

# CARR'S THIRD ALPINE — BOND MAKES FORD 1-2

Story by KEITH COOK

**M**AKING 1977 the year of the Fords, despite just missing the "Southern Cross", Greg Carr and Fred Gocentas on November 27 brought home their RS1800 Escort 21 points ahead of team mates Colin Bond/John Dawson-Damer (RS2000) to win the testing and spectacular "Repco-Alpine" Rally in North-East Victoria.

This year's Alpine — reputed to be the third oldest motoring event in the world, with a history dating back to 1920 when cars did the big loop from Melbourne to Omeo over the Alps and back down to Melbourne — was once again organised by the Light Car Club of Australia, with Frank Kilfoyle at the helm as Director.

With such a large entry (127 applied to start) problems soon arose as to who would and who would not start. This situation is still causing some consternation, and a system that satisfies both entrants and organisers is yet to appear. However, the field was eventually whittled down to the official eighty entries, and everyone looked forward to a weekend in the mountains.

to get out. However, as Graham outweighs Lloyd by quite an amount, he won the toss, holding the rear bumper while Lloyd climbed out. As an indication of how high the rear bumper was off the ground, Lloyd received a severe burn on the inside of the elbow from the exhaust while reaching up to hold the car!

The route now continued on down to the very fast sections in the Warrenbayne Pine Plantation before heading across to Whitfield and more competitive sections through Merriang Pine Forest, reaching Myrtleford just after midnight.

Final section for the night just south of Bright included a descent through a cleared pine forest. It proved to be a spectators delight,



Local hero, John Sproule, throws his EH through a turn in dashing style. Unfortunately, the superbly prepared and driven car failed to finish. JOHN WILKINSON

Thanks to strong support from Repco — which extended beyond just handing over some money — publicity for the event surpassed that of any yet held in Victoria, even stretching to a two page game for the children in the Sunday papers.

Showing a flair for the unusual, the Alpine started from the driveway of Government House. (Thank you, Sir Henry Winneke). Cars transported along Swanston Street, Nicholson Street and then via the Hume Highway to arrive at the Benalla Showgrounds by 7 pm. With daylight saving in force, the many spectators who followed the vent had their first chance of a close-up look at the field — including the Eureka PL30, and what a crowd puller this was to prove over the whole weekend.

Following the meal break the field headed for the Reef Hills forest, just 3 km out of Benalla, and the start of the hard stuff. The first competitive, on fast, hard roads, saw Carr take advantage of his number one on the road. Racing clear of the dust he picked up just over a minute to set a hot pace early.

Within two sections the retirements began. Probably the most spectacular was that of Graham Troughton/Lloyd Minifie. After their Datsun left the road on the edge of a 60-foot drop, some time was taken on deciding who was going to be the first

with sometimes four cars coming down the mountains at the same time being visible for at least ten minutes.

Following this section a short transport to Bright Showground allowed crews a chance to shake off the dust, a hazard that was proving a real hassle.

## PROGRESS PLACINGS — DIV. ONE

Carr/Gocentas (Escort) .....	11 1/4
Bond/Dawson-Damer (Escort) .....	16 1/4
Watson/Gregson (Datsun) .....	23 1/4
Shinozuka/Connolly (Lancer) .....	25
Jones/Pearson (Lancer) .....	28
Waterhouse/Paterson (Datsun) .....	28

Retirements at the end of Division One included the HDT Gemini of Wayne Bell/George Shepherd.

Bob Bird looks spectacular here, but he was as smooth as silk during his winning run on the dirt circuit. PAUL HOGIE



Watched by Rally Director, Frank Kilfoyle (left) and the winner, Greg Carr (right) RCN's roving (raving?) Editor — who certainly picked the right T-shirt to wear! — interviews runner-up, Colin Bond. PAUL HOGIE

whose retirement was forced by a large rock that damaged the rear end, resulting in the diff being pushed out of line. Another fancied retirement was the Gerry Bell Tuning Datsun of Gaudron/Pigram apparently with a smashed windscreen after an excursion.

Eventually all crews, service crews and spectators settled down for the night, or rather the morning, with the start of Division Two due at 12.30 pm Saturday.

Saturday morning dawned with a total fire ban on the whole State, and the promise of a very testing, hot day for both cars and crews, not to mention officials.

The action started with two laps of the Bright Sportsground and saw Bob Bird wind up the Dandenong Chrysler Lancer to take home \$150 with a fastest time of 2 min 14 sec, followed by Bob Buck's Escort RS2000 only one and a half seconds behind.

Bob Bird also poured on the power to take out the flying lap with a time of 1:09.9, hard pressed by, would you believe, John Sproule's Holden EH, putting on a spectacular display of cornering under full power.

Contestants then moved out of Bright, heading for the Plantations for a series of very tight sections. Spectators had a wonderful view as cars travelled through the Buckland Valley Road area, with cars being visible for 15 minutes travelling downhill.

The heat of the day was beginning to take its toll. The Roger Bonhom-

me/Ian Herard Datsun retired with a blown engine, the Bob Waterhouse/Paul Paterson Datsun retired with water pump problems along with Murray Coote/Brian Marsden (Datsun) a Queensland entry succumbing to the Victorian weather when their Datsun overheated.

Another crew in trouble here was David Jones/Ian Pearson (Lancer) managing to roll, breaking the windscreen along with a few other things. Two other cars with problems were the Rallye Rubber Lancer of Peter Corkran/Ian Ellis who after correcting a fuel blockage problem during Division One, blew the gearbox on this section.

After these competitive sections cars transported to Wangaratta Apex Park, where Max Stahl greeted competitors from the comfort of the Ford supplied Escort Control Vehicle (good job Max), keeping spectators informed and entertained with a portable PA unit.

Scores at the end of Division Two saw Greg Carr/Fred Gocentas 14 minutes clear of Bond/Dawson-Damer, who in turn held a 2 1/4-minute lead on Bob Watson/Wayne Gregson, with Shinozuka/Connolly still just one and a half behind and dogging Watson's tail.

Disappointment for the day was the Eureka, dropping huge numbers of points in an attempt to keep with the field, admittedly having problems of its own with the motor overheating and dust proving a big headache on that huge windscreen.

All eyes were on the beautiful Eureka, which acquitted itself quite well, despite some engine oil problems. JOHN WILKINSON



## PROGRESS PLACINGS —

Carr/Gocentas (Escort) 12 (Total 23 1/4)	
Bond/Dawson-Damer (Escort) 16 1/4 (Total 37 1/4)	
Watson/Gregson (Datsun) 15 1/4 (Total 40)	
Shinozuka/Connolly (Lancer) 16 1/4 (Total 41 1/2)	
Portman/Runnalls (Datsun) 19 1/4 (Total 48)	
Hankinson/Moule (Datsun) 21 1/4 (Total 51)	

Division Three started with Carr still first on the road, although second on the road now was Watson, having passed Bond near the end of Division Two when Bond's Escort punctured.

*natural amphitheatre*

Having stopped and despite a record wheel change worthy of the Bathurst pits, Bond had trouble restarting the hot Escort engine and zap. Watson was past, leaving his dust for the unfortunate Escort crew.

Leaving Wangaratta the route was to take the cars over the slippery fast roads in the Chiltern area before a refuel in Albury, and then on to the Stanley Pine Plantations.

Shinozuka/Connelly struck trouble here with a broken drive shaft on the Lancer, a shaft that according to Connelly had completed at least 26,000 rally kilometres, with the Alpine being the straw to break the camel's back.

Bob Watson really started to fire from here on having passed Greg

being covered at the time, booked the offending driver.

However, back to the action. And drama struck with a vengeance in the closing stages. Carr's Escort was sidelined with its broken oil-line and, as Colin Bond stopped to assist, Bob Watson's Datsun roared into the lead.

Carr's service crew was quickly on the scene as well, but he lost around 22 minutes before the line was repaired, giving Watson/Gregson a narrow lead of some 2 minutes, with Bond, who lost 11 minutes, another 12 minutes behind his team-mate.

Once under way, Carr set a hot pace, scoring fastest time on all of the remaining five stages and closing fast on Watson. The Victorian ace,



Greg Carr/Fred Gocentas and their mighty Escort RS1800 carried all before them to score a brilliant win. Despite the great year he's had, Greg has decided to defer his visit to England for another year. PAUL HOGIE

#### RESULTS

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|--|------|
| 1. Ford Motor Co. Greg Carr/Fred Gocentas (Escort RS1800)      | 86%  |
| 2. Ford Motor Co. Colin Bond/John Dawson-Damer (Escort RS2000) | 107% |
| 3. Brad Boyden Datsun: Chris Power/Mick Brasier (Datsun P510)  | 131% |
| 4. 10. Gil Davis Prep: Gil Davis/David Long (Datsun P510)      | 134% |
| 5. Ian Swan/Derek Rawson (Datsun 120Y)                         | 140% |
| 6. Rob Jackson/Mike Mitchell (Torana XU1)                      | 144% |
| 7. Gary Harrowfield/Neil Richards (Datsun P510)                | 146  |
| 8. Rod Browning/Lloyd Meller (Datsun 1600)                     | 154% |
| 9. Peter Evans/Chris Maniatakis (Datsun 1600)                  | 158% |
| 10. Peter Johnston/Geoff Jones (Lancer)                        | 159% |

Carr during a service break, to put him first on the road, without the disadvantage of dust. Carr's Escort had dislodged an oil line and his crew took some time to replace it.

Heading now for the Owens Plantation and finally a climb over Mount Porepunkah, cars passed a huge crowd at Mansions Road just east of Beechworth. Control officials here were kept busy by a couple of young bucks who appeared to have a skinful, but without too much trouble members of the Torana Car Club explained to them the error of their ways, and things settled down.

At the end of Division Three, back in Bright, Watson was now running second on points, splitting the Escort Team cars, and leading on the road.

#### PROGRESS PLACINGS —

Carr/Gocentas (Escort)	27 1/2
Watson/Gregson (Datsun)	29 1/2
Bond/Dawson-Damer (Escort)	36 1/2
Portman/Runnalls (Datsun)	55 1/2
	(Total 93 1/2)

Cars left Bright at 9.30 Sunday morning for the final Division of what was proving to be a fascinating event for both crews and an estimated three thousand spectators (Repco stickers everywhere). The first competitive section, once more just off the Owens Highway, saw a large crowd watching some really exciting driving under conditions ideal for the average non-rally-going spectator.

Leaving the Porepunkah area cars now headed for the Merriang complex just south of Myrtleford. This section of the highway saw two cars with problems — firstly Greg Carr repairing a broken oil line in a local farmer's driveway. The farmer thought this was terrific, and he's probably still telling the story at the local pub.

The other car in trouble was that of a certain "Racing Car News" reporter (Ahem) who, while travelling at the exact speed limit, managed to attract an officer of the law, from Wodonga no less. After checking this reporter's car for at least ten minutes, he could only decide the lights were too numerous and, despite their

#### ALPINE ANECDOTES

by MAX STAHL

- It was a gala start in Government House drive, despite the heat-wave conditions, and the Governor, Sir Henry Winneke, took a keen interest in his starting duties.
- Still troubled by his ankle injured in Turkey during the London-Sydney, Gil Davis almost withdrew several times, only to find that his position had improved. He pressed on, despite the pain, and finished in a fine sixth place.
- The unusually hot conditions played havoc with much of the field, overheated engines accounting for many more retirements than the usual mechanical breakdowns or off-road excursions.
- The Alpine was strongly publicised by its new sponsor, Repco Limited, who even coincided a visit to PBR by Australia's motoring press, then transported them to the start aboard 20 of the rally cars which paraded through City streets complete with Police escort.
- Thanks to the big "dry" the State had been suffering, dust was a huge problem, and several runners left the road in the first Division while driving "blind". A few, of course were "OVER-driving blind".
- The Purvis Eureka excited great interest at the start and at all the spectator stages. Despite its fragile appearance and a little oil trouble from its Lotus twin-cam engine, the car came through with flying colours — body and chassis unaffected, crew unchoked — into 33rd place.
- When Bob Watson blew his clutch and stopped only two sections from home, Chris Power was so surprised when he realised he was in front that he spun the Datsun on the very next corner and nearly threw it all away!
- I was indebted throughout the rally to the event's "resident historian", Max Trist, who kept me well supplied with data for the spectators. For instance, few people probably realised that there hadn't been a wet Alpine since 1968! A light shower fell on Sunday morning, but it wasn't enough to either settle the dust or break the Alpine's "dry" average.
- One driver pleased to finish was Doug Chapple, who'd rolled and destroyed his Datsun only three weeks earlier, then spent every night since building up a new one. He and Bruce Ford were tired and irritable throughout, but they finished — and in 18th place.
- In winning his third consecutive Alpine, Greg Carr joined an illustrious duo who'd previously achieved that feat — Frank Kilfoyle (who has actually won six times) and Tony Roberts.
- Bob Riley worked hard in the big Volvo to achieve a satisfying 11th place — which actually could have been fourth or fifth had they not lost half an hour early in the first Division with a split brake hose. Bob found the car's excellent handling and braking a disadvantage, too; the first few times he tried a handbrake turn the car simply stopped — it just wouldn't lurch sideways like most cars do!
- Australia is fast becoming a second home for popular Japanese driver, Kenjiro Shinozuka. Though a broken driveshaft sidelined the Lancer in Div. 3, he and Gary Connelly were lying fourth at the time. Now the pair plan to do all the 1978 ARC rounds.
- Greg Carr burned up the tracks in his bid to catch Bob Watson in Div. 4. Excluding the 22 minutes he lost with the broken oil line, his penalties on the Division totalled 14 1/2 minutes — compared to 22 1/2 for Power, 23 1/2 for Bond and 25 1/2 for Davis.

served.

At the Bright Sportsground at 3 pm a large crowd was on hand to welcome the place-getters, the presentations of champagne being carried out by the Bright Shire President, Mrs Ruth Hamilton, and Repco Divisional Manager, Frank Kenna. Once again, the Alpine Rally had shown that a well organised and well publicised event can have great appeal to the public, and when it's well conducted also, the entertainment value is high.