

HOLDEN TEAM OUT IN '69?

Story by ROGER BONHOMME

WILL General Motors disband their highly successful dealers' rally team? This is the question pondered by most rally enthusiasts at the start of the 1969 season. At the time of writing a GM-H spokesman said that no decision had been made.

This is despite the fact that rumours of the team going to the wall had been rife since late last year—at the end of the team's most successful season.

Finding reasons for not disbanding the team is easier than arguing that it should be. Team members Tony Roberts/Peter Haas won the driving and navigating championships in 1966, Reg Lunn won the driving half in 1967 and Bob Watson/Jim McAuliffe ran away with the championship last year. Roberts, who came second in 1968 with Mike Osborne, supported his teammates by winning the Australian Alpine Rally for the third year in a row. How good do you have to be to make the General happy?

Perhaps cost is the major point against the team. Still, I can think of far more expensive rally cars to maintain than two V8 Holdens and an admittedly somewhat unreliable (until the end of the season) hot Torana. The Marathon must have cost GMH a packet—but in substituting racing drivers for rallyists in two-thirds of their Marathon team they have only themselves to blame.

The Victorian rally calendar for 1969 looks a little strange, too. The first event, MUCC's "Akademos", is not until May 31—after the "BP Rally" and two rounds of the Australian Championship. The "Classic" Rally will only count in the National Championship this year, with the VADC Two-day

Trial taking its place. The other events are unchanged.

Here is a breakdown of possible manufacturers' teams for the 1969 Championships:—

PORSCHE: This is perhaps the most interesting newcomer to the scene. Porsche Distributors have purchased the Herrmann/Schuler Marathon 911 and will be running it in the major events this year. Allan Hamilton says his current commitments stop him from driving the rally car and as yet a crew has not been picked. Names of possible drivers range from Harry Firth, heading a long list, down to the hopeful amateurs. Interestingly, the privately-owned and factory-prepared car has competed in two East African Safaris, two 84-hour runs at Nurburgring and the Marathon.

CHRYSLER: Metropolitan dealers, Surrey Motors, sponsored a Hunter last year with Andy Chapman at the wheel and are likely to continue representing the marque in Victorian events this year. Although Chapman will be the driver, the car has not yet been decided but will probably be a Hunter GT.



Sure to be a threat in Victorian and National rallies this year is the ex-Herrmann Marathon Porsche 911, now owned by Norman (left) and Alan Hamilton in Melbourne. JOHN FERGUSON

BMC: With the factory pulling out of most motor sport overseas, the local scene is a little confused. The Dent's Cooper S, which waved the BMC flag here last year, was unfortunately written-off by your scribe whilst leading the Alpine Rally in November. A replacement may not be forthcoming without factory backing. Peter Manton's offshoot, Monaro Motors, will be helping recently-arrived English rally driver Ben Shoemaker this year.

DATSUN: With the increasing success of dealer Bruce Wilkinson in his Rally 1600, Datsun will be represented in Victorian events this year and may even increase participation in the sport with a car in the National series. The "BP Rally" and the "Southern Cross", both

Victorian Rally Championship Events for 1969

CLUB	EVENT	DATE
Melbourne University C.C.	The Akademos	May 31, June 1
Light Car Club of Australia	Experts Trial	July 5/6
Victorian Sporting C.C.	Blue Ribbon Rally	July 27/28
C.C. Royal Melbourne Tech.	George Derrick Trial	August 16/17
Victorian Amateur Drivers' Club	Two Day Trial	August 30/31
North Eastern C.C.	Caltex North Eastern Trial	October 26/27
Western District C.C.	Cooper Memorial Trial	November 8/9

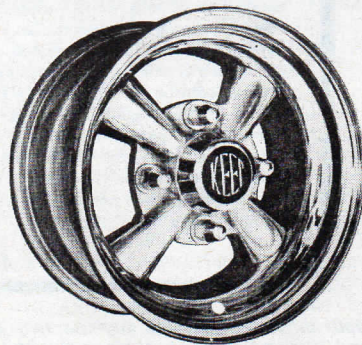
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happy hunting-grounds of class-winning Datsuns, will both see the Datsun company entered. Wilkinson, with Ian Inglis, is the most likely driver.

FORD: With Cortinas first and second in the inaugural Australian Championship last year, Ford will be hard-pressed to do better this year. However, I believe they will be entering the Nationals and other major events in 1969, giving the State Championship a miss. Competitions Manager John Gowland did not have a finalised plan of attack at the time of writing—the publicity and financial aftermath of the Marathon no doubt had a lot to do with this—although Ford are believed to have purchased two ex-Marathon Lotus Cortinas for their drivers this year. The Marathon Falcons won't be seen in the sport for quite some time, publicity stunts in dealers' showrooms will take care of that. Ford seem blessed with a number of top crews: Firth, Frank Kilfoyle (National winners), Ian Vaughan, Jack Ellis (third in the Marathon) and N.S.W's. Bruce Hodgson. Navigators like Graeme Hoinville, Bob Forsyth, Doug Rutherford and possibly Gary Chapman will keep them on the right tracks.