

**AUSTRALIAN**

**JULY, 1963**

**PRICE 2/6**

# **Autosportsman**

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- MAINTAINING THE BREED



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drivers' fuel*



The Ford Motor Co. entered Falcon No. 23 crewed by George Hughes, Roger Abrahams and Ron Sharpley, finds the going hard on a particularly muddy section of the course.

# Ford Dominate 1963 BP Rally

**Provisionally Placed 1st — 2nd — 4th, with Firth Outright Winner**

Veteran trials driver Harry Firth, with Frank Kilfoyle and Geoff Thomas, decisively won the BP Rally this year. Driving Car 36, a Ford Falcon, he took the lead half way round the 2040 mile course and held it, effortlessly, for the remainder of the trip.

Provisionally declared second was D. Opie, Car 32, a Ford Anglia with a loss of 20 points and third was T. Theiler, Volkswagen, who lost 25 points.

Dry conditions throughout the State made the course an easier one than the organisers had planned and competitors struck only very limited quantities of mud during their travels.

Thirty-nine of the top Rally crews in Australia entered the "BP" this year, a field which director

Donald K. Thomson described as "the finest ever to assemble in Australia". They came from Tasmania, South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria and all left their respective start points in Adelaide, Goulburn and Melbourne on Wednesday, May 1, for the assembly point at Ballarat. Tasmanian starters, as they have done previously, had two official starts—one from Hobart, where they were flagged away by the Mayor of Hobart from

one of that city's main shopping centres and the other from Melbourne, where they joined Victorian starters at the get-away. Nearly 3000 people assembled at Chadstone Shopping Centre to watch the cars depart, at one minute intervals, on beginning of their assembly stage.

Meeting up at Bendigo in the early hours of Thursday morning, all crews moved by way of Castlemaine, to Ballarat, which they reached early on Thursday morning. After "briefing" and break-

West, Burke's Flat, Gowar East, Medlyn South, Moolerr South and Traynor's Lagoon to Donald. The position of the control at Maryborough which was not readily found by competitors was the subject of several protests later.

Leading cars at Donald, which was reached between 1.45 p.m.-3.50 p.m., were R. Christie, VW, no points lost, Car 25, T. Theiler, VW, down 2 points and G. Russell, Car 34, Ford Cortina 1500, minus 4 points. Harry Firth, at this stage was well



Car 18, a Holden driven by well-known trials driver M. McPherson splashes through a rocky crossing near Glen Wills, on the Omeo Highway.

fast, they started on Division I of the trial stage, a 209 mile trip to Donald. With the exception of Car 27, a Datsun, which had trouble before reaching Ballarat, all cars commenced on the trial stage. Driver K. Gamble, however brought the Datsun into the Rally again at Swan Hill, finishing the course eventually.

Some tricky problems were encountered on the first stage, which took the cars through control points at Clunes North, Maryborough, Bung Bong East, Dunluce, Goldsbrough, Inkerman, McIntyre

down the list with minus 13 points, the score at which he eventually finished the Rally.

Two cars withdrew in Division I — Car 12, a Holden driven by T. Ober of N.S.W. and Car 14, a VW driven by D. Reid of Tasmania. The VW struck bearing trouble and was towed into Donald later.

Division II took crews through a maze of back tracks to Swan Hill, a distance of 158 miles from Donald. Sandy conditions were met on some of the tracks.

Alf Long, a N.S.W. entrant in a Morris Major Elite was unfortunate at this stage. Following competitors over an old wooden bridge, he was brought up short when the wheels caught on the stringers of the bridge. Although unhurt by the sudden stop, he gashed his leg badly when he jumped out to warn following cars of his predicament.

At 6.40 p.m., the first cars arrived at Swan Hill the first overnight halt of the Rally. Leading cars, provisionally, were G. Russell, Ford Cortina 1500 minus 4 points, Kevin Lott, Ford Cortina, minus 5

South, Drummartin, Mayreaf, Runnymede, Lake Cooper, Mathieson's and East Whroo took the cars to Nagambie, a refuelling and meal halt, after a run of 223 miles. Lead cars at Nagambie were Kevin Lott, Ford Cortina minus 5 points, M. McPherson, Holden, minus 9 points and D. Scott, VW, minus 11 points. No further cars pulled out in this section, although Car 38, a Morris 850, was tailing the field, running very late, at this stage.

With first car away at 3.30 p.m., the field plunged on to Wangaratta, a 176 miles trip through con-



A South Australian entered VW being cornered hard by driver Adrian Callary.

points, D. Opie, Ford Anglia, minus 5 points.

While crews were resting at Swan Hill, two official cars left to test the morning run to Westby South via the lake country north west of Kerang. They became satisfactorily bogged, but the track was declared possible to negotiate and all concerned looked forward to a large loss of points by crews when they negotiated this section. Unfortunately, a strong south wind throughout the night completely dried the section and competitors, next morning, breezed happily through the swamp area with no difficulty.

The rest of the mornings' run, via Mead, Terrick

trols at Longwood North, Barjarg West, Mansfield East, Mahaikah and Hansonville. Former leader Geoff Russell had lost his lead en route to Nagambie by hitting a submerged stump at a creek crossing. Although his steering was slightly damaged, he was able to repair it, but his points loss was now 117.

Reaching Wangaratta from 8.10 p.m. onwards, crews snatched a meal, a brief rest, refuelled and set off again from 11 p.m. onwards on a 206 mile, all night trip which brought them back to Wangaratta in the early hours of the following morning. The route, through the flat irrigation area in the

north-west of Wangaratta, took them through Chesney Vale, Katandra East, Yuanamite, Cobram East, Tungamah, Peechelba, Wahgunyah and Eldorado. Car 26, a VW driven by R. Brown, fell by the way-side here and did not report in at the end of the section. Leaders after the return to Wangaratta were H. Firth minus 13 points, T. Theiler minus 24 points, K. Tubman minus 25 points.

At 7 a.m. on the Saturday, the rally route moved into the hill country, leaving for Sale via the refuelling point at Tallangatta, a total distance of 367 miles. As usual, the route followed took in every back track possible and cars reported into controls at Myrtleford, Bowman Station, Stanley West and Rosewhite to Tallangatta.

An early lunch at Tallangatta was served in the RSL hall and, at noon, the first car left for Sale. Ignoring the highway as far as possible, the route took in Mitta North, Benambra West, Brookville and Mt. Taylor. The most difficult section at this point was the Knocker Track, the original bullock-team route between Omeo and Glen Wills. An overgrown, 12 mile length of boulder-strewn, eroded track, it has never been used for cars and local people at Benambra were amazed to find that it had been negotiated. New South Wales entrant K. Tubman, in a Morris Major Elite, who had been running third from the time the route reached Wangaratta was eliminated at this point.

Driving slowly along the comparatively smooth part of the Knocker Track, he hit a concealed stump and slammed into a tree, pushing his radiator back on to the engine. All of the other competitors still in the trial negotiated the track safely and the first cars reached Sale at 7 p.m. after a highway run from Bairnsdale, the longest section of good road met on the trial.

The second overnight halt was taken at Sale and provisional leaders were announced as being H. Firth, Tony Theiler and Ray Christie in a VW.

The final stage commenced at 9 a.m., the following morning as the cars started off on the 201 mile trip to Melbourne. Greasy conditions were met on the Grand Trunk Road and the Morris 850 came to grief here. However, it got back into the Rally and, slightly dented, succeeded in reaching the finishing point some time after the sub-events were completed. A VW, driven by B. Sloane, over-heated on almost the final leg of the route and was forced to withdraw. Control points on this final stage were Stradbroke West, Carrajung South, Boodyarn, Livingstone, Mirboo, Leongatha South, Outtrim East, Loch and Beaconsfield.

A crowd estimated to number 12,000 welcomed the cars at Chadstone Shopping Centre, watching with interest, the final examination of the cars by the Police Motor Sports Club and the sub-events all crews carried out.

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35 QUEENS AVE., AUBURN, VIC. TEL. 81-5703