

# HUGH RINGS THE BELL IN RALLY

The 1981 Windscreen O'Brien Begonia Rally was won in fine style by Hugh Bell and Steve Ellis in a highly modified Datsun 1600.

It was the second consecutive win the event for Bell who led the rally almost from start to finish.

In second place was the popular team of "Dinta" Officer and Kate Hobson in a Lancer.

They snatched this position just eight stages from the finish when the rear suspension collapsed on Geoff Portman's Datsun 200B.

In third place, only three seconds behind Officer, was the Cortina crewed by David Hodge and Tom Seymour.

Hodge did a magnificent job getting the large Cortina up to this position and was loudly cheered by Ford supporters at the spectator points.

Chris and Simon Brown in a 180B took fourth position and managed to score points in this Victorian Rally Championship Round.

They won the Championship last year and are desperately defending their title.

Warwick Smith and Janine Kilfoyle in a Lancer finished in fifth position after being troubled by front suspension failure.

John White in a Lancer was sixth.

He was closely followed by Frank Markus in a Datsun 1600.

This was an excellent effort on behalf of the SA driver who has been rallying for only a year.

On eighth place was Peter

Corkran in a Lancer.

Only 10 seconds behind him came a relatively unknown driver Graeme Wise in a Datsun 1600.

Graeme began the event as car 58 and drove brilliantly to get to this position.

Simon Birrell drove his Galant to tenth position, only one second behind Wise.

The rally began with an exciting spectator stage in Victoria Park.

Hundreds of people lined the roads and saw Hugh Bell win the section by one second from Geoff Portman.

At the end of four stages, however, Portman had moved to a 35 second lead over local driver Gary Harrowfield with Bell a further 4 seconds behind. On the next stage Harrowfield's motor blew up and put him out of the event.

The following stage had to be cancelled when car 2, Ian Hill from NSW — crashed badly and blocked the section.

Garry Rainsford from SA blew his Mazda rotary engine on the next stage.

This left only 9 of the 12 Group One drivers.

From then on Bell moved steadily ahead and finished Saturday's running 1 min 26 seconds ahead of Portman.

Graham Hodge driving brilliantly in the Cortina was a further 2min 53 seconds behind and Officer was only 11 seconds behind him.

A further 13 cars had retired during the day.

The incredible pace kept up by the front runners in the hot and dusty conditions could not be matched by the less well-

•By Bruce Campbell

prepared cars and slower drivers.

On Sunday Bell forged further ahead — delighting spectators with his fast, precise driving.

The first five sections were completed without incident then again the retirements began as both drivers and machines suffered from the grueling pace.

Chris Wall crashed his car and broke the rear axle and Gil Davis blew up his engine — the turbo-charger proving too much for the bottom end of the motor.

Local driver, David Chestnut, who had driven extremely well on Saturday and had worked his way into 11th position, rolled his car over and could not continue.

Geoff Portman was out of the event a few sections later then Chris Power crashed while lying in 6th position.

By the time the cars reached Sago Hills quarry for the final stage there were only 27 of the original 65 starters left.

Bell and Hodge blasted their way through the quarry in 1min 18 secs. with the rest of the drivers taking between 1:20 and 1:30.

A large crowd gathered there again saw why Bell is ranked with Portman as one of the fastest privateers in Australia.

The cars then conveyed to the North Gardens Reserve where a jubilant Hugh Bell was presented with the winners trophy by the 1981 Begonia Queen.

Bell told the crowd that it



•Rally driver, Chestnut, gets off to a flying start at the Begonia Rally on Sunday, but later in the event the car was rolled and Chestnut was out of the Rally.

had been a tough, demanding event and that he was honored to win.

calendar.

Provisional Results: 1. Bell-Ellis Dat 1600 226mins 51; 2. Officer-Hobson Lancer 234.30; 3. Hodge-Seymour Cortina 234.33; 4. Brown-Brown Lancer 236.03; 5.

Smith-Kilfoyle Lancer 243.02; 6. White-Williams Lancer 247.59; 7. Markus-Johns Dat 1600 249.37; 8. Corhran-Stewart Lancer 250.15; 9. Wise-Brooke Dat 1600 250.25; 10. Birrell-Cornish Galant 250.26.



•Driver, Birrell; in car 20 makes the dust rise as he takes a bend during the Begonia Rally on Sunday

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