

# VOLKSWAGEN TAKE OUTRIGHT HONORS IN SOUTHERN CROSS



A NEW innovation for the 1967 Southern Cross Rally, and one which differed from the usual Australian event, was the promised Special Stages — undisguised road races through forests.

The regulations called for 2500 miles in four nights of driving from Sydney, across the alps to Bairnsdale in Victoria, and return.

Preparation for the event reflected the trend towards speed. Heavy iron sump shields were being replaced by light alloy guards and interior trim was being removed to reduce weight.

When the 84 entrants arrived at the Sydney start of the event, it became apparent that tyres would play an important part in deciding the placings. The crunch of studded tyres on the tiled floor of the Bankstown shopping plaza brought tears to the eyes of the starters.

Then the cars were off to Mittagong on the Hume Highway at a polite amble, in deference to the public and the law.

But from Mittagong, it was really on. By the time the entrants had covered the 300 mile loop around the Wombeyan Caves to Collector

near Canberra, the service crews had plenty to do.

They were tightening lamps, changing tyres and tut-tutting about the creased mudguards. Two cars had already rolled over but their crews were unhurt.

Another, a Mini Cooper S, had been deliberately driven over a bank, in and out among the rocks, beside the creek at the bottom of the hill onto the road. Such is the skill of Finnish driver and world rally champion, Timo Makinen. He drove off the edge rather than face an almost certain roll over.

True, his car had a cracked rear suspension arm at Canberra, but he was leading the rally. Behind him were fellow internationals Paddy Hopkirk and Tony Fall.

This trio were ahead but their cars' tyre wear was astonishing. Between Collector and Canberra, Paddy wore out four Dunlop SP44 radial ply winter treads on the short 300 mile stage.

The BMC international team was navigated by Australians, Garry Chapman with Paddy Hopkirk, Bob Forsyth with Timo Makinen and Fred Logan with Tony Fall.

At Canberra, the first rest stop, many cars were already limping. Tony Fall's Cooper S had a loose rear subframe but this was tightened to allow him to continue.

More than 10 starters dropped out that first night, broken, tired or crashed.

Experts in long distance events were holding themselves in readiness for the next three nights and when the field left Canberra, the order ran:

**Makinen/Forsyth, Morris Cooper S, 14 pts.; Fall/Logan, Morris Cooper S, 19 pts.; Hopkirk/Chapman, Morris Cooper S, 22 pts.; Bond/Hope, Colt 1000F, 28 pts.; Green/Denny, Morris Cooper S, 28 pts.; Keran/Halloran, Volvo, 30 pts.; Holden/Shepherd, Morris Cooper S, 30 pts.**

From Canberra, the field headed west into the Brindabella ranges, an area riddled with back tracks. It was here that things began to go wrong with the International's cars.

First Timo Makinen's mount lost first and reverse gears, 20 miles further on Paddy Hopkirk's car suffered the same trouble and Tony Fall's car's rear subframe again came loose.

Most of the route of the second and third stages covered a direct dash to Bairnsdale and then back to New South Wales. This presented the service crews with the problem of trying to stay ahead of the rally field.

For Paddy Hopkirk and Timo Makinen, the rally problem was solved with two days of leisurely sight-seeing around Canberra.

For the first stage of the event, the weather had been kind and there had been no rain. But as the cars climbed towards Kiandra and the roof of Australia, they were gasping the thin air on roads between snow covered banks.

Light rain followed them to Corryong in North Eastern Victoria. Then it began to pour. The route to Omeo lay across a sharp range with steep drops.

The rally's average speed stayed at a continual and impossible 48 mph. But the experts were in there trying. Harry Firth with Graham Hoinville as navigator, was having differential trouble. Their car, Lotus Cortina Mk. II was in third place when the differential suddenly drove on only one wheel and hurled the car off the edge of the road.

It dropped down the side of a hill, turned over 4½ times and finally stopped against a tree. This prevented another drop to a creek far below. The crew were unhurt.

Further into Gippsland, Greg Garard and Frank Goulburn struck creek trouble. Their Holden HR inverted after missing a tiny bridge and finished with the bonnet on one bank and the boot on the other, upside down with water flowing across the roof.

Releasing their belts, they swam from the car and continued after it had been righted.

At Bairnsdale, the field looked a sorry sight. Nearly three quarters

of the cars had hit something at some stage and many were nursing internal troubles.

As the tired cars lined up for the dash back to Canberra, drivers and navigators looked as though they had been partying for a week without sleep.

With Barry Ferguson's VW beetle now in front with a loss of 99 points and John Keran's Volvo second on 102 points, the rally was still wide open.

Tony Fall's car had dropped a valve guide and the time required to change the head put him out of the running.

Ron Phillips and Jim McAuliffe, in a Victorian trials Holden, were in third place at Bairnsdale with 117 points lost and Frank Kilfoyle and Doug Rutherford in a Cortina GT were fourth.

Competitors used the Princes Highway from Orbost and then turned onto the Bonang Highway. Its gravel and mud surface had been damped by misty rain and the 60 miles to Bendoc, near the New South Wales border, were arranged in three special stages.

Two loops around Bendoc were spoiled by the route becoming chopped up and boggy as the field went through to Delegate.

Keran's Volvo had retired after colliding with another car in Orbost.

From Delegate, the route took cars to the coast near Merimbula and then inland over **Brown**



**Light-footed Japanese technicians adjust the bonnet fit of the Stewart/Bryson Colt 1000F following its spectacular, high speed rollover. The crew drove the car in this condition for the last 600 miles of the Rally.**

Mountain. Coming down the mountain, the Colt 1000F of Doug Stewart and John Bryson flipped over several times at high speed before finishing the right way up astride a fence.

Japanese mechanics with hammers beat out the dents in the

wreck when it limped into Canberra, and, with windows taped back into place, the car continued.

Barry Ferguson was firmly in the lead with Kilfoyle second and Ron Phillips third as the field left on the final stage to Sydney via the Araluen Valley, Moruya, Nowra and Kangaroo Valley.

At Moruya, Ron Phillips' car developed differential trouble and retired. During the Araluen Valley escapades, Bob Holden improved his fourth place to third ahead of the Vaughan brothers. And Ferguson's VW continued in the lead, unmarked, and the quickest car around the loops.

In the run to the finish, Ferguson won comfortably. Of that there was no doubt.

True, the other placings were way, way up in the air and officials closetted themselves with the route cards of the competitors to sort out the minor positions.

At Bankstown, the order was given as Bond/Hope, Colt 1000F; Kilfoyle/Rutherford, Cortina GT; Holden/Shepherd, Morris Cooper S; I. and R. Vaughan, Cortina GT.

But a week later, the Bond/Hope car was in seventh spot, and a few days later it was fourth.

It was an excellent event according to the competitors, "like four very good 600 mile events on end," said winner Ferguson — and one likely to receive plenty of support next year — IF the organisers can improve their scoring at the finish.