HPI MINI-TROPHY TRUCK

MOVE OVER, SHORT COURSE!

BY **MATT HIGGINS** PHOTOS BY **HOPE MCCALL**

The hobby is currently all about short course, right? The answer is yes, but that might change if HPI has anything to say about it. HPI recently got the whole RC community's attention when it unveiled its Mini-Trophy Truck. This small truck isn't a replica of something you might find banging fenders at Crandon, WI, or Surprise, AZ. It's a desert racer, and in the full-size racing world, short course racing's big brother is the far more famous desert racing scene (think of household names such as Ivan Stewart and the Baja 1000). The cool thing about desert and short course is that when it comes to RC, if you like one, you'll like the other. They look a little different, for sure, but the scale appeal that makes short course so cool is right there for desert trucks, too. And when it comes to realism, HPI's Mini-Trophy Truck is loaded. Let's check this machine out.

The scale driver and co-driver are molded Lexan.

THE REAL DEAL

The Mini-Trophy Truck is arguably the most realistic ready-to-run RC vehicle ever offered. Just the fact that it's a trophy truck is cool enough, but HPI took it to extremes and loaded this truck with cool features.

SCALE DETAILS
■ **Driver and co-driver figures**
■ **Dual spare tires**
■ **Roll cage**
■ **Separate body panels**

The molded-plastic roll cage is a multipiece design.

The separate body panels seal the deal when it comes to realism.

PLUSH SUSPENSION

One of the coolest things about full-size off-road race trucks such as Trophy Trucks is the super-plush long travel suspension. RC'ers will be thrilled when they see those long trailing arms pop into view when the Mini-Trophy Truck gets airborne.

SUSPENSION FEATURES
■ **Plastic threaded body shocks**
■ **4-wheel independent suspension**
■ **Long-link trailing-arm rear suspension**
■ **Multiple rear shock-mounting locations**

The plastic shocks feature threaded bodies for easy pre-load adjustment. The shock mounts are incorporated into the roll cage.

The rear suspension is not your typical lower A-arm setup seen in RC. A more realistic trailing arm design is used instead.

FYI

HPI SAID THE MINI-TROPHY TRUCK WAS TESTED WITH HOTTER MOTORS, AND IT EASILY HANDLES A 5,700KV BRUSHLESS SETUP.

ACCORDING TO HPI, HOP-UPS ARE ON THE WAY AND WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. WE EXPECT A LARGE AFTERMARKET SUPPORT FOR THIS TRUCK AS WELL.

SANCTIONING BODIES SUCH AS SCORE, SNORE AND THE BEST IN THE DESERT ALL RUN MINI TRUCK CLASSES.

TOUGH TRUCK

Full-size desert trucks are subjected to brutal conditions and continually pushed to the limit. They have to be able to take a beating, as they are driven at speeds of over 100mph on dirt roads (where these even exist) and have to be able to withstand crazy crashes enough to protect the driver and copilot.

DURABILITY FEATURES
- **Molded-plastic front bumper and skidplate**
- **Cast-aluminum front rear hubs (the front and rear hubs are the same part)**
- **Smooth tub chassis**
- **Molded-plastic rear bumper with scale spare tires**
- **Molded-plastic roll cage**

Shown naked without the body and roll cage, you can see the tub main chassis. The tub main chassis is perfectly smooth on the bottom.

The rear bumper has one of the spares hanging over the end—just like the real deal. The spares are fakes.

Included Electronics

The Mini-Trophy Truck is fully ready to run, so as expected, electronics are included. The transmitter is HPI's TF-1 AM unit that features the essentials such as servo-reversing and trim but also includes dual rate. The SC-15 speed control can handle most 15-turn motors and is hooked up to a closed-endbell brushed motor. HPI's SF-1 plastic-gear servo handles steering duties.

Right: The TF-1 transmitter is a simple AM radio but includes dual rate for adjusting steering travel. **Below:** The included motor is a fairly mild closed-endbell unit. Speed freaks need not worry; the Mini-Trophy Truck can handle brushless.

TRACTION ACTION

Traction is king when it comes to performance, and the Mini-Trophy Truck is outfitted with a 4WD drivetrain to get all four wheels spinning under power. Like the rest of the truck, the drivetrain is also designed to take a good beating.

DRIVETRAIN FEATURES
- **Front and rear geared differentials**
- **Full ball bearings**
- **Shaft-driven drivetrain**
- **Centrally mounted motor**
- **12mm wheel hexes**
- **Built-in slipper clutch**
- **Cast-aluminum motor mount**

Above: Durability is important in the desert. The front and rear diffs are strong bevel-gear units.

Above: The 4WD drivetrain must do a lot in a little space. The spur gear is mounted higher than the motor, and the thick driveshafts are over the main chassis. **Right:** The driveshafts work at some serious angles, but universal joints on the center shafts make this possible.

BEHIND THE WHEEL

We got a kick just checking out the Mini-Trophy Truck at the office, but we knew the real fun with it would happen out in the dirt and with action. But before we risked wrecking the truck, we got all the studio shots we needed. We'd be remiss not to state that the Mini-Trophy Truck is a bear to work on—and we're talking grizzly. That's the price you pay for beauty. After we got the truck back together, we headed to a large open dirt lot full of sand and rocks. This test area looks like a bit of Baja in our backyard. The sealed 4WD drivetrain instantly proved its worth as the Mini-Trophy Truck shot out of the hole, spinning all four tires and spraying dirt in every direction. The top speed is fairly modest but in line with most of the ready-to-run short course trucks and entirely appropriate for a vehicle that will likely end up in the hands of beginners. If you've been a pro racer for 12 years, don't expect to be blown away by the top speed. The suspension looked cool as we blasted along at full speed. You gotta love those trailing arms. Sometimes the rear seemed bouncy, but not too bad. You could leave it alone, or swap in slightly thicker shock fluid. Overall, the Mini-Trophy Truck was easy to control. It didn't want to spin out yet had enough motor for some big power slides—always fun. The Mini-Trophy Truck has a smooth bottom, but it's a low rider compared to most trucks and can get high centered on the rough stuff. Because the closed-endbell motor is fairly mild, run times were great, and we didn't notice any excessive heat buildup from the motor or speed control. Like every short course truck we've run on loose dirt, the inside of this desert truck quickly filled with debris. Since the drivetrain is completely sealed, it's no big deal and nothing a good shake doesn't fix.

Mini or not a mini

The "Mini" in the Mini-Trophy $1/12$-Scale 4WD Desert Truck is throwing many people off and causing all sorts of a clamor online. HPI explained that "Mini" referred to the nickname full-size racers use to describe the small trucks running in the mini truck class. While these vehicles usually run in Class 7, or 7200, depending on the particular event's sanctioning body, the racers have come to call them Mini-Trophy Trucks. As an RC vehicle, this truck is not a mini; it is, however, $1/12$ scale. Since this is a model of a non-street truck and a prototype at that, $1/12$-scale doesn't mean too much by itself. What really matters is how big the truck actually is. Here's the scoop:

	BLITZ	TROPHY TRUCK
Length:	21.6 in. (548mm)	21 in. (533.4mm)
Width:	11.7 in. (296mm)	9.2 in. (233mm)
Wheelbase:	13 in. (329mm)	12.3 in. (312mm)
Height:	7.6 in. (192mm)	6.4 in. (162mm)

These photos show how the Mini-Trophy Truck compares with HPI's $1/10$-scale Blitz short course truck.

WRAP-UP

The Mini-Trophy Truck successfully combines scale looks with high performance. It looks incredibly realistic yet still meets our expectations of performance that, these days, is quite high. There is no doubt we'll see lots of these trucks tearing up dirt lots, ripping up and down streets and at more than a few tracks across the country. It will be interesting to see if this is the vehicle that launches desert racers as a category, or if Trophy Trucks and desert buggies remain a spin-off of short course.