

HPI RACING BAJA 5B

Words: Derek Buono ■ Photos: Jason Yu

Living large.

I originally wanted to have some witty comical introduction about the history of 2WD racing, maybe toss in some scale references, try to look like I knew what the hell I was talking about. That all changed after I took the new Baja 5B out for the first time. Of course I was excited to get the big beast simply because it looked rad and the limited testing I had under my belt when I drove the prototype had me excited to finally get our sample. Now that I've put serious time on the Baja 5B, I erased my cool introspective intro and just wanted to come back and describe the feeling I have after testing. AWESOME. That sums it up in one simple universal word. It's not the fastest, it's not the best handling, but it is some of the most fun I've had with a 1/5-scale ever. Once you get behind the wheel and pull the trigger you'll understand. As you watch the huge buggy hit the dirt, and try to control the mass and the torque, you get an appreciation for real Baja buggies and even the little ones. It may not be every ones cup of tea, but there's no denying how badass the Baja 5B is.

We wouldn't let Mike roll this one.

At least not until we got these cool pictures.



HPI RACING BAJA 5B

• 1/5-SCALE GAS BUGGY • 1/5-SCALE GAS BUGGY • 1/5-SCALE GAS BUGGY • 1/5-SCALE GAS BUGGY • 1/5-SCALE GAS BUGGY •

VEHICLE FEATURES

Once you get over looking at the size of the 5B you'll get knee deep into the details, and put some boots on because they laid the detail down thick on this thing. It's hard to point out all the "stuff" that separates the 5B from all the other larger scale vehicles, but looking around the car you'll see all the race details that allow you to adjust the suspension, and give the 5B the beating it's asking for. It was hard to pick just 5 details that made us go "ooohhhh" but we had to do it.

► "Diff"erent STROKES

The 5B is huge. When you open the box you'll probably be a little shocked how big it is. With that size comes weight, and to handle the weight and the power of the 23cc gas engine, HPI designed a huge diff that could handle the loads. One of the advantages of making larger scale vehicles is that you can do things that might be limited by size. The fluid damped four-gear design puts the power down reliably.



Looks beefy.



The weight of the Baja requires some beefy parts and
THE BAJA IS ALL ABOUT THE BEEF.

Now that's a pull start!

► SHOCKING SHOCKS

Every thing about this car is big and bigger thinking went into the finer details of every part. The shocks come pre-built, but damping changes are external. One of five rates can be selected by removing the shocks and simply twisting the shaft left or right to alter the amount of piston area. The rear springs also get a dual stage design that allow smaller bumps to be soaked up with the initial rate and the larger disruptions handled by the longer spring. It's something that is tried in smaller shocks but really stands out on these giant shocks.



► SETUP AND INSTRUCTIONS

For an RTR that probably is targeted to people not into RC, instructions for the Baja are top notch. They are just shy of being a full blown step-by-step of a kit, but they cover the key areas of maintenance and setup tips that should help those who actually read directions fill it out. For the rest of us that look at pictures and call support numbers, HPI has a great customer service center ready.

► IN THE CLUTCH

If you aren't familiar with gas engines and their differences, the first thing you should notice is that the clutch is HUGE! Giant clutch shoes are needed to make sure that the Baja gets the most forward movement without worry of the clutch being able to hold up.



► GOLD FRONTS

The front suspension is a work of art. Maybe because we're used to looking at smaller parts, but when you look into the detail of the



front suspension you'll be just as impressed as we were. HPI designers made adjusting the buggy simple, and proof is in the degree marks on the upper camber links, which allow you to set camber without any tools. Just match up the marks on each

side and everything is aligned. No tools, no special set up boards. HPI did an incredible job making the buggy complex but simple all in the same sentence.

► DAMP IN THE REAR

The rear of the car is just as advanced and bullet proof as the front. The weight of the Baja requires some beefy parts, and the Baja is all about the beef. Again the name of the game was to make it a fully adjustable suspension, but also to make sure a grinder monkey couldn't mess it up. The rear toe-plates are awesome. They alter the toe angle at the wheel and adjustments are made by rotating the plate to get a range of toe angles.



TESTING

I debated where to test the 5B and narrowed it down to two distinct spots where I think you'll see the Baja on a regular basis: The beach or the dirt bike trails. I opted for the dirt bike trails because they were close, and every time I drive by and see them ripping it up I want to join in. So with Baja 5B, some tools, a gallon of mixed gas and 2-stroke oil we packed up the car and headed out. Once I got there, I saw some serious ruts, rocks, broken TVs, tires, and jumps everywhere. The smile started immediately.

Acceleration and Speed • Those of you who have never seen a 1/5-scale you may not be totally impressed with the acceleration. The power band and delivery isn't like a small nitro engine, and it doesn't sound like it's about to rev off the charts. Almost like VTEC in a Honda, once the engine hits a certain RPM power is escalated and things get a little hard to control on looser surfaces. Part of the fun is the realistic 2WD drivetrain and that can make the tail a little hard to control, but once you get used to that, things are easier and on smoother spots it was very easy to control. Speed is good, but nothing that will make smaller scales sweat. It is necessary to understand that this is 20+ pounds of car hitting speeds that approach 35MPH and above. The suspension does do an unbelievable job in keeping it controllable when punching it over the broken terrain. If I were judging this against an 1/8-scale on a track in race conditions it wouldn't be fair, but as something that's huge in comparison to other large scale buggies the Baja is amazing. And for those looking for a quick jump in power just take off the restrictive exhaust extension and the power

down low is way better. It's easier to control with less of a "rubber band" effect in the bottom end.

Rating: 8/8

Braking • The big calipers can easily lock up the wheels and induce a opposite lock slide on call. Controlling the car after you do that is not as confidence inspiring as some may be used to. On the loose dirt you're taught a quick physics lesson—"a body in motion tends to stay in motion." If you're looking at panic braking and not hitting something, odds are if you're in that deep, just brace for impact. The rear wheels lock up and the car slides along trying to slow down. With a fair amount of tinkering you can get the brakes to be better. You really don't want the wheels to lock up because that creates longer stopping distances than threshold braking.

Rating: 7

Low-Speed Handling • With a little practice, slow speed maneuvers are easy. HPI spec'd a huge servo in this thing, and that isn't the problem when it comes to low speed handling—the wheels turn when the car is stopped. The suspension works like a trained athlete, and you can enjoy watching the shocks do their things. I hate to keep comparing this to the smaller cars, because odds are that this is probably going to be in the hands of somebody that likes 1/5-scale or it's their first RC to go out camping or MX'ing, but for most of us we're curious to see how they compare. The size and weight of this thing will make you have to think a move or two ahead.


Unlike the hyper reactive 1/8- or 1/10-scale, if you make a mistake it's not going to want to correct as fast as the lighter cars. I can't really knock the Baja; it's part of the appeal of 1/5-scale with more realistic handling.

Rating: 8

RTR GEAR

	Radio: HPI TF-10 FM 3CH
	Receiver: HPI RF-01FM
	Servo(s): HPI SF-1(Giant and small)
	Engine: HPI 23cc Fuelie
	Pipe: HPI Stock
	Receiver Pack: HPI 6v 2000 mAh NiCad

OUR TEST GEAR

	Fuel: 87 Octane Pump w/HPI 2-stroke oil
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High-Speed Handling • Getting the Baja up to high speeds can be a challenge and like MJ: my tongue was a sign of the concentration I put into it. As I got the car to go faster around the given terrain, it started to feel lighter and almost more comfortable, as the tires weren't trying to peel the dirt from the earth. The engine really produces a lot of torque and wheel spin is delayed a second while the engine gets in tune, but after a pause it throws it down. Once you get going the suspension settles, the engine sings in tune and the steering gets quicker. Sure, there's still a decent push but crank the wheel, let the suspension set and the 5B will get where you want it to. Like I said before, you have to think a little ahead of what you're used to because of the weight of the vehicle, but once you get used to it the smile factor is exponential.

Rating: 9

Rough-Track Handling • Big freaking ruts—that's what I dealt to the 5B and that's what it took. The suspension really is a work of art with it being super adjustable, working to control the movement so well. Once you realized "hey that was a one foot rut from a real tire" and the 5B just sucked it up, you get happy. Controlling the throttle through the ruts is key, and it's best to try and roll the throttle to prevent the wheels from spinning too much.

Rating: 10

Watch out for the cactus!



The 5B is almost big enough to have us attempt to stuff a little Worrel in there.

Jumping • This is much harder than you think. The car is big; it's heavy, and launching the beast in the air is just a thrill to watch. Much like an RC, getting the right jump underneath you is key and we found lots. The approach can be tricky if you're on such a hodge-podge of terrain as I was, but in the air it was beautiful. But beware: the throttle/brake corrections you do so easily with smaller stuff just doesn't have the effect on the Baja 5B. It's a much slower movement, and honestly if you're out of shape grab on to something and wait for the result. If you hit it right there was no issue, and it is much more realistic.

Rating: 9.5

Wrenching

Maintenance • The Baja is one of those kits that you could break out the Craftsman tool set and be happy using larger tools than we're used to. For the most part the basic maintenance stuff is a snap. HPI made it fairly easy to access most of the car. The quick removal of the roll bar makes it easy to access the radio box and engine. Getting to the transmission, clutch, and diff may take a little more effort than you're ready for. Break out the good tools because you'll need them. Our engine was bolted in tight and the supplied allen wrench wasn't up to the task of breaking the thread lock, but after we broke them it was easier. For the most part the tranny is near bullet proof, but there's always somebody that wants to test the limits or tune the diff.

Rating: 9

Wear and Tear • Weight is an issue with the Baja and after about 2 hours of a photo shoot and testing I wasn't surprised I had to do some repairs, but I was surprised at what they were. The first was an E-clip. The wheel hub is held

on by an e-clip and after a jump-gone-wrong I landed from about 6 feet in the air and 20 mph on one of the front wheels. I clenched as it landed and watched the wheel bounce off in the distance. When I looked at the damage I was amazed that nothing really broke. I shut the engine off (which made a "ding" sound) and went back to the car for some repairs. The kit came with tools and a spare clip. Now that "ding" that I mentioned may have just been a coincidence, but our pull-start failed to engage after that. We took it off and found that sand may have gotten in there and prevented the mechanism from springing out. A little cleaning and some grease and we were back in action—not bad considering the war wounds the chassis showed on the bottom after testing. We really went 12 rounds with the Baja and it came out looking tough. The last odd occurrence was when I thought I busted the wheel or a tire blew out and when I looked I had inverted the wheel. Like a flipped umbrella in the wind, all it need was me to pull on it and it popped back to normal.

Rating: 9

Tuning • Tuning is something you may do once you extract all the enjoyment you can from the stock set up. Once you want to start to explore the options, you'll marvel at what you can do. One of the advantages of large scale is that you can do things that in smaller scales doesn't scale down, or are just too small to be feasible. The Baja is built for tuning with externally adjustable shock damping, dual stage springs, camber, toe, anti-squat, and or anything you want to try the Baja is open for business.

Rating: 10

SCORECARD

SCALE RATINGS: 1=POOR • 10=EXCELLENT

9	INSTRUCTIONS
10	PARTS QUALITY/FIT
10	DURABILITY
10	TUNABILITY
8	OVERALL PERFORMANCE
10	VALUE

+ HITS

- Are you kidding me? Finally a 1/5-scale that looks like a racecar!
- Amazing amount of detail in the adjustment department
- Needs nothing more than some gas and 8 AAs and you're rollin' for 45 minutes.
- Cheaper than most 1/8-scale kits at the end of the day

- MISSES

- It's big and can't be raced everywhere
- Engine response isn't what most will be used to
- Initial sticker shock

Conclusion

Sold. That's what I think about the Baja 5B. One can argue that compared to an 1/8-scale buggy it's a little slow, doesn't have the lightning fast reaction and is heavy. But that is what I call 1/5-scale perfection. It's very realistic in the physics of driving and the fun of driving. Start to consider that a full race 1/8-scale or truggy will set you back almost 2 grand and even the price tag of the Baja 5B starts to look delicious. I spent a long time running the car and I didn't even dent the 1 gallon of gas I bought, which totaled an appalling \$3.39 per gallon. Even at that price it's still the fraction of a gallon of nitro, and my runtime stretched to almost an hour of fun. The Baja 5B may not be for everybody, but if you want something that looks incredible, takes a beating, and is fun to drive you may want to reconsider.

Plus, start to think about 8 of these on a track and how cool that is going to look; HPI has a winner. ⚙️



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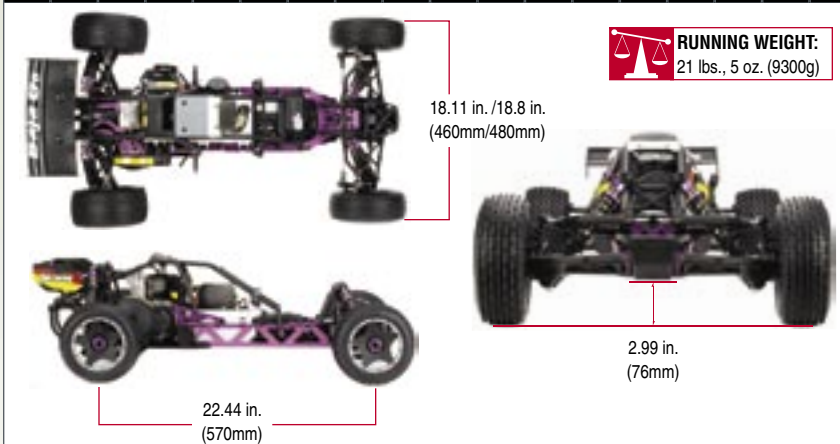
CONNECT:

MANUFACTURER: HPI Racing
PHONE: 949.753.1009
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VEHICLE INFO

VEHICLE: HPI Baja 5B
SCALE: 1/5
TYPE: 2WD Gas Buggy
PART #: 10600
STREET PRICE: \$999
PRICE AS TESTED: \$1015 (including all items used for testing)
SETUP TIME: 1 hour
EXPERIENCE LEVEL: Novice/Advanced

DIMENSIONS



RUNNING WEIGHT:
21 lbs., 5 oz. (9300g)

TECHNICAL INFO

CHASSIS

LAYOUT: 2-piece Stamped tub
THICKNESS: 3mm
MATERIAL: 6061 Stamped
FUEL TANK CAPACITY: 750cc

SUSPENSION

TYPE: Four-wheel independent
TURNBUCKLES: Polished steel
STEERING: Dual bell crank w/integrated servo saver and adjustable
SWAYBARS: None

SHOCKS

BODIES: Aluminum threaded body
DAMPING: 20wt Fork Oil
PISTONS: 5 position externally adjustable
SPRINGS: F/R 13-coil Black/ 17.5-coils Dual Stage

DRIVE TRAIN

TYPE: 2WD gear reduction
DIFFERENTIAL: Gear fluid damped
DIFF FLUID: HPI 1,000 wt.
AXLE TYPE: Constant velocity axles
TRANSMISSION: Single-speed
SPUR GEAR MATERIAL: Molded Plastic
CLUTCH: 2-shoe
BEARINGS: Rubber shielded

GEARING

PINION/SPUR: 17/57
GEAR RATIOS:
PRIMARY: 3.53:1
INTERNAL: 2.40:1
FINAL: 8.05:1

BODY, TIRES, WHEELS

BODY: HPI Baja 5B
TIRES (F/R): HPI Dirt Buster
DIAMETER/WIDTH: 4.45 in. x 1.66 in. (113mm x 42mm)
HEX SIZE: 17mm
WHEELS: HPI 5-star bead lock

ITEMS NEEDED

Pump Gas (87 octane), 8 AAs

MAIN COMPETITION

XTM 1/6-Scale Buggy, FG Modelsport

WHO IT'S FOR

Those who want something big, Off-road racers

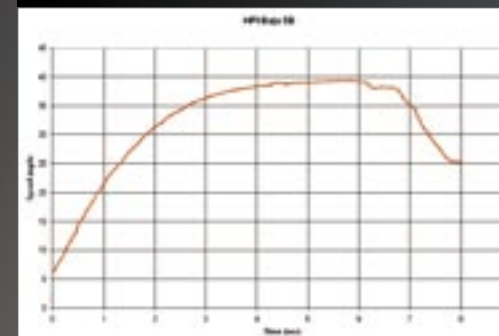
POWERPLANT INFO

Of course with a buggy this big you need something big to move it and the current spec is the HPI "Fuelie" 23cc 2-stroke engine. That's close to 10 times the displacement of some engines and with that comes the torque to move the 21 pounds of mass. Those not familiar with this type of engine may be a little thrown off on the power delivery. It's a little different than your typical RC engine. There's a butt load of torque off the line, but the engine doesn't sound like it's revving. Once it gets moving and the revs can increase, you'll feel a big rush of power as the engine gets in tune. That can be a little tricky to handle in loose conditions. With the pipe extension on power was robbed quite a bit and removing that piping unlocked a good amount of low-end power and a more linear power delivery. There are some really good things about an engine with a magneto. For starters idling isn't a worry. It will sit there as long as you want without a death rev to keep it running. It won't load up off idle, you can get a nice shock if you touch the top of the plug and if you want you could power some lights.



ACCELERATION CURVE

ACCELERATION AND TOP SPEED



ACCELERATION

ACCELERATION (0-60FT): 2.00 sec @ 31.4mph
TOP SPEED: 39.4mph @ 256 ft.
AVERAGE RUNTIME: 45 minutes

ENGINE DATA

ENGINE: Zenohs 23cc
Fuel Mixture: 25:1
DISPLACEMENT: 1.4 in.³ (23cc)
FUEL: 87 Octane
PIPE: Canister
PLUG: NGK
PEAK HP*: 2.27 hp (Manufacturer supplied)

*Results as tested.

PERFORMANCE INFO

TEST CONDITIONS

WEATHER: Sunny
TEMPERATURE/HUMIDITY: 72° F/21%
BAROMETRIC PRESSURE: 29.97 in.
ALTITUDE: 900 ft.

HANDLING

TURNING RADIUS: 6 ft., 11 in.
ON POWER: Moderate understeer
OFF POWER: Slight understeer

BRAKING

CONTROL: Good
FADE: None
OVERALL BRAKING: Good

21 lbs.? Wow.

Weed wackin'!

