



FERGUSON'S REVENGE

James Laing-Peach (you remember, he won Class B for us in the rally last year) reports on this year's Southern Cross.

ON finishing last year's Southern Cross Rally we determined to be back this year. Unfortunately we weren't. But had we, the chance of finishing with an unmarked car and success was small. Barry Ferguson did; in fact he won the 1967 Rothmans International Car Rally (to give it the correct name) and he did it without one bent panel. He's that sort of driver. For the rest of the field it was a lot harder and a lot faster than the 1966 event. Director Bob Selby-Wood concentrated on rough mountainous terrain either side of the NSW-Victorian border. None of the flatter Riverina sections used last year were touched. Times were made stiffer and in most cases were "impossible".

So when the field lined up at Sydney's Bankstown Square start on October 4, they had in front a 2100 mile car-breaking course. And it was a car breaker. Only 51 of the original 83 finished.

We first sighted the competitors at Collector. First car in was the McLeod/Lock works VW from SA. It had hit a bank on the run from the Wombeyan Caves road up to Mt Werong. The Jansen/Bainbridge Hillman Hunter also arrived in control with indications of bank biffing.

For the second half of the night Selby-Wood took them through Gunderoo, Weetangara, Wee Jasper and then on to special stages timed to quarter minutes in the Brindabella, Argalong and Piccadilly Circus area.

With the fog lying low out from Brindabella, the field emerged over two hours late, led by Ferguson (VW) and Hopkirk (Mini S). When the field eventually trailed into

Canberra the casualty rate was high. The McLeod VW, not content with biffing a bank in the earlier stages, had completely rolled, pushing in the front guard and roof over the navigator but losing only two minutes. The Stahl/Stephanoff Fiat 124 had bent the nearside front end on a tree near the Towrang creek crossing and the Mullins/Hall Daihatsu GT had tripped and rolled with a rock catching under the roof, tearing it up. Jack Mullins received a few scratches but the crew continued to Canberra for patching up. The only Falcon entered, an XP two-door, retired after inversion. The rear suspension subframes on the British-prepared Mini Cooper Ss of Paddy Hopkirk and Timo Makinen had fractured from the rough going but the overseas trio held first, second and third into Canberra — Makinen/Forsyth, Fall/Logan and Hopkirk/Chapman. Then came all the local contenders, Green (Mini S), Bond (Colt), Holden (Mini S), Keran (Volvo), Ferguson (VW) Kilfoyle (Cortina), J. Garard (Holden) and last year's winner and hot contender for the 1967 title, Harry Firth and Graham Hoinville in the incredibly equipped Lotus Cortina Mk 2.

The rally was divided into eight classes — up to 1000 cc, 1000 to 1300, 1300 to 2000 and 2000 and over in both standard and improved categories. Class leaders in Canberra were Burns, Fiat 850 (A), Collier, Renault Gordini (B), Vaughan, Cortina 2 (C), J. Garard, Holden (D), Brown, Colt (E), Makinen, Mini S (F), Green, Mini S (G), Winkless, Volvo (H).

Snow was an almost certainty as the field left for Bairnsdale on the second night via the Rules Point

The best news Volkswagen Australasia has had all year — Ferguson winning the Rothmans Rally.

road, Sue City, high in the Snowy Mountains, then across the border to Corryong, Omeo, Bruthen Buchan, Sawyers Creek, and Tara Mountain. If the roads were rough — and to Rules Point it is — then they were to get rougher. But it was the road to Sawyers Creek that claimed much interest from the rally. Although on a short straight, the limited slip differential of Firth's Lotus locked up, forcing the car to drop a front wheel over the edge. Unable to catch it, Firth, Hoinville and Lotus rolled down an 80 ft embankment, wrecking the Lotus but, thanks to seat belts, the crew emerged unscathed.

Firth was not the only "name" driver to strike bad trouble. Greg Garard (Holden 186S) ran off a bridge and he and Frank Goulbourn — last year's NSW champions, were lucky to be unhurt. The Holden was righted and continued — unlike Firth, who had to retire and trailer the only Mk 2 Lotus Cortina in Australia back to Melbourne. Less dramatic were the retirements of Hopkirk and Makinen when the gearboxes of their British Coopers fell foul to hard driving. Tony Fall also had gearbox and oil leak problems to keep the BMC service crew awake but he kept on.

From Bairnsdale the rally ran back to Canberra via the Bonang Highway, out to the coast at Merimbula, then over Brown Mountain to Michelago on the Cooma-Canberra road. Main event of the night was when the Stewart/Bryson works Colt 1100 Fastback somersaulted after hitting a spoon drain at close to 100 mph. Hardly a panel of the Colt was left unbent but both Stewart and Bryson were ready to push on — which must say something for the strength of Colts. With the help of the service crew and much Japanese sticky tape the Colt was righted and pushed on to support Colin Bond in the other Colt team car, running well up. As the field prepared for the last night (which Selby-Wood threatened would be the worst) the order was Ferguson, Kilfoyle (Cortina GT), Phillips (Holden 186), Vaughan (Cortina), Holden (Mini S), Green (Mini S), Roberts (Holden 186), Collier (Renault Gordini), Winkless (Volvo) and Bond (Colt).

The final night was to take toll on yet another leading name and winner of the Rothmans' Snowy rally earlier in the year. John Keran dropped his Volvo in a lake.

So it was a smiling if exhausted Barry Ferguson who came howling through the last special stages run through the Araluen Valley near Braidwood and on to the Marulan which was the last serious driving of the rally. #