

# FINISHING Balsa WHEELS

By John Pakiz

One of the advantages of balsa wheels is their light weight. One of the greatest challenges in scale work is getting balsa wood to look like rubber tires.

I recently discovered a simple way to do this. Once the wheel has been shaped and formed, go over it with fine sand paper. Fine enough to work the wood but not so course that the sand paper changes the profile of the tire portion of the wheel.

Next, mix a little Johnson's talcum powder in a small amount of clear Aero Gloss dope. You don't need much talcum powder. Brush this mixture liberally over the wheel. The wood is going to turn a ghostly white color. Let it dry well and again sand it out with fine paper.

The next step is to give the wheel an over coat of the clear Aero Gloss. Now you're ready to paint on the flat black acrylic of your choice. I have had great results with Tamiya but I suppose Acryl products would work just as well. Two coats is sufficient.

I'm working on a set of wheels and normally I'd sand out the clear over coat. This time as an experiment I left the over coat alone. The results I got are very nice. The grain is completely filled and the wood honestly looks like rubber. Use the system of your choice for the center hub.