

LYING

“INVITATION” TO TORANA

by Roger Bonhomme

Nineteen-seventy-one Victorian championship runners-up Gil Davis/Peter Haas had no trouble in taking off the Huntingdale Auto Club's Total Invitation Rally, an open event in Victoria's Gippsland hills.

Competing in their new mount, an ex- Holden Dealer Team XU-1 for Mollison Motors, Davis/Haas used the invitation as a “shakedown” cruise in preparation for this year's tough Victorian championship which gets underway next weekend.

A championship trial in 1971 and 1970, this year's Invitation lost a lot of its former toughness although it utilised the excellent rallying country south of the Latrobe Valley.

Davis/Haas hit the front from the start at Ben Guzzardi's Total garage in Traralgon when they and the Peter Davis/Warwick Smith Escort TC were the only cars to clean a winding run down to Calder Junction.

Unfortunately the Escort ran off the road on the next section and retired.

A similar fate befell the car in last year's Invitation when it was crewed by Len Shaw/Tony Wunderlich.

Between Calder Junction and Christies, Davis showed his superiority when he dropped only a point to the five of Wacamer/Prendergast (Renault 10) who was second best. The rest of the stage was fairly straight forward with a loop back to Christies then up the popular Morwell River and Prosper Valley

roads to the half-way mark at Morwell.

The stage easily went to Davis on five points from Wacamer, a newcomer to the sport, on 17 points with veterans Weston/Richards (VW 1600 Beetle) in third spot on 22.

The final stage moved crews through more populated areas in West Gippsland with Davis/Haas only losing points on the Ross Hill to Topiram South control.

Directors David Long and Colin Turnbull deleted a section near Leongatha following heavy local rains whilst another section near Ross Hill was re-routed.

The rest of the route was in perfect condition with light pre-rally rains compacting the road surfaces into first-class, dust-free challenges to the crews.

Weston/Richards showed the benefit of their years of experiences in the stage by drawing ahead of all the restricted class crews. But they were no match for Davis/Haas who lost only

two points through Tarwin River, Heath Hill and Longwarry South to the finish at Picnic Point.

The Root/Porrirt Mini 1100 put in a consistent performance throughout the event to improve fourth overall at Morwell to take off third outright at Picnic Point.

Sorenson/Amey (Falcon hardtop) made a good recovery after a poor first stage and drew level with Wacamer/Prendergast but both were pipped for fourth slot by Ruskin/Trenham (who knows Gippsland better than most navigators) in a Renault 16TS.

Provisional results put Davis/Haas first on seven points, from Weston/Richards 33, Root/Porrirt 41 and Ruskin/Trenahm 48.



Gil Davis — winner