

FURY'S SECOND "SOUTHERN CROSS"!

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DATSUN'S TURN FOR 1-2-3!

Story by CANDY BAKER

SPEARHEADING a magnificent 1-2-3 result for the Datsun Rally Team on October 13-17, Albury's George Fury, navigated by his longtime navigator, Monty Suffern, took the winner's laurels in the "Southern Cross International" for the second consecutive year, and in so doing overcame some of the quickest drivers in the world, including the current World Champion-elect, Bjorn Waldegaard.

It was the third successive win for Datsun in the "Southern Cross" Rally, backed this year by Port Macquarie itself and the Southern Pacific Hotel Corporation. Fury drove a consistently fast and careful rally and had his equally consistent team-mates, Ross Dunkerton and Rauno Aaltonen finish close behind him, all in Datsun Stanzas.

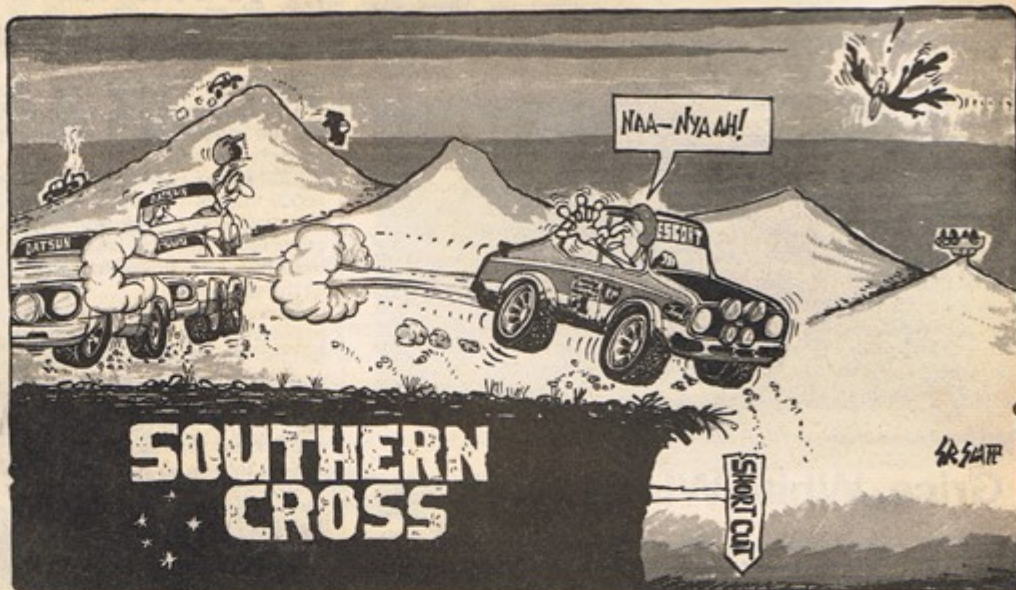
But it was no easy victory. The drama and excitement went on well into the fourth and final night until Waldegaard broke his Escort's differential only four stages before the end of the rally, shattering Ford's hopes of a win and leaving team-mate Colin Bond to carry the banner by taking a courageous fourth place.

There were forty starters for this year's Cross, largely the result of a carnet confusion which eliminated the usual large Japanese and Filipino contingent. In addition, many local drivers had had their pockets overly stretched by the "Repco" in August and couldn't afford to compete in another major rally quite so soon.

As usual, the event was run by the Australian Sporting Car Club, with Tony Webb at the helm as General Manager, Peter Berriman as Road Director, Terry Bain as chief Scorer and John Arter as Competitor-Liaison Officer. The customary around-the-clock media centre was set up, with Max Stahl, Mike Bedford, Nick Munting and Wayne Webster reporting on the progress of the rally from the headquarters in the Sandcastle Motor Inn, overlooking the beach.

New Format

There were a couple of changes in format for this year's event.



Cars officially started from Sydney Square before heading out for the first special stage at Amaroo Park. Scoring was based on elapsed time, meaning that the actual time taken by a competitor to complete each special stage was aggregated, with liaison stage or other penalties worked out separately and then added to the progressive total.

The system worked well and, with the new Zilog computer installed, not only were progress scores quickly and accurately tabulated, but also they were promptly and continuously posted on the board, keeping both press and competitors happy.

The works teams looked impressive as they headed the field, with Bjorn Waldegaard and navigator Hans Thorzelius in the Ford Escort RS1800 prepared by Colin Bond and Bob Riley started No. 1, followed by the 1977

Waldegaard hurls his Escort into a corner in a beautiful demo of the "Scandinavian Flick Turn". COLIN LOCK



winner, Rauno Aaltonen, with Adrian Mortimer in a Datsun Stanza.

Even before the start the potential Nissan-Ford fight was apparent, with Greg Carr-Fred Gocentas in their Escort followed by current Australian Rally Champion, Ross Dunkerton, fresh from his remarkable endurance trial during the Repco, with Jeff Beaumont his navigator, in their new Datsun Stanza.

Colin Bond and John Dawson-Damer were next in their Escort, with Fury-Suffern right behind them, the latter's sixth seeding being criticised in several quarters. Ford, Datsun, Ford, Datsun — with no firm favourite for the event and some very quick drivers right behind.

Jean-Paul Luc, long-time Citroen works drivers who drove a CX2400 to seventh place in the '77 London-Sydney Marathon, was

in Wes Nalder's super reliable Toyota Celica with the redoubtable Ann Heaney as navigator. Originally, Ann was to have accompanied Ian Hill, but an unfortunate accident in a rally a few weeks earlier eliminated their Lancer, so she was co-opted to replace Barry Lake, who had been told he must mind the shop in the Sydney offices of 'Modern Motor'.

Seeded eighth was Wayne Bell in the Marlboro Holden Dealer Team turbo-charged Gemini. The lightning quick Bell, teamed with Dave Boddy, was tipped by most to be the dark horse of the event, and a good chance for one of the top three placings.

Sadly, he was to remain dark, which, along with the retirement of Arthur Jackson's MHDT Gemini on the first stage, disappointed Peter Brock. He'd mused out "to have a look at how all this rally stuff happens" (does he need to know!), but didn't have a lot to do, while team guru, George Shephard, set out to spectate with the same devotion with which he'd normally service his crews.

Behind Bell were the brilliant winners of the previous month's ARC "Endrust" Rally, Geoff Portman and Ross Runnalls, in Greg Carr's Repco Trial Cortina 6. This car, of course, is unique to Australia and had not been homologated with the FIA, but CAMS approved the vehicle with the consent of the competitor and organisers, thus giving Portman his first crack at the "Cross".

Another car which received such homologation was the Holden Commodore — one driven by Jean Doug Stewart, another by Jean

Jones and yet another by John Murray. They were quite a handful in the tight conditions of the "Cross", but after their "Repco" breakdowns in the Great Sandy Desert, they were looking forward to a fight or two — particularly Stewart with Portman.

Behind Stewart was the quick and neat Frank Neale, with Phil Dodd as navigator in their reliable Rallyequip Mitsubishi Lancer — they finished fifth in '78 and were looking forward to repeating their performance. Then came Arthur Jackson in the 2-litre Gemini for which the final engine parts had arrived only a few days before the start, followed by Peter Janson in a Saab Turbo. Privateer Frank Johnson had made the long trek over from Perth and had Sydney's Steve Halloran as navigator in his rotary Mazda RX3.

The first of only two Japanese crews, Nobuhiro Tajima and Kiyoshi Kawamura, were seeded 16th in their Toyota Levin, quite an improvement on last year. Then, after starting 48th, they climbed rapidly to be almost continually in

a tree had swapped his Stratos for his Datsun 120Y, proceeded to show everybody a thing or two, with Peter Nelson in his immaculate Lancer right behind. Brian Hilton was driving his ageless Marathon and Repco Trial Toyota Celica and got as high as 12th place before the steering box broke half way into the third night.

As usual, the field didn't comprise only traditional rally cars. Brian Clark and Bruno Ryan decided to enter a VW Golf, which did pretty well until a blown head gasket towards the end of the second Division put them out — and then the little car was seen nipping in and out of spectator points, seemingly after always getting the best position! There were Bill Nolan and Ken Smith in a Triumph TR7, who burnt out two pistons and drove 60km of an 80km stage with the remaining two!

Wayne Griffiths and Tim Francis in a Honda Civic were one of the early retirements. They had alternator problems — it kept falling off! On the first stage at Amaroo they discovered it was faulty and asked the service crew to put a spare in the boot. Somehow it was forgotten and they came to grief in Special Stage 5.

After the withdrawal of John and Sonja Bryson (they failed by only a few hours to finish their Escort and reach Scrutineering), there were only three girls in the event — Ann Heaney, and Jean Jones-Joan Bennett in the Kambrook Commodore. They had a constant fight with Gelnite Jack's son, John Murray, and managed to beat his times on almost every stage!

Following Tajima as the second Japanese entry and seeded 24th were Eiichi Suzuki-Takashi Yufune in their Lancer. For both Japanese entries it was a good event and hopefully it'll be a larger contingent next year.

Ross's Mighty Leap

The "Southern Cross" started at 10.00 am on the Saturday and, as the crews collected their cars from scrutineering at the Council Car Park, the weather grew progressively finer and there was great anticipation amongst the crews as they waited for the start of the 4 km "Marchal" special stage sponsored by the distributors, Race & Rally.

The first special stage is always exciting and this year was no exception. Waldegaard asserted himself immediately, taking 3m.49s, and right behind him was team-mate Bond, only one second slower — and right behind him was team-mate Carr, one second slower again! The three Datsuns followed next with Tajima and Wayne Bell behind them.

Bell was slightly slower than expected, as he had to stop and



George Fury drove impeccably to almost match the World Champion, and the Datsun's reliability clinched the victory. PAUL HOGIE

select first gear after a gigantic 57 ft. jump, but by far and away the most spectacular leap was Ross Dunkerton's — 72' long and 12' in the air! That was one surprised pair of people as they hurtled into the air and, as Beaumont pointed out, ... "I knew he wanted to win the \$50, but he didn't have to make that sure!". Frank Johnson, Gordon Leven, Ron Marks, Frank Neale, Peter Nelson and Doug Stewart all stated their tactics for the rally, completing the course quickly but tidily, with Gary Mecak coming second on the long jump with 58'. Jean-Paul Luc was disappointingly slow, but it was his first outing in a right-hand, rear-wheel-drive car and, with only 100km or so practice to date, he hadn't quite settled into it.

As the field set off for the rest of the Division, Arthur Jackson had still not appeared at the end of Amaroo. It finally took him 27 minutes to complete the course, after his oil filter blew and he was left sitting rather morosely by his car, which had run its oil-starved bearings. The leaders charged on up towards Port Macquarie via special stages around Gosford, Newcastle, Bulahdelah and Taree, arriving at the Sandcastle at 2.30 next morning.

For those following it was fascinating to watch the developing fight between the teams. Waldegaard was fastest over eight of the 10 stages, being beaten once by Greg Carr by one second and once by Ross Dunkerton by nine seconds. The top half-dozen cars were running very close to each other and, at the start of the night, it looked like anybody's rally.

By the time the cars reached Port Macquarie, however, the picture had changed dramatically. Carr, whose rally ended in the fourth stage last year, had put up fastest time for the "Wallaroo" Special, only to come to grief in the following "Cabbage Tree" Special. He'd had an "off" early into the section which had bent the front wheel back and given them a flat tyre, which they changed, only to get another a little further on.

Having only one spare Carr continued on, travelling very quickly over the remaining 15km until he arrived at the control with no rubber left on the tyre and a mostly missing rim — and with an irate Dunkerton right behind him, held up in the dust.

The service crew changed the front suspension at Bulahdelah and Carr set off again, only to have one axle break in the next stage because of stress, and then the second one go with completely stripped splines. Finally, the service crew had to go in and pull him out and Carr ran out of late time. It was a sad repeat of last year's history.

Wayne Bell also had a disastrous night. After running third last year in his underpowered Gemini he was hoping for great things from the turbo-charged model, which had 50 per cent more power — but unfortunately, it was simply that which caused its downfall, the centre being torn out of the clutch driven plate because it was not strong enough for the kind of pressure being constantly applied.

Up until then the Bell-Boddy car had been consistently amongst the top five cars, and what with that and team-mate Jackson's undignified exit there was quite a lot of the 'Jaffa' brigade with not a lot to do.

But that wasn't the end of the night's stories. In the last long Special, the 95km Bago-Kerewong section, Bond broke part of the locker diff and limped out on only one axle all the way back to Port Macquarie, putting him back to 15th for the start of the next day's fun and games. The Ford service crew set some kind of record on the first liaison of Div. 2, when they changed the diff and springs and completed a major service in 16 minutes 22 seconds, according to Waldegaard, 8 minutes less than their European counterparts and losing Bond only five minutes.

All around it had been an eventful first night. Only 3 cars completed the 764 km, and it was going to get a lot harder. Datsun

cont. on p.58



A mighty leap from Dunkerton ... and a heavy landing from Bond highlighted the Amaroo stage. MAURICE WALSH

the top ten until put out of the event. Graham Gillies, recently returned from California, was navigating for Gary Mecak in a Mazda RX 2.

Gordon Leven-Robbie Wilson were to put up a formidable show in their Datsun SSS and Gary Mechan-Greg Gifford went very well in their Toyota Celica until put out by a blown diff at the Northern-most point of the rally near Grafton.

On they went — Ron Marks, who after last year's collision with

"SOUTHERN CROSS"

cont. from p.7

had stated their intentions with the three cars running second, third and fourth, and behind them some interesting battles were developing.

Frank Johnson had shown consistently good times throughout the first night he had Frank Neale, Tajima, Stewart and Leven snapping at his heels, while at the other end of the scale Dan White managed to limp into his home town last after mechanical problems. A former "Cross" Director, Dan was running his Escort RS2000 with backing from that wondrous Port Macquarie provide one of fishy fare — the Whalebone Wharf Restaurant.

PROGRESS RESULTS — Div. 1 (Top 20)

Waldegaard 4:01.54, Fury 4:09.59, Aaltonen 4:10.56, Dunkerton 4:12.36, Johnson 4:36.20, Neale 4:36.52, Tajima 4:36.47, Stewart 4:37.42, Leven 4:39.34, Clarke 4:40.56, Blair 4:42.21, Hilton 4:43.33, Portman 4:44.38, Meehan 4:45.29, Bond 4:45.48, Janson 4:46.42, Marks 4:47.02, Knowles 4:56.34, Suzuki 4:58.10, Creman 5:01.02.

Bjorn Steals a Break

The start of Division Two dawned bright and sunny, with a short circuit around the dam site to whet people's appetites. There were some great long sandy corners and sweeping curves to give the drivers a chance to show off a little in front of a big crowd before heading for the long night's drive into the mountains around Wingham, Yarrowitch and Comboyne.

It was a hard 600km Division, with ten special stages — three of which were over 80km long — and once more the dramas started right from the word go.

Waldegaard, not content with having an 8-minute lead, managed to foil the system on the very first stage. A directional barrier was missing, so the Swedes simply followed the road, cutting off about 3 km and saving themselves about 90 seconds. Temporarily there was panic at the ranch as he increased his lead to 9.5 minutes, but the stage times were deleted and the panic subsided.

Bond was quickest on the next 'Middle Brother' Special stage, beating Waldegaard by 14 seconds with George Fury only 1 second behind him. Bond was desperately trying to make up for lost time and was quickest on two more stages, never dropping below fifth fastest during the night.

By Wingham there'd been two more casualties — Jean-Paul Luc in Wes Nalder's Toyota and Peter Janson in the Saab. Luc had been having problems since the start with tyres and the slowness of the car he wasn't used to changing the mag wheels and each was taking him 10 minutes — after four

punctures on the first night, he'd dropped back to 26th and wanted to give it away.

"He wasn't used to the roughness," says Wes Nalder. "It didn't suit his style of driving although he put up some good times on the fast sections in what was an uncompetitive car. We got him some new Dunlops for the second night, but he blew one almost straight away, hitting a gutter and doing a bit of damage to the car. He was very depressed about being so far behind and what with that and the fatigue he decided he couldn't go on." Sounds like a trying business!

Peter Janson, who had been driving as hard as he could, had his gearbox shatter in the seventh stage of the night the 'Seaview' special, so he joined the list of DNFs. Rauno Aaltonen also lost time with a flat tyre early in the night, which allowed team-mate Dunkerton to overtake him by four minutes by the end of the Division.

It was a long and winding drive up over the mountains near Yarrowitch to catch up with the cars (particularly in an AP5) and we were the only ones mad enough to attempt it, but it was worth every corner to be the first to find out that a route instruction error appeared to have cost Waldegaard his lead.

During the 'Doyle's' special stage, they'd been confronted with Y-intersection where the instructions said straight ahead, turning left, it was 15 minutes before Waldegaard realised the mistake and by this time the Datsun Team had gone through. Several other cars lost time here, including Dunkerton, Stewart and Frank Johnson, out in front now, Fury increased his lead over the last 97 km 'Kerawang' Special which ended the night's work at Wauchope's Timbertown. As the field arrived, Fury was 2.5 mins clear of Dunkerton, with another 4 minutes to Aaltonen and 17 to Waldegaard in fourth.

The Ford Team, however, lost no time in lodging a protest against incorrect route instructions and a Stewards hearing was set up. Evidence produced by competitors and officials showed that only a few days before the event Council workers had bull-dozed a new road from the intersection, turning the original set of wheel tracks into a main road, so the Stewards had no hesitation in upholding the protest and deleting the section.

By the end of the 'Seaview' special, the seventh of the night, two more favoured competitors had disappeared, Peter Nelson and Frank Neale. Nelson, running for a class win with a 1600 cc engine, had a remarkably eventful rally: "When we came third on the jump at Amaroo we managed to land on our nose and damage the front end. Repairing it held us



The result of many kms of driving without a tyre on Greg Carr's Escort. COLIN LOCK

up a bit and then later on in the night we got caught up in Suzuki's dust misjudged a corner, went off, and it took us 25 minutes to winch back on again. But that wasn't all; we also ran out of brakes and blew an oil ring, so we were lucky to be even running 28th at the end of the first night!"

Towards the end of the second night they'd caught up a lot of time and seemed set for their class win when they suddenly broke their rear spring on the 'Doyle's' Stage. They ran out of late time fixing it, but in fact, had they known of the wrong instruction, they could have stayed in the rally since the times were nullified!

Frank Neale was one of the more unfortunate exits from the rally. He was putting up an incredible fight against the works teams and was only a couple of seconds behind Frank Johnston when they bent a stub axle.

"We were travelling really quickly along a dirt road when suddenly there was a loud bang and the steering was deranged. We tried to drive on, but finally the bearings locked up and the wheels started to fall off, so we thought we'd better stop! I've no idea what it was — it felt like a large lump of metal. Portman damaged his wheel on the same thing and Brian Hilton wiped out his half-shaft on it."

Brian Clark in the VW Golf also failed to make it through the night when a head gasket blew and it was a depleted field of 26 cars whose crews staggered into the Sandcastle bar at 4.00 in the morning. Doug Stewart had lost time in the last long section when they'd taken a wrong turn onto the main road, and there'd been flat tyres galore on the 600km of dusty roads.

Bond had rocketed up from fifteenth to fourth, and Johnson, Portman, Leven and Stewart were still fighting tooth and nail behind the Datsuns sitting pretty in second, third and fourth.

The private battles down the back were still going on, too. Dan White was creeping up, Jean Jones was still beating John Murray, and Knowles, Creman, Berne, Suzuki

and Bramble were running very close on times. Almost half the field had been knocked out by this halfway point of the event and the organisers still had a lot of surprises left in store.

PROGRESS RESULTS — Div 2 (Top 20)

Waldegaard 9:14.55, Fury 9:21.08, Dunkerton 9:23.47, Aaltonen 9:27.54, Bond 10:15.59, Johnson 10:16.46, Portman 10:18.46, Leven 10:29.41, Stewart 10:29.49, Blair 10:32.23, Meehan 10:33.09, Hilton 10:40.25, Clarke 10:48.04, Tajima 10:54.59, Marks 10:58.56, Mecak 11:04.04, Knowles 11:16.03, Creman 11:16.57, Berne 11:24.42, Suzuki 11:28.07.

Fury Hits The Front!

The third night was the make or break Division of the rally, starting at 2.30pm on Monday and finishing at 4.00am on Tuesday. The 700km would take the cars up the coast through Kempsey, Bowraville and Bellingen, with two services at the Ampol Garage in Coff's Harbour after a difficult loop through Mount Caramba and Nana Glen, with the 'Moleton' Special stage over 100km in length. The cars then wound their way back via the steep ups and downs of the Taylors Arm area before returning to Port Macquarie.

The 26 remaining cars headed off for the first short Special before another blast around the dam site. Unfortunately the first stage had to be cancelled due to incorrect timing, which infuriated Ron Marks, as he dropped 37 minutes on the dam-site when his tie rod broke and would have much preferred to have that section deleted.

The former water-ski champion finally finished 10th in his 120Y, but his wasn't a completely trouble-free run either, although, at least, as he pointed out, all the kangaroos and trees managed to miss him:

"We had difficulties in the first Division with a broken Haldal which lost us time, and then during the first and second Divisions we had trouble with rear brakes — we kept running out of them! So that cost us more time, and then we ran off the road in a

transport section on the second night near Yarrowitch where everybody — spectators, competitors and service crews — was all using the same stretch of road. It had caused a dreadful dust bowl and we went straight on instead of round the corner, which was a bit embarrassing.

"Dust was a bad problem right the way through the rally for those running behind, and even before it rained the roads were very slippery by the time the first 20 cars had gone through. We were lucky to get to the end of Division 3 since we got to one service spot out in the bush above Coffs Harbour where we needed to get fuel, only to find that our service crew weren't there. But the Fords Works Team helped us out with a bit of fuel — for which I'm forever grateful — so we carried on."

Out in the field the gap between Fury and Waldegaard was now 7 minutes and the top boys were flying. Ross Dunkerton managed to beat the two leaders by 3 secs on the second stage and the night was shaping up to be pretty exciting.

The first withdrawal of the Division happened in special stage 5 — the 'Newry' Special — where Bob Clarke broke a stub axle in his Datsun SSS. It was also where Waldegaard dropped six minutes to Fury when he dislodged a plank on a bridge and a nut came off the

front sway bar. It was a jubilant George Fury who appeared first at the end of the section, but teammates Dunkerton and Aaltonen were not so lucky.

Dunkerton had hit the loose plank and bent his rear axle assembly, and then Aaltonen spun off as he was crossing, hitting a bank on the other side and bending his rear axle. Although they finished the stage second and fourth fastest, they both had to get new axles at the Bellingen Service Point and, unhappily for Aaltonen, Dunkerton got there first losing only four minutes on the transport stage whilst Aaltonen lost 36 as he waited for the crew.

Now the picture of the rally had changed somewhat. Fury had seven minutes on Waldegaard, Dunkerton was not far behind them and Aaltonen and Bond were pretty close.

At the service point Waldegaard is reported to have said — "Now, I attack." Certainly in the very next special he was quickest, by 16 seconds to Fury and 22 seconds over Dunkerton. By the end of the night the flying Swede had decreased the deficit to 2.5 minutes between himself and Fury with Dunkerton six minutes behind them.

A little way back down the field more dramas were happening. Geoff Portman and Doug Stewart

were having a ding-dong battle and were swapping positions all night long. Early on, Portman had brake problems, and he then lost 7 minutes to Leven and Stewart on the Mount Caramba special stage. On the first night he'd had the same old "Repc" problems with suspension and engine mounts.

Stewart was enjoying the fight between himself, Leven, Portman and Tajima enormously and it was a measure of his driving ability that on one short and fast special, before the slowness of the car could tell they arrived right behind the works teams — not a bad effort in the most cumbersome car of the event — with Frank Johnson right behind clinging for dear life on to his fifth position and sounding progressively more like a souped up lawn-mower with every passing stage.

The next crew to disappear from the ever decreasing list was Brian Hilton-Graham Roser in their Toyota Celica. They'd already had problems with tyres blowing and then, in the 'Pine Creek' special stage, they hit a gutter too hard and damaged the steering box. They weren't carrying a spare, so that was the end of the rally for them.

By the end of the long 102km 'Moleton' Special, No 8, three more cars had bitten the dust — or, to be more precise, the mud.

There was a severe electrical storm and the heavens had opened with torrential rain over the forests and mountains. The leading cars managed to get through just before the worst started. Aaltonen's navigator Adrian Mortimer reckoned there'd be several cars stuck on a very steep hill before the night was out — and he was right.

Jean Jones and Joan Bennett were bogged so badly that they ran out of late time, Gary Meehan blew the differential in his Toyota Celica, and John — son of 'Jack' — ran into trouble when the Halda broke. Stewart passed Johnson and then got bogged, so Johnson passed him and both Leven and Portman took a fair amount of time to get to the end of the stage.

The long 'Horseshoe' special didn't seem to hold too many surprises, although Waldegaard's speed through the spectator points managed to astound even the hardiest followers who'd made the trek up the notoriously bad road to the Taylors Arm — the pub with no beer! George Fury seemed to be travelling a little slower, but Ross Dunkerton was flying — he was quickest over three stages in the third Division, came second three times, fourth twice, and fifth once. No wonder he and Beaumont were told 'no racing' by the Japanese!



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"SOUTHERN CROSS" cont

At the end of the Collombatti special stage 21 cars made it back to Port Macquarie, with Dan White once more arriving home last despite some very quick section times.

PROGRESS RESULTS - Div 3

Fury 14:33.56, Waldegaard 14:36.29, Dunkerton 14:42.21, Aaltonen 15:33.55, Bond 15:41.51, Johnson 16:38.07, Stewart 16:45.18, Leven 16:46.22, Portman 16:51.33, Tajima 16:56.59, Mecak 17:24.50, Blair 17:25.21, Marks 17:35.16, Cremen 17:52.54, Knowles 17:59.54, Suzuki 18:00.26, Bramble 18:03.03, Page 18:05.27, Berne 18:06.29, White 18:08.43, Casey 18:38.29.

Fury Flies Home

It was still very much anybody's rally as the cars headed off at the start of the fourth and last Division. Once more the first stage of the afternoon had to be cancelled, this time due to the rain, which had turned the dam site into a quagmire. The cars headed off for a couple of short special stages around the Wauchope-Timbertown area before settling down to the night's work.

Fury lost only 5 seconds of his 2.5-minute lead over the World Rally Champion in the two stages, and Ross Dunkerton was now 6 minutes behind him. Colin Bond managed to hold on to fifth position despite alternator and electrical problems which meant he had to be towed at the start of the last division to fire the engine! Frank Johnson was still lying sixth, but he and Steve Halloran were tired and so was the car.

Despite slight suspension problems when a wheel hit a bank in the mud, and a little time lost on navigation by Col Parry (better known as a driver) Doug Stewart was lying seventh ahead of Sydney privateer Gordon Leven in his Datsun SSS and the "Wild Colonial Boy", Geoff Portman. The latter, I should point out, won "Rookie of the Rally" award from Citizen — not, as some people were saying, "Rookie of the Year" award.

Tajima, Blair, Marks and Cremen were all very close and Suzuki was hanging on in there, in — amazingly enough — the only Lancer still running, a big difference from last year when four finished in the top ten. Paul Bramble, Keith Page, John Berne and Dan White were also having a fair sort of a battle with Suzuki and at that stage Jim Casey looked like a most unlikely finisher 30 minutes behind White.

Waldegaard was pouring on the pace right from the start, but so was Fury and, until the first long special, the 70k 'Ballengarra' stage, the positions amongst the leaders had not changed.

Then suddenly, at a tricky corner where the road went to the

left but appeared to go straight on, things happened. Waldegaard left the road but managed to plough his way through the undergrowth and continue on, picking up 50 seconds on Fury, who came through behind.

Bond had problems with the Halda and he and Dawson-Damer took a wrong turn, only to reappear minutes later to find Portman rather firmly stuck in the scenery. Bond tried to pull him out, but it was useless, and Portman lost 30 minutes winching himself back on the road.

Then, in the next special — the 'Tambar' special stage, disaster really struck for Ford. A short way into the stage Waldegaard passed Fury, busily changing a flat tyre, and was then confident he must now have regained the lead. But, just a few kilometres further into the section his Escort's differential broke, too far away for the service crew to reach him before time had run out.

Stage 5 was the end of the rally for another Ford — Dan White's RS2000 withdrew with the clutch problems that had been plaguing him since the start of the rally. It wasn't a very lucky night for Fords in general, especially when Port Macquarie's second driver, John Berne, in his Escort RS2000 ran off the road and couldn't be winched back on in time to continue running.

But, though there were only two more special stages to go, the rally was by no means over. Once more, with the aid of photographer Jean-Pierre Zajac, from New Caledonia, we headed off for the hills in our valiant Valiant which, minus its muffler, sounded more like an Escort, after its exhaust pipe broke.

One spectator's rally ended rather abruptly when Suzuki's rear axle bearing broke during the night and he lifted a rear axle off this friendly guy's Lancer at Kempsey. We were the only people to go to the start of the longest special stage of the rally, 215 kilometres bearing the inauspicious name of 'Spikes Mountain Special', but it was worth it to catch up with everybody before they set off on a long and tiring four hour drive.

For the group of people waiting at the end of the long stage the excitement was intense — in this year's rally there were distinct groups of cars all very close on times, which meant that there was suspense all the way down the line, right up until the very end.

Suddenly, way in the bush we could hear the sound of a rally car making its way through the night with two pinpoints of light shining far off in the sky — it was the unmistakable sound of a Datsun, and all too soon there they were almost on top of us, a blaze of lights and sound and dust and grins as even the impeccably cool



THE CHAMPS! Fury and Sufferen acknowledge the cheers of the Port Macquarie crowd in the usual fashion — a champagne bath! COLIN LOCK

"SOUTHERN CROSS" cont

Howard Marsden allowed himself to relax a little as his cars came in 1-2-3.

George Fury and Monty Sufferen were looking just a little smug, as well they might with their second successive win and Datsun's stranglehold on the top placings, with only Bond upholding the honour of Ford in fourth position.

After a long interval the whine of Johnson's Mazda could be heard rending the night apart and the RX3 staggered in with its wheel at a 45-degree angle. The spot welding around the engine bay had fallen apart, but fortunately it was only 5km before the end of the section, although they reckoned they'd have to jam a piece of wood between the struts to keep them apart as they headed off for Port Macquarie!

Next came Tajima in his Toyota, who'd been flying through the night and had managed to overtake Doug Stewart on the long section where the heaviness of the Commodore was a handicap, but despite that Stewart had managed to stay ahead of Leven and Portman. After Portman there was a gap of thirty minutes to Marks, with Blair and Gary Mecak in the Mazda RX2 close behind.

Mecak's finish was little short of amazing and his rally had been full of trials and tribulations. "I'd never driven the car before the start. Leon Prgomet had built it for the Repco and lent it to me. We didn't start off well — the keys were delivered one and a half hours late, and at Amaroo we had to change the distributor and coil. Then in the jump we bent the rear axle housing and had to change the rear end, which we did by pulling one out of a spectator's car — that lost us 40 minutes.

"Then a little later on we were travelling at about 120km-h downhill when the back end fell off — they'd forgotten to tighten the wheel nut! After we'd got over that the electrical system went haywire and every time I put my foot on the brakes the lights went out, so then I'd have to take my foot off to see what I was going to hit! The car was an electrician's nightmare and all the back-up systems failed as well, so I reckoned we were actually doing pretty well to be 23rd at the end of the first night.

The second night was less eventful apart from driving 20km on a flat tyre, but then during the third division our gearbox got stuck in third, and after we'd extricated it we had to drive with only 1st, 2nd and 4th, which was pretty difficult, particularly up some of the hills. But the body of

the car was bullet proof, it was so strong it could have gone on and on." Mecak and Gillies managed to finish 12th, which under the circumstances was little short of miraculous.

So there they were — 17 finishers. Behind Mecak was Edward Knowles who'd driven a consistent rally in his Ford Escort to win his class, and Paul Bramble-Arthur Evans who won theirs in a Galant. Then Ron Cremen-Alan Brooke who won Class 1 in their Datsun 120Y, Suzuki behind them in his Lancer, and Jim Casey in a Ford Escort as the last of the finishers.

Ron Marks almost got himself deleted from the scores when there was a query as to the eligibility of running a Datsun 120Y with a PB 210 engine as used in the 1600s and had to prove that it was an homologated version allowed as a variant, on the smaller engine. But after missing the first couple of hours of the jollities at the bar, he was allowed out to join in the fun.

But really, the day — and the Glory — belonged to Datsun, with the inscrutable Japanese laughing and smiling as their crews won almost every conceivable honour including the Manufacturers Award and the Manufacturers Team.

Another happy Japanese was Tajima, who won the Award for Best Driver from Asia. Both they and Port Macquarie had donated money for prizes and Frank

Johnson deservedly won the first Port Macquarie prize as first privateer home just behind Bond. George Fury and Monty Sufferen won everything except the longest lead at Amaroo — and in all it was a good end to a happy rally!

The timing by Citizen clocks was immaculate and the full results were available dead on the dot of 3.00 pm, neatly bound in a clear and concise book. All the business houses in Port Macquarie had supported 'their' event magnificently and the Southern Pacific Hotel Corp had once more come to the aid of the party when extra money was essential to run the event.

Terry Bain and the scoring team were looking tired but happy, and Tony Webb seemed glued to his directors chair as he kept things running smoothly, but even he couldn't have managed without all the voluntary help from crazy control officials, and mad helpers who wreck their social lives, and often their cars, to make the Southern Cross Port Macquarie International rally possible.

Although there were vague mumbblings of discontent on the prohibitive cost of entering a rally from a privateer's viewpoint, there seems no doubt that next year's event will be better and bigger — with George Fury, who managed to keep the Cross in Australian hands for the second year running, trying for a hat trick! Good luck, George!

RESULTS

1. Nissan Motor Aust: G. Fury-M. Sufferen (Datsun Stanza)	20h.36m.09s
2. Nissan Motor Aust: R. Dunkerton-J. Beaumont (Datsun Stanza)	20:49:20
3. Nissan Motor Aust: R. Aaltonen-A. Mortimer (Datsun Stanza)	21:53:53
4. Ford Motor Co: C. Bond-J. Dawson-Damer (Escort RS1800)	22:05:18
5. F. Johnson-S. Halloran (Mazda RX3)	23:18:13
6. N. Takima-K. Kawamura (Toyota Levin)	23:32:26
7. J. Parry: D. Stewart-C. Parry (Holden Commodore)	23:41:35
8. Cascade Motors: G. Leven-R. Wilson (Datsun H510)	23:46:30
9. Autosport: G. Portman-R. Runnells (Ford Cortina)	24:05:36
10. R. Marks-C. Heaney (Datsun 120Y)	24:38:41
11. ASCC: S. Blair-R. Ferguson (Datsun Stanza)	24:37:09
12. Leon Prgomet: G. Mecak-G. Gillies (Mazda RX2)	24:44:29
13. E. Knowles-D. Officer (Escort RS2000)	25:27:18
14. P. Bramble-A. Evans (Galant)	25:40:43
15. Deepwater SCC: R. Cremen-A. Brooke (Datsun 120Y)	25:57:11
16. E. Suzuki-T. Yufune (Lancer)	26:12:39
17. North Shore SCC: J. Casey-L. Oliver (Escort RS2000)	26:37:43

CLASSES: 1 — Cremen-Brooke; 2 — Knowles-Officer; 5A-B — Bramble-Evans; 5C — Fury-Sufferen
MANUFACTURERS: Nissan Motor Australia

S.E.V. MARCHAL

1979 Progress Results

MARCHAL DRIVERS

(SUBJECT TO OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION)

EVENT/DATE PLACING	ARC 1 - 17/3 AKADENOS (VIC)	MAR 31 CASTROL INTERNATIONAL	ARC 2 - 14/4 COMMONWEALTH BANK (NSW)	ARC 3 - 5/5 LUTWYCHE SHIP VILLAGE (QLD)	ARC 4 - 15/6 ANPOL (NSW)	AUG 5-18 REPCO ROUND AUSTRALIA	ARC 5 - 22/9 ENDURIST (SA)	OCT 13-16 SOUTHERN CROSS	NOV 5-11 REPCO ALPINE
1st.	FURY	CARR	CARR	DUNKERTON	BOND		PORTMAN		
2nd.	DUNKERTON	PORTMAN	BOND	PORTMAN	FURY		CARR		
3rd.	CARR	BOND	DUNKERTON	CARR	DUNKERTON		DUNKERTON		
4th.				BOND		DUNKERTON	BOND		

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