

Sentenced

Gruelling trial in mud heap

I RATE driver endurance as the biggest winning factor in last week's gruelling BP Rally of south-eastern Australia.

As an international event the rally did not come under the local rules stipulating rest periods after certain lengths of driving.

The first leg from Sydney to Canberra was 26 hours, with a meal break at Albury; and the second 31 hours to Bairnsdale, with stops at Wagga, Jerilderie and Wangaratta.

After this the mud took its toll and almost all of the cars, except the rear-engined Renaults and VWs became bogged at some stage.

Then it was a matter of how many points (at one a minute) competitors lost by extricating themselves, either by fitting chains or by winching out.

The first boggy section, of eight miles somewhere around Tocumwal, caused talk of rebellion, even among some of the devoted Victorian drivers.

N.S.W. crews were disappointed when the Victorians, plus the one South Australian entry, had first crack at this stretch, as it became steadily worse after each car in turn had churned it up.

However, a shortage of officials compelled the director, Don Thomson, to send cars off as they arrived, and not in the ballot order for what was the start of the points losing section of the rally.

Thomson had a miner's lamp strapped to his head in the early morning darkness and had only his wife Nan for assistance.

Neither Thomson nor his assistant directors, Graham Hoinville or John Pryce, went through the mud-heap to see if it was drivable, as is done in all N.S.W. rallies.

Thomson had a really hot Toyota 2000S as his director's car while Hoinville and Pryce had old model station waggons.

Nevertheless the three did a wonderful job overall, assisted by teams of cross-country Light Car Club members.

And the speedy compilation of progressive results was something which should be copied by northern clubs.



By CLYDE HODGINS

MANY people ask why I chose a Hillman, with automatic gearbox and tubeless tyres for the Ninth BP Rally, which now is considered our hardest annual event, and the only reliability which has stood the test of time.

First Redex Trial winner Ken Tubman made me realise the Hillman Gazelle was a quick, safe vehicle and he is one of the few top drivers today who does not receive monetary assistance from a motor firm.

Tubman could have obtained almost any type of vehicle at about the same price cut, but chose a Hillman Minx manual for its never-fading disc brakes and excellent roadholding.

Engineers told me an automatic would take up the slip better in the mud and the tyre makers will not concede that tubeless tyres are any more dangerous in any circumstances than those fitted with tubes.

In any case, I tried to obtain some Olympic wintertreads which self-expel the mud, but I did not have time and the tubeless Air-Ride C64 type were fitted as standard equipment.

I found the standard tubeless tyre held the road well on both bitumen and dirt and wear afterwards was hardly noticeable, despite the fact the car had done more than 7,000 miles of hard cornering.