



Andy Chapman and Laurie Comerford caused a big upset by downing many fancied crews in their convincing "BP Rally" victory. CHRIS BROWN

DATSUN TAKES LAST "BP"

Story by ROGER BONHOMME

THE Surrey Motors Datsun crew of Andy Chapman/Laurie Comerford on May 13 overcame a very troubled last night to win the 16th and final BP Rally of South Eastern Australia. They beat home by 13 points Mat Philip/myself (Torana XU1), although at the final control at Bendigo we actually thought we'd won! However, the last control contained an incorrectly typed route chart and the section was scrubbed.

Chapman/Comerford were hampered by a defunct clutch and alternator during the event's last Division between Charlton and Bendigo, but hung on grimly to the lead they had inherited three quarters of the way through the event at Ouyen. Third in the BP were the Datsun Rally Team of Gil Davis/Peter Haas, one of four crews to lead the 60-car field during the 1500-mile four-day event. They were just one point ahead of the Holden Dealer Team entered 308 Kingswood of Colin Bond/Warwick Smith.

Richard Creed/Tony Wunderlich, in a ULR Services sponsored four-wheel-drive Range Rover, and Bob Watson/Jeff Beaumont (Peugeot 504) finished fifth and sixth respectively. The prestigious Manufacturers Award went to Nissan, with Datsuns in first, third and seventh places, while two three-car teams, one from Tasmania and the other from Victoria, tied on 1386 points for the Teams Prize.

The 1973 BP was undoubtedly one of the most incident-packed, roughest and fastest BP's in the event's long history. It was also the shortest (in time), starting on Thursday morning instead of the usual Wednesday night. Directors Mike Osborne and Frank Kilfoyle packed a greater variety of terrain into the event, too, ranging from

All the traditional acts were included in the "BP," including bumper-riding through the stops. ORANGE PHOTO



icy mountain roads between Dargo and Hotham in the Victorian Alps, flat grid country south of the Murray, flooded tracks near Echuca and rough sandy and clay-pan tracks in the desert west of Ouyen.

The First Division, from Benalla (central rallying point for the starters from four States) to Bright, caught most crews by surprise, as the speeds required and navigational simplicity were more in line with an Alpine rally than a BP. The route led over rough and rogy Mt. Samaria to Jamieson, then on a 100-mile section via Licola to Cromwell Knob. Dargo, Mt. St. Bernard and Harrietteville were then visited before the Bright break.

The roughness of the Samaria and Valencia Creek Roads saw the demise of many cars. Bond lost half an hour with a broken front suspension, while three cars rolled out of contention south of Dargo. Thick dust alternated with mud during the cross-Alps run and Watson was one of the many dust victims, clouting a bank while closing on a slower car. Despite the mishap, Watson was only a point behind early leaders, Davis/Haas, at Bright.

During the Second Division, Bright to Shepparton via the mazes of Stanley and Owens pine plantations, Bond threw out a strong challenge to move from seventh to second place behind Davis, pushing Watson back to third. Chapman was fourth at this stage, performing consistently. Philip and I dropped back a little when we bogged for the second time in the event and then missed a checkpoint near Shepparton.

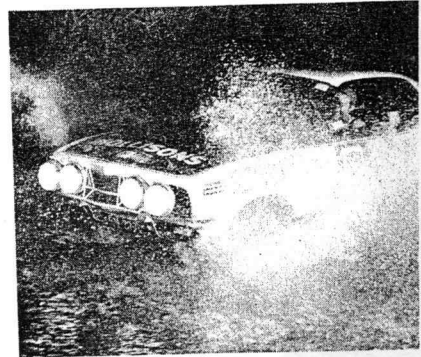
Two of the BP's more favoured crews, South Australians Stewart McLeod/Adrian Mortimer (XU1) and Chris Murray/Jack Lock (Datsun 180B), fell by the wayside during the stage with a broken gearbox and front suspension respectively. Murray, like most others who suffered major setbacks, repaired his car and continued later in the event. The fact that 55 out of the 60 starters finished was due to the crews' determination to finish, no matter what the points loss.

Division Three, Shepparton to Swan Hill, held few fears for most when two potentially difficult controls were cancelled in the Pericoota forest because of floods. However, both Davis and Bond got bogged in a flooded laneway north of Echuca and dropped back, leaving Watson seven points clear of Chapman, who was two points up on Creed. Friday evening was spent resting at Swan Hill before the rally continued west on Saturday morning.

The first few controls of the Fourth Division were straightforward, but the last three took the field through the sandy scrub deserts between Underbool and Nowingie, generally west of Ouyen. This terrain is only used normally by scrub wallabies and contestants in the Sunraysia desert rallies and the inevitable happened - around 20 or so cars bogged badly in the deep sand and lost over an hour. Watson lost an hour with a broken front suspension and steering arm. Fortunately, a control official's 504, plus



Big cheery smiles - and why not? - from "BP" victors, Chapman and Comerford, at the finish. AUTOPIA



Matt Philip and Roger Bonhomme held victory in their grasp till the final stage was scrubbed. CHRIS BROWN



An outstanding performance came from Richard Creed/Tony Wunderlich Range Rover, which took fifth outright. ORANGE PHOTO

the clever use of a winch, kept the car running, although down badly on the points list. Bond dropped back, too, when he vainly searched for an alternative route rather than go through an unsignposted gate.

Tom Barr-Smith/Rob Hunt were one of the best on the Swan Hill to Ouyen division, but lost a further 20 minutes working on their Renault 12's transmission instead of booking into impound. The problem later compounded itself and the South Australians retired near Bendigo.

As the field set off for Charlton, Chapman/Comerford led on 98 from Davis/Haas 108 and Philip/myself 115. Straightforward navigation and generally good roads (for a change) kept points losses to a minimum, although we moved seven points ahead of Davis/Haas into second place, with Wilson/Mitchell (Datsun 180B SSS) in fourth.

The final Division, Charlton to Bendigo, was navigationally orientated and "desperate" for the three leading cars, who were surprisingly close for a final BP stage. The lead in the field see-sawed between Chapman and Philip, with Bond storming through mid-stage to arrive first at Bendigo. But the Australian Rally Champ's run was a little late and the best he could do was to draw within a point of Davis. Wilson had navigational problems in the forests between St. Arnaud and Dunolly and dropped back to seventh.

Tension was high at the Bendigo score room, with possible victory going to Chapman, Philip or Davis. But, with the cancellation of the final section, Chapman scored a well-deserved 13-point victory.

This year's BP, unfortunately to be the last, was quite different in many aspects to its 15 predecessors. Opinion on the format change was divided, with several of the older hands regretting the slight swing to faster stages and less navigation. Certainly most of the Tasmanians felt the event was a little quicker than they were used to. Best Taswegians were Beetle-mounted Lin Gigney/Ross Kelly, who always keep the mainlanders honest. Queenslanders did not fare so well this year, with Hank Kabel/Ced Reinhardt doing best in their Mazda in equal thirteenth outright.

The strong South Australian contingent weakened during the rugged event, with mechanical failings accounting for McLeod, Murray, Barr-Smith and the X6 Austin of John Taylor/Graham West. The last car won the SA prize, despite suspension problems mid-event. A new sponsor may be sought by the LCCA for another event next year. In the meantime, BP will be sorely missed as a sponsor by those who prefer this type of event to the fast "Southern Crosses" of Australian rallying.

PROVISIONAL RESULTS

1. Surrey Motors: A. Chapman/L. Comerford (Datsun 1600) 128
2. Mollison Motors: M. Philip/R. Bonhomme (Torana XU1) 141
3. Datsun Rally Team: G. Davis/P. Haas (Datsun 180 SSS) 164
4. Holden Dealer Team: C. Bond/W. Smith (Kingswood 308) 165
5. ULR Sales and Service: R. Creed/A. Wunderlich (Range Rover) 177
6. Renault Australia: R. Watson/J. Beaumont (Peugeot 504) 193

Class A: Graham/Inglis (Honda Civic); Class B: Chapman/Comerford; Class C: Philip/Bonhomme. Manufacturers' Award: Chapman/Comerford, Davis/Haas, Wilson/Mitchell (Datsun). Teams Prize: Gigney/Kelly, Pooley/Tyson, Barwick/Reid (Tasmania) tied with Creed/Wunderlich, Hutchinon/Brasier, Waterhouse/Amey.

RALLY BITS

Big Money in Novice "Snowy"

WITH 450,000 acres of pine and gum forests at its disposal, the Snowy Mountains Car Club offers ideal conditions for its "Tumut Snowy 300" Rally, to be run on July 7-8. Offering at least \$525 in cash and trophies, the rally has a fully route-charted course, with "tulips", with the 250 miles broken into short, competitive sections. As a Novice event, the "Snowy 300" excludes Recognised or Classified crews. For details, call Rod Bawden, Tumut 16.

New Rally Safety Gear

PETER Mulder, of Club Autosport (a division of Race & Rally), has come up with a brand new safety idea for rallies - reflective day-glo "bibs" for control officials. Peter has stocks of the bibs and will lend them, free of charge, to any Rally Club - provided they are returned. Call Club Autosport on Sydney 74-8603.

Two More "Clubman" Rounds

SUCH has been the demand for competition in the "RCN-Total" Clubman Rally series in NSW this year that two additional rounds have been provided by CAMS. They will be run by the North Shore Sporting Car Club on September 15 (now Round 5) and the Canberra Sporting Car Club on November 10 (Round 8), bringing the total number of events to eight. Also because of the demand, special arrangements have been made to provide at least one start for every one of the 200-odd registered crews, and as many as possible for those in contention for the outright placings. With first prize for the series being a return trip and entry in the "Caledonian Safari" early in December, plus prizemoney down to sixth place, competition has been keen in the two rounds run so far. Following the protest hearing on the Police Motor Sport Club's "Total" Rally at Orange in March, progress pointscore for the series is: Ken Ford/Brian McGuirk 15; Peter Cashman/L. Lincoln 13; Ron Fraser/Jim Williamson 10; Gary Clarke/Ron Mettam, Garry Burge/Judy Burge 8½; Dave Rowney/Ron Wilson 8. Third round of the series is the Kaiser Stuhl "Cold Duck", run at Goolma on June 2 by the Naval Motoring Association, followed by the "K.L.G. 300", run by the Hills District Car Club on July 21.



DURING a recent visit to the Griffith ("Hoddo-ville") vintage festival, Sue Ransom and Chris Cole entered a grape stompin' race. The girls tried hard (that's Chris above, taking her turn in the barrel), but were beaten to the bottle by an Italian "works" team. First prize was a Mini Clubman, too! The girls convinced the locals that their "Team Cibie" T-shirts were from the Cibie Vineyard "down the road" - and had them placing orders for bottles of '64 Super Oscar!

Novel Clubman Rally in Qld.

BRISBANE Sporting Car Club President, Hank Kabel, has announced details of the "Motorama Worry Free" Rally, Round 3 of the 1973 Qld. Novice Series, to be run on Saturday night, June 23. Directed by RCN correspondent, Brian Gemmell, the rally will run only on bitumen or good gravel roads, with elementary navigation designed to cater for crews with little or no rally experience. In fact, top Queensland navigator, Bob Dancer, is giving series of lectures on navigation during this month. Enquiries to John Sked, Brisbane 85-3322 (day) or Brian Gemmell, 49-4999, night.

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