

WHO RUNS THE ROCKS?



2.2 COMPETITION TIRE GUIDE

WORDS THE RC CAR ACTION TEAM PHOTOS PETE HALL

Whether it's racing or rock crawling, the single most important aspect of a vehicle's setup are the tires. In regular, go-fast racing, picking the right tire is easy: just go with what the local A-main winners use. In the rapidly growing rock-crawling segment, you'll be at disadvantage if you jump on the latest-and-greatest-tire bandwagon. New tires are being released far too rapidly to be limited to just what won last month. Add the fact that there

are thousands of different types of rocks to run on, and the issue gets further complicated. To help you select the best tires possible for your crawler, we gathered the five hottest tires being used in competition and tested them in a variety of conditions and situations. Smooth rocks, coarse rocks, wet

rocks, dirt, steep climbs, descents and side-hilling were all part of the testing, and we also enlisted multiple drivers using their own trucks. Read on to see which tire you should be running if you want to dominate the rocks.



TEST GEAR

RIMS. We used RPM's new Revolver Rock Crawler wheels (item no. 82232) with the wide offset. These rims are made in the USA and come narrowed. The hex area has also been beefed up better to handle the stresses of rock crawling. RPM also offers its Clawz-style rim as a narrow rock crawler. We drilled two breather holes in each rim.



We wanted to make this testing as fair and scientific as possible, so each tire was mounted on the same rims using the same amount of weight and the same inserts. No mystery black-magic setups were used. Here's what we went with:

WEIGHTS. Almost all crawlers work best with weight added to the front rims, and there are a lot of options for weights. The best overall is stick-on weights. Great Planes Segmented Lead Weights (GPMQ4485) can be found in most hobby stores. We used 4 ounces of weight in each front tire.



INSERTS. Kreepy Krawler Designs hooked us up with its popular Kreepy-Squishy Inserts. We ran Red inserts in each tire but selected wide or narrow, depending on the tire shape.



AXIAL ROCK LIZARDS RACE COMPOUND

The Axial tires are included with its popular AX10 Scorpion rock crawler but in a standard compound. The optional Race Compound used here is softer, and it improved grip. The Rock Lizard has a slightly rounded carcass and features aggressive side lugs with large voids between the tire's treads.

Height 5.19 in.
Width 2.2 in.
Weight 3.8 oz.
Item no. AX12010

Excellent climbing and descending on rough rocks.



Fantastic overall climber and great on side hills.



IMEX RUBICON SOFT

The Rubicons are one of the newest tires to hit rock crawling. Previously, Imex tires were used more frequently for their scale appearance than their performance on the rocks. The Rubicon, however, is a pure comp tire. The wide-looking Rubicon has a square shape and long, thin lugs.

Height 5 in.
Width 2.4 in.
Weight 3.8 oz.
Item no. IMX7585

LOSI ROCK CLAWS

The Rock Claws is the current national champion, so you know it's a solid choice. The tire is fairly domed, and the tread pattern is also directional, but we ran them in both directions for testing. The tread pattern features numerous lugs with some hollowed out, and overall the tire looks like a full-size aggressive mud tire. These tires are only offered in Losi Blue compound.

Height 4.9 in.
Width 2.2 in.
Weight 3.1 oz.
Item no. LOSA7682B

Excellent at climbing on almost all rock surfaces.



Great overall tire. Strong on climbs and side-hilling.



PRO-LINE MASHER 2000 M3 COMPOUND

Height 4.71 in.
Width 2.48 in.
Weight 3.7 oz.
Item no. 1074-02

The Masher tire has been around for a while, but Pro-Line just recently released in it in its super-soft M3 compound to make it even better for rock crawling. This tire's tread pattern is directional, but like the other direction tires, it's most common to see it being used "backwards." The Masher 2000 looks square and wide from the front.

PRO-LINE MOAB M3 COMPOUND

Height 4.95 in.
Width 2.17 in.
Weight 3.2 oz.
Item no. 1120-02

While it has a lot of new competition, the Moab is still the most popular 2.2 rock-crawling tire. The narrow and round carcass features lugs down the side. Like the Masher 2000, the addition of the soft M3 will only make this tire better. The Moab is also technically a directional tire but is run both ways.

Great-looking, realistic tire that performs well on almost all surfaces.



Great overall tire. Strong on climbs and side-hilling.



PRO-LINE MASHER 2000 M3 COMPOUND

Height 4.71 in.
Width 2.48 in.
Weight 3.7 oz.
Item no. 1074-02

The Masher tire has been around for a while, but Pro-Line just recently released in it in its super-soft M3 compound to make it even better for rock crawling. This tire's tread pattern is directional, but like the other direction tires, it's most common to see it being used "backwards." The Masher 2000 looks square and wide from the front.

PRO-LINE MOAB M3 COMPOUND

While it has a lot of new competition, the Moab is still the most popular 2.2 rock-crawling tire. The narrow and round carcass features lugs down the side. Like the Masher 2000, the addition of the soft M3 will only make this tire better. The Moab is also technically a directional tire but is run both ways.

Height 4.95 in.
Width 2.17 in.
Weight 3.2 oz.
Item no. 1120-02

Great-looking, realistic tire that performs well on almost all surfaces.





TESTING

Testing took place at the rock-crawling locale we frequent most often and we're most familiar with—Matt's backyard. As a rock-crawling nut, Matt is lucky enough to have a huge rock garden at home. This is no manmade pile of rocks; it's just about big enough to run a full-size Jeep on (but that would require a lot of explaining and apologizing). There's a variety of terrain. The rock garden features some steep climbs, off-camber sections as well as smooth and coarse surfaces. We set up a course, but we also ran any line we could find while switching back and forth among all of the tires. Here's what each driver had to say about the tires:

MATT HIGGINS

It was a lot tougher call than I thought it would be, but my pick for this test session is the Losi Rock Claws. I was surprised about how very close most of these tires performed. The Pro-Line Masher 2000, Pro-Line Moab and Losi Rock Claws all worked exceptionally well. I have seen the Imex Rubicons dominate at comps, but they had a hard time making vertical climbs when we tested. I used to run Moabs exclusively, but switched to other tires as more options became available. Let me tell you, the Pro-Line Moabs are a whole new tire in the M3 compound and the best-looking, in my opinion. For competitions, I'll probably bring the Imex, Losi and Pro-Line tires and decide which to use after testing at that comp's location.

PAUL ONORATO

The Pro-Line Moab tires worked the best on my truck for the majority of the different tests we performed. I like the narrow width, sticky tire compound and aggressive sidewall lugs of the Moab tires that allowed my truck to consistently traverse obstacles that stopped it when running the other tires. The rest of the tires all seemed fairly close in overall performance, with the Imex Rubicons being my second pick after the Moabs. For terrain mostly composed of vertical climbs, I grabbed the Losi Rock Claws or Pro-Line Masher 2000 that both performed very well on steep angles. Since you are usually faced with many different types of terrain when rock crawling, I always start with the Pro-Line Moab tires.

BRANDON WILCOX

Overall, I believe the best were the Masher 2000s. I set up four steep vertical gates and two off-camber tests, and I ran all the tires through them numerous times. The Axial Rock Lizards struggled on the tough vertical climbs. The Imex Rubicons' sidewalls worked great, but that tire also struggled on the vertical climbs. The Pro-Line Moabs did great on both the vertical and side hill tests, but my two favorites were the Losi Rock Claws and the Pro-Line Masher 2000's—the only two tires to make it up all the vertical climbs. Both side-hilled exceptionally well, but the Losi's could not side-hill quite as well as the softer Pro-Line tires. When it came to side-bite performance, the Losi tires didn't compare with the super-soft Pro-Line M3 rubber.



Pro-Line Masher 2000 M3 Compound

Imex Rubicon Soft

Axial Rock Lizards Race Compound

Pro-Line Moab M3 Compound

Losi Rock Claws

WRAP UP

There are thousands of types of rocks and a variety of of obstacles, so ultimately there is no single perfect rock-crawling tire. We wish it were that simple, but that's just one of the many things that make RC rock-crawling so interesting. Our three testers all chose different individual top picks, but we all agreed that the two Pro-Line tires and the new tire from Losi are solid choices for competition. That said, we have also seen all of these tires run successfully at comps. Your best bet might be simply to get your hands on a few sets of tires so that you're prepared for any situation. Good luck, and see you on the rocks.

SOURCES

Axial axialracing.com

Great Planes greatplanes.com

Imex imexrc.com

Kreepy Krawler Designs kreepykrawler@gmail.com

Losi losi.com

Pro-Line pro-lineracing.com

RPM rpmrcproducts.com