products, with a definite following. It's just that it can make it a little difficult finding a place to run these boats. If customers can't operate their boats, they certainly aren't going to purchase them.

The good news came about five years ago when our local parks system once again allowed operation of radio control boats. There was a stipulation, however, that no glow or gasoline would be allowed. Sailboats and electric boats, however, can be run anywhere at any time as long as it is within the hours of operation for the parks. This restriction actually created a market.

The Traxxas Blast a nicely priced entry-level boat that in many areas can be operated anywhere there is water. Because it is described as an entry-level product, there's not a lot that needs to be covered in detail before you sell this product to your customers. Traxxas does its home-



Racy graphics and smart stance in the water offer the impression of a lot of speed.

work before allowing its products to be sold. The company knows that if a new customer constantly has to return to your store to have problems solved, then that customer will eventually become discouraged and both the local dealer and the parent company will lose that purchaser.

The Blast measures roughly 21" long and 6" wide. The hull is molded plastic with the blue and gray graphics of the review boat already applied at the factory. Power is provided by what Traxxas calls its 20-turn Stinger motor. The motor is connected to a nicely articulated stern drive. The receiver is housed in a waterproof compartment, and the steering servo is also described as being waterproof.

The review boat came equipped with an optional water-cooling jacket for the motor, an option I highly recommend you offer your customers. Heat is the enemy of every electric product. Traxxas has even posted a heat warning with a cool-down recommendation in the hull next to the motor.

The opening pages of the manual explain the basic operation and limitations of a radio control boat of this nature. The section titled "Preparing to Run" couldn't be simpler. A brief yet completely understandable set of instructions

more or less says to put batteries in the transmitter, extend the receiver antenna, and install a battery pack in the molded tray that is part of the boat hull. Once these basic instructions are out of the way, Traxxas goes into detail further in the manual about such topics as maintenance. The concept is to get the customer in the water in the quickest and safest manner possible, then go into

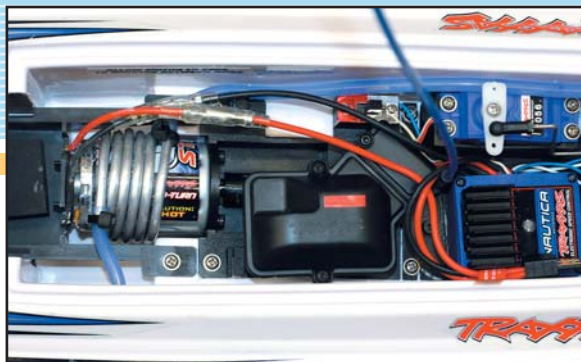


The nicely articulated stern drive not only looks good but also provides flawless performance.

detail later on once the initial excitement has passed.

Running this boat is really a lot of fun, even for an experienced model boater. My wife, Cindy, was my pilot for the trial run, and about the only request I made was not to flip it over as I wasn't in the mood to go swimming. Racing model boats has been a Fuchsen family tradition entering its third generation. Cindy has done more than her fair share of boat racing, so my comment about flipping the boat returned a glare. I suppose I should just let her do her job.

Whether by accident or design, when you apply throttle the Blast squats in the water and the hull kicks up quite the wake. The racy graphics and the squatted stance along with the associated wake make this boat look like it is traveling a whole lot faster than it really is. Cindy and I passed the transmitter back and forth until two onboard



A nice touch from the factory is having all the electronics housed in watertight compartments. The test boat was equipped with an optional water cooling jacket for the Stinger motor, a highly recommended option.

battery packs were used up. I did find that the two-stick transmitter that comes with the boat was a little small for my overly large hands, yet the boat was still easy to operate.

The Blast can be marketed at your store in several different

ways. It can be sold as an entry-level boat to a customer who's thinking about boats but isn't yet prepared to make a high-dollar investment. Or you can sell it to the dad who's looking to spend some time at the park with his son or daughter. The Blast would also make for a unique gift for the full size boater who's looking to have some fun of a different nature while out on the water.

The boat, two 7.2-volt battery packs, a charger and eight AA batteries for the transmitter go out the door for slightly less than \$200. It's a lot of fun for a small investment. **HM**

THE RIGHT PIECES FOR A BETTER HOBBY BUSINESS

Join NRHSA, the only industry association supporting the brick and mortar hobby retailer.



1 Unite with other hobby retailers to create a much needed collective voice and consistent message to the rest of the trade.



2 Use the benefits NRHSA members enjoy to save money on office products & shipping. Take advantage of the excellent credit card processing program and much more.



3 Join hundreds of hobby retailers nationwide. Share knowledge and experience that can help you build a better business.

TO JOIN, download the membership form at nrhsa.org/welcome/mem_app.cfm



For more information, visit www.nrhsa.org or email members@nrhsa.org