



ABOVE: BP Rally was a triumph for Renault. Not content with finishing first and second outright they also took off the teams prize. The second place R8 Gordini of Bruce Collier and Lindsay Adcock is seen here fording a river.

BELOW: Winners Mal McPherson and Robin Sharp-ley at the finish.

MOTOR SPORT

BP RALLY VIC

First and second outright and the teams prize go to Renault Gordinis in a dry, dusty and hard event.



IT was Don Thomson's last and best BP Rally—and it was the dustiest, too. Renault made a clean sweep of the event, winning it outright first and second, winning their class first and second and taking the teams award.

Mal McPherson, of Ballarat, and Robin Sharp-ley, of Melbourne, crewed the winning Renault Gordini which finished six minutes in front of the Sydney Gordini of Bruce Collier and Lindsay Adcock.

The 37 starters — 33 made the finish — met at Wangaratta after a 500-mile assembly stage for the 1500-mile trial section. Already a tight section through the Whroo forest had given them a taste of the dust (literally) and the alert navigation the event demanded.

After a briefing from Don Thomson, which included a warning to keep lights ablaze by day in the dust which lay ahead, they set off for points north over the Murray in New South Wales.

Navigation for the first few hours was straight forward. Then the route turned east, through Holbrook and into the pine forest near Rosewood where so many were to lose points. Many took the main highway to Canberra from here, skipping the rough, tight sections along appalling stony roads through Uriarra to Canberra.

On this section two cars holed their sumps, many more tore great chunks off soft mud tyres on the sharp stones, and one broke a tie rod—twice.



ABOVE: Maddock and Kelly from Tasmania entered a VW, turned up in a Bellett. Gate opening and closing again proved to be a sore point with many competitors. BELOW: Only women's team, Mrs. S. Vaughan and Mrs. J. Cash in VW No. 1 became lost near Tumut and this cost many points.

At Canberra six cars were in the lead without loss of points. Twenty-four hours' rallying for a loss of only two points put one competitor in ninth place. Frantic service for the cars whose motors had been eating a pretty thick diet of murk for 200 miles had crews working frantically and some lost points for being late at the impound.

Next day the cars headed north to Goulburn for lunch and the halfway point, where Harry Firth, navigated by Mike Osborne, shared the lead with Gerry Crown and Nigel Collier in a Renault Gordini. The eventual winner, McPherson, was lying seventh at Goulburn. The field then turned south, using dusty roads to the east of Lake Bathurst to Bredbo, across the Monaro Highway, through a farmer's land amid mutterings about fences and gates, and into Cooma for dinner.

Harry Firth had surveyed the trial route by luck the week before the event while returning from Sydney. He led at Cooma, the only competitor without loss of points.

Right behind him came the Winkless/Myer Volvo with Ron Phillips and Jim McAuliffe in a Holden X2 and Colin Bond and Brian Hope in a Colt 1000 equal third with five points lost.

Robin Sharpley, McPherson's navigator, won the event in the sections out of Cooma using Broadbents map.

New forestry maps of the area were wrong — they will be right in a couple of months when the roads go through — and the leaders fell out. McPherson climbed to second place behind the consistent Cortina GT crew of Bruce Woodful and Bob Forsyth.

A series of loops through forests around Bendoc caught more, and at Orbost the Vaughans had pulled up to third place despite a loss of nine points earlier while plugging a holed sump.

From Orbost, forest stages in the dust caused several prangs — two head on — but no one was hurt. The VW 1300 of McLeod and Locke was severely maimed and continued minus the right front guard, light, parker and turn signal and with the wheel 3in. behind its rightful place. Right turns were made with the hand brake, but it continued to the finish.

Its friend in the fog, the Ellis/Guymer Fairmont V8



automatic, had its right front guard amputated and the front suspension revamped. It, too, continued, but well down from its fourth place—a creditable spot for a big car.

The Bonhomme/Goode Cortina GT found the Keran/Halloran Volvo in the dust and both continued with wrecked right lights and severe bruising around the guards.

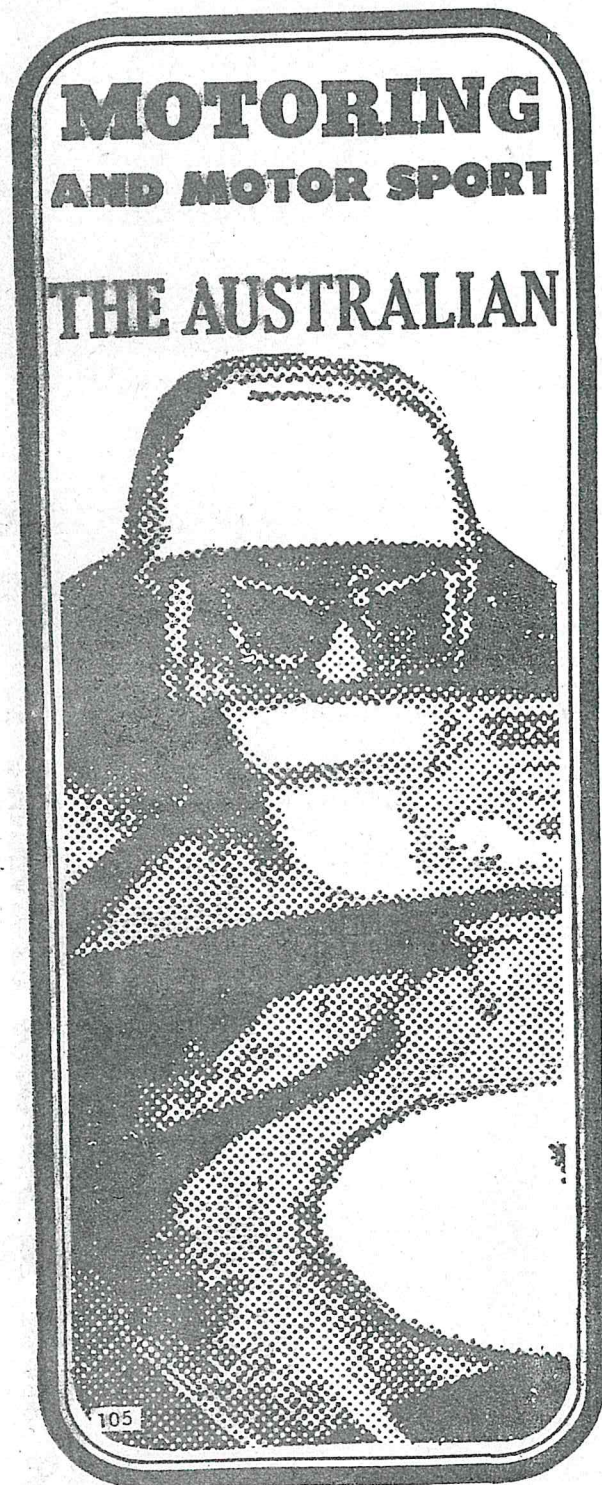
Through steep, stony country the field ran or limped to Bairnsdale, where McPherson had taken the lead by eight points from equal second placeholders, Collier/Adcock and the Vaughan brothers Roger and Ian.

On tie breaking assembly stage points, the Vaughans had it sewn up, but they lost a minute on the run to Melbourne the next day and had to settle for third spot.

Bruce Woodful and Bob Forsyth were fourth.

WARWICK FARM NSW

It was Frank Matich's turn for another victory at this meeting, too.



LIKE most major sports car races these days, the result of the RAC Trophy at Warwick Farm on May 14 was more or less a foregone conclusion before it started.

Frank Matich led from start to finish in his Mk. II Matich SR3, lapping the entire field to win the Trophy for the third time and also regaining his sports car lap record from Niel Allen with a sizzling 1:32.2—only .8sec. outside Jackie Stewart's outright record of 1:31.4.

Matich, who had rushed back from America in order to compete, had clutch failure in practice and managed only three laps, so that he did not start from his customary pole spot. Niel Allen held this in the white Elfin-Traco, but he gave Matich only token opposition before he miscalculated, spun, and retired soon after with serious engine trouble caused by a dropped valve.

The 23-lap, 51-mile RAC Trophy was a good training run for Matich for the Australian Tourist Trophy at Surfers Paradise the following weekend, and his great form at the Farm must have scared his opposition away from Surfers, as neither Allen nor Bob Jane turned up there.

The Trophy was rather overshadowed by a new open-wheeler race, which Geoff Sykes has styled as the Australian race of the champions, which he intends to build up next year as a dress rehearsal for the Gold Star. This was exactly what it was this year, with the top seven contenders having a fling.

Kevin Bartlett had the best sorted car there in the Mildren Team's Brabham-Climax, in which he had rewritten the record books at Bathurst at Easter. Bartlett had an all-the-way win, but it was Leo Geoghegan who really stole the limelight in his maiden run with his Repco V8-engined Lotus.

Geoghegan missed practice, as the car was still being rushed together at his nearby Liverpool workshop and he had to start from the rear of the grid. He rushed through the field, picking up place after place and gaining a second a lap on Bartlett until he lay second with three laps to go. Geoghegan's engine sounded magnificent, but it was steadily losing oil and finally gave up the ghost after he spun spectacularly at Paddock Bend. His consolation came in setting the fastest lap at 1:32.

Harvey's V8 was the only one to survive, but he was right out of the picture after losing second and third gears early in the race and having to struggle round the slower parts of the circuit in fourth, with the engine right off the cam. Greg Cusack got right back into form in Scuderia Veloce's Repco-Brabham, driving aggressively to catch and pass Spencer Martin within three laps and remaining in second place until the 11th lap, when crankcase pressurisation and consequent oil blow forced him to give up.

Martin was not as competitive as usual, owing to the fact that he was using a well-worn long-stroke engine in place of his faithful short-stroke Climax, which was undergoing a total rebuild for the opening Gold Star round at Lakeside.

Geoghegan's meteoric drive left no doubt that he would be the one to watch in the Gold Star series. The car