

▶4x4

Re-make of the Toyota Hilux



Members of the RFC core scouting group Mustafari Mahmood (from left to right), Rizal Hashim Chin, Luis Wee, Basyaruddin Ahmad and Hamdan Sirif.



A good winch like the Warn XP 9500 is only as good as its mount – the ARB and Warn are an unbeatable combination.

By Yamin Vong

THE fitting out of the four Toyota Hilux which were loaned as the official trucks for the Rainforest Challenge 2008 was done in a record time of five working days.

It was quite an amazing feat to build up a truck from scratch to manage the extreme off-roading that the RFC is well-known for.

There were two factors to this rapid customisation.

One was the popularity of the Toyota Hilux – all the essential off-road equipment was available.

Second was the level of professionalism of the outfitter, in this case 4x4 Equipment Sdn Bhd, the Malaysian distributor of Warn winches, and a comprehensive range of equipment.

We managed to get a word with Steven Tan on his philosophy of creating the Toyota Hilux as an official truck for the extreme 4x4 RFC event.

Tan is the founder of 4x4 Equipment and he has the distinction of selling winches in the early 1980s when recreational off-roading had not yet been popularised.

While his sister Janet Tan is adept with the latest winches and specifications, Steven's vast experience means

that a customer gets value for money and a vehicle is equipped correctly.

What this means for the customer is that Tan will recommend the correct equipment. Most often that means Australian-made winch bars when structural strength and compliance with air-bag sensors is an insurance issue and locally sourced side-rails and rear bumpers when there is no insurance liability but the build strength is equal if not better than the imported kit.

"Our idea was to customise a truck so that it could get you in and get you out. The basic philosophy for the RFC official truck was that we don't want to change too much. We kept within the manufacturer's specifications and for the RFC Hilux, that was what we have succeeded," said Tan.

"Our suspension lift was two inches so that the changes in the angle of the drive line, suspension and the steering were within the manufacturer's tolerances. Luis (Wee, the founder and event director of RFC) wanted the maximum size of tyre that could fit in the wheel well but we went for the 31-inch tyre that would minimise the extra stress on the drive shafts."

True enough, only one of the trucks had a broken half shaft.

"We fitted the medium duty suspen-

sion because our product brief was that it would be carrying officials and media and that comfort would be a priority. If the truck had been planned to take part in competition or for cargo carrying, we could have fitted the heavy duty or the extra heavy duty suspension," said Tan.

"We used the OME brand because in my experience of selling suspension systems, the OME is about the only brand that offers such a range of equipment offering unique solutions for most of the truck models.

"It's not a one type fit all type of suspension system. The RFC Hilux therefore has a two-inch lift OME system of leaf springs and matched absorbers.

"The tyres were Silverstone MT117 (31 x 10.5 x R15) because they have the size and the price was within our budget.

"There were two items that were not listed on the official package of items that we've installed on the Hilux and that was the metal plate that we fabricated and installed to protect the plastic fuel tank. We also installed a metal plate to protect the transmission case which was too vulnerable for an RFC event."

The re-make of the Hilux cost about RM35,000 for each vehicle.



The amount of mudslide is an indication of how extreme the RFC was.



The bash plates protected the steering linkages.

Other 4x4 equipment installed

1. ARB deluxe winch bar, Australia
2. Warn winch 9.5XP, United States
3. Safari snorkel, Australia
4. Rear bumper c/w spare wheel carrier, Thailand
5. Local side-step c/w jacking point
6. Local side rail
7. IPF round spot lights, Japan
8. Warn winch kit
9. ARB recovery strap
10. Hi-lift jack, United States
11. Plastic fuel jerry can
12. Winch isolator, battery N70Z