

RALLY ACTION

Victorian Clubmen Series

"COOPER" TO SPENCE AND KELLY

GEELONG, OCTOBER 5 — GARY SPENCE AND NOEL KELLY CLINCHED SECOND PLACE IN THE 1975 VIC CLUBMAN'S SERIES when they brought their Clark Chrysler Galant home in first place in the WDCC Cooper Memorial Trial here today. In what must have been the most demanding heat of the series they had a trouble-free run to lose a total of 38 points.

This crew has performed consistently well throughout the year and couldn't let up for a moment as their second placing in the series was assured only after their placing in this event.

After their surprise first place the HAC Invitation last month in their newly built Escort 2000 it came as no shock to see Greg Sinclair and Dave Kershaw grab a major outright placing in the Cooper.

SCORE

Their score of 42 was good enough for second place, even though they had had one 'off'

and been 'temporarily misaligned' a couple of times.

What is astounding is that this crew has taken out third in the series even though they have only competed in two events! One first and a second gave them a total of 15 points.

Doug Irish and Ian Ellis, who had already won the series prior to this event having accumulated 30 points, did not contest the final heat. Spence and Kelly ended up on 27 series points.

Sinclair and Kershaw, with success ringing in their ears, will suddenly find themselves in different company next year because, together with the other two crews, they will automatically be put up to grade two for 1976.

LOCALS

Third place in the Cooper went to local crew Kevin Mills and Barry Burt who, in their orange Torana, are one of the most under-rated grade threes. This time they put in a 47 which earned them another four points giving them a total of 13

championship points throughout the year.

Mills and Burt suffered from the dreaded Torana understeer only once during the night when they hit a tree damaging the nose a little and demolishing a Super Oscar.

Fast improvers Steve Johnston and Roger Curran dropped 63 in their Datsun 1600 to take out fourth spot, and did it all without a windscreen!

Although it's a laminated screen next time the car was fitted with an ordinary toughened screen which a stone from a passing car took care of on the initial transport section.

They woundup the windows to keep the breeze out but found it a little more difficult to keep the mud and water at bay.

John Birrell and Graham Vaux were fifth in their Renault R8 special on 66. This was the crew's first series placing this year.

Hailing from Hamilton Bob Bowden and Max Sharrock made it to sixth in their Datsun 180B SSS with a loss of 71.

As usual some fancied runners failed to show.

Norm Wagner and Gael McLean were having their second run in their new Joe Verhagen Motors (Moe) Holden Gemini. The four door Gemini is very smart in its red, white and blue paint job but is still very much standard at the moment.

SORTING

Despite the fact that they were mainly sorting the car out prior to the Holden Dealers 500 (Oct 18) they were putting in some very quick times and were well placed until they incurred a penalty for infringing a quiet zone restriction in dense fog.

Maybe the rules ought to be changed to cater for crews' safety under such conditions.

After rebuilding the alternator on their Blue Star Batteries Peugeot 403 at the start Tom Seymour and Ian Wallace never made the first competitive section because the Pug blew a head gasket.

Phil Nicholson fronted up with his just completed Datsun 1600. Fitted with the ex-Roger Bonhomme-Don Capasco power unit of 1800cc the car should prove a force to be reckoned with next year.

The preparation is complete and comprehensive for a grade three entrant but will need a settling in period. The car blew a head gasket on section 30 and so was unable to continue.

HARD LUCK

And this event's hard luck story has to be Jean Jones (used to be Jean Reid if you remember) and Hugh McMenamin who came seventh.

They stopped to help Birrell and Vaux by supplying them with some Selley's Troubleshooter when the Renault flamed out in some water.

It's possible that had they not been so generous they may have made it to sixth place so gaining their first VCS points.

The Cooper was designed as a test of car, driver and navigator and it certainly was!

Apart from the pressure put on the crews the cars had to



Story: Colin Wood
Pix: Ken Cusack

BEING MEMBERS OF THE Clark Chrysler Rally Team has lots of advantages. For instance, you get to win quite a few rallies that way. Spence and Kelly won well in the "Cooper".

traverse difficult, sometimes rough, terrain. And throughout the night water was in evidence playing havoc with traction when it remained on the ground and with vision when the muddy water dried on driving lights. Of course Johnston and Curran were a pale shade of brown come morning.

SCARSDALE

The event, directed by Mick Brasier and the WDCC, was set in the area generally around Scarsdale which involved 74km transports to get crews to and from the competitive sections from Geelong.

Brasier set an event which taxed drivers, navigators and cars to a level unequalled this year.

Route charts comprised the entire first stage mainly so that most crews should see the stage break. It ran from Dereel Swamp (would you credit a section called Dereel Thing?) up to Berringa and Staffordshire Reef.

Then it was on to some newly made roads in Italian Gully which have never been used in a rally before. Route charts were obviously the only way to take advantage of these new roads as they do not appear on any maps.

Then it was off to a central control at Scarsdale which crews were to visit four times during the night. The remainder of the first division was set in Cherry Tree Plantation.

LENGTHY

By now the lengthy nature of the event was beginning to show. Beginning with a 74km assembly stage from Geelong to Rokewood, the first stage comprised 120km of which 100km was competitive.

And the second stage was even longer, with a total of 251km made up of 156km competitive and 94km transport.

The grand total of 444km (256km competitive) made it the longest event in this year's

Victorian Clubman Trials Series.

By contrast with the first division the second was a pressurised mixture of route charts, some of them over rough and rocky tracks, and very tight map reading. Some of the grid references were so close together on the map that some crews were caught napping.

A passage control on section 16 caught 15 cars from the wrong direction.

But by stating the route instructions' complexity by no means should be taken as criticism. Director Mick Brasier had it all there, even if it did take a lot of work to get it all in the correct order.

Many of the things attempted were no doubt a try out for next year's event which will be Vic Champ status.

After a route charted blast through Cherry Tree Plantation the first of the mapping sections led through Linton Forest and on to the Happy Valley-Piggoreet abandoned gold mine area.

After a champagne section 'for the car', there were ones for the driver' and 'for the Navigator', there was a return trip through Happy Valley and back to central control at Scarsdale.

A route charted breather in the forests east of Smythsdale led on to one of the longer sections (18km) and the longest section in the event (31km) which was called 'Down the Hatch'. The hatch was a very steep and rough descent into a ford.

Through much of the trial there was a complicated intermeshing of routes which required competing cars to not only join competitors on different sections but also to cross rally traffic at passage controls.

With the 25 competitors nothing went wrong but this brave and ingenious routing will need strict supervision for next year's State Title Cooper.

PROVISIONAL RESULTS

1. Spence/Kelly Galant 38
2. Sinclair/Kershaw Escort 2000 42
3. Mills/Burt Torana 47
4. Johnston/Curran Datsun 1600 63
5. Birrell/Vaux Renault 66
6. Bowden/Sharrock Datsun SSS 71

VCS Points after all 7 heats provisional upon finalisation of Cooper Memorial results.

DRIVERS

Irish	30
Spence	27
Sinclair	15
Mills	13
Fletcher	12
Wood	11
Hutchinson	10
Seymour	9
Johnston	9

NAVIGATORS

Ellis	30
Kelly	27
Kershaw	15
Swan	14
Burt	13
Hartnell	9
Curran	9