

The Rex Lunn/John Hall Capri V6 roars out of the night en route to its fine "Cooper Memorial" victory.

MOTORING PHOTOGRAPHICS

LOCAL ACES TAKE "COOPER"

Story by ROGER BONHOMME

Geelong's Rex Lunn/John Hall (Capri V6) took off the final heat of the 1970 Victorian Rally Championship, the Cooper Memorial Trial, well organised by their own Western District Car Club on November 15. They finished some 15 points ahead of Richard Creed/Robin Sharpley (Torana GTR) and the WDCC crew of Warwick Henderson and Alpine Rally director Bruce Ford (Toyota 1900).

With the Championship well and truly won by the virtually unbeatable Bob Watson/Jim McAuliffe combination, the main interest in the Cooper centred on the minor Championship placings. Creed needed an outright win to finish ahead of David Cuthbert for second place in the listings, while Cuthbert had to finish at least fifth to retain his championship position. Bob McInnes (Cooper S), Graham Alexander (Torana GTR) and Lunn were also battling hard for a placing.

It was an "all-Renault" start at Geelong with Renault team captain Bob Watson flagging off one of his yellow Gordinis, crewed by myself and Jim McAuliffe. The first three sections - a loop around old Wensleydale and a run through the Otways to Benwerrin - caused no problems for most of the field. The supercharged 203 Peugeot of Seymour/Cox started its overheating problems again and another Pug (Jones/Hutchinson) dropped an early 45 when they left the road temporarily.

Only seven cars cleaned the next control down to Mt. Cowley. Our Gordini fell out of the running when it blew a radiator hose (I must learn to watch the temperature gauge). A quick loop back to Mt. Cowley, followed by a rapid turn down to Kennett River and up the tortuous Sunnyside Road, caught all cars, with Creed/Sharpley (Torana GTR) in early form to drop 2 and 7 points respectively.

At the central control point atop drizzly Mt. Sabine, first stage scores were totalled, with the leaders being Creed 10, Lunn 11 and Alexander 12. Creed's navigator, Robin Sharpley, misunderstood the instructions to the "out" control to start Stage 2 and dropped 5 valuable points - confused officialdom may have helped, too.

The fabulous Turtons Pass road to south of Olangolah was next, with four cars on 3 minutes late - Creed/Lunn, Halifax/Turnbull (Datsun 1600) and myself (the Gordini rejuvenated by a new hose and fan belt).

Shortly afterwards, Alexander sidelined the Winter and Taylor Torana with steering box problems and left Lunn and Creed to fight it out. Privateer Halifax was driving well in his newly prepared Datsun 1600, but gearbox problems on the very last control of the event were to rob him of an excellent third placing.

Directors Trevor Stanley and Ross Middleton maintained the pressure on crews with loops between Gellibrand and Cape Horn. The dust early on in the event gave way to steady drizzle and patches of fog. Greasy roads kept drivers busy with several cars leaving the road at one or two particularly bad forestry corners.

Lunn, probably revelling in the "home town" conditions, scored well throughout the stage by dropping 20 to Henderson's 26 and Halifax's 28. Mat Philip was up amongst the leaders when he lost a wheel - fortunately at low speed. As the muddled cars faced the final stage, Lunn was 10 clear of Creed (41) followed by Henderson 54 and Halifax 56.

Lunn increased his lead by being the only driver to clean the first section out to near Beech Forest and then tying on four points with Creed on the following loop section. Our Gordini got into its stride on the next control with a two point loss for best time, whilst Lunn, Wardill and Halifax each dropped three on the long run through Hordern Vale and Cape Horn to south of Apollo Bay. Halifax did well to drop only 8 on the next boggy loop, but stuck cars delayed several other competitors on a slippery climb up Blanket Bay Road.

The final competitive section was a fantastic loop up Skenes Creek Road to Tanbryn and down Wild Dog Creek Road. It was good Gordini stuff (what country isn't?) and we dropped two to the threes of Henderson and Wardill. Racing-rally man Jon Leighton (with John Begehole in the Birchwood Racing Datsun 1000) had been flying earlier, but slowed with a leaking radiator and finally retired with a blown head gasket. Creed had a poor third stage too - his press-on type driving wore out a set of studded SP44's which resulted in too little traction for the final controls.

The Cooper Trial was a high note on which to end the 1970 Victorian Rally Championship and congratulations are in order to the enthusiastic team of workers from the WDCC.

PROVISIONAL RESULTS:

1. Rex Lunn R.Lunn/J.Hall Capri V6 61
2. Neil Neilson Motors- R.Creed/
R. Sharpley Torana GTR 86
3. Warwick Henderson
W.Henderson/B.Ford Toyota 1900 92
4. Huntingdale Auto Club
J.Wardill/J.Hocking Datsun 1600 95
5. Surrey Motors-
D.Cuthbert/A.Chapman Hunter 115
6. Bob McInnes
R.McInnes/R.Forsyth Cooper S 158

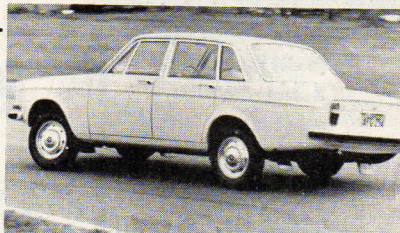
* First Restricted crew

Correspondent Roger Bonhomme, with Champion nav, Jim McAuliffe, tries his hand at the Gordini, but lost out to a blown water hose. MOTORING PHOTOGRAPHICS



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