



All smiles for the victors — Geoff Portman (left) and Ross Runnalls — while the fans check out what made their Datsun go so well.

# PORTMAN'S MIGHTY "ALPINE": NAILS FORD WORKS TEAM

Story by KEITH COOK Photos by EAGLE

VICTORIAN privateers Geoff Portman/Ross Runnalls caused a major upset on November 24-26 when they challenged the works teams and won the '78 "Repco Alpine" Rally by a narrow margin from the hard-changing but unlucky Ford Rally Team's Colin Bond/John Dawson-Damer.

Enjoying a healthy boost from the 710 parts taken from Ross Dunkerton's works car and fitted by Nissan to his Autosport-entered Datsun 1600, Portman steadily improved his position through the event and snatched the lead when Bond bogged his Escort on the second last stage.

The Light Car Club of Victoria organised the Alpine again, and attracted one of the greatest line-ups of

rally stars in Australia, with entrants coming from as far away as WA and Qld. However, among the full field of 96 were a lot of anxious crews watching the outcome of the crippling Victorian petrol strike that ended only a week before the event.

Following a big publicity start in the colourful though controversial Bourke St. Mall which attracted an enormous crowd (maybe we should have the Mall just to start rallies from), crews

headed north up the Hume Highway to the first of the competitive daylight sections just out of Benalla in the dusty Reef Hills forest.

First car to strike problems was the turbocharged Peugeot 504 of Bob Watson, stalling at the start of the first section and losing valuable time before getting away. Also in trouble early was Greg Carr's Escort, with rumours flying as to what was actually wrong.

Eventually it was discovered that the car expired with overheating and suspect valve problems, a disappointment for Greg and the numbers of spectators hoping to see him in action.

Following the Reef Hill Forest crews headed for Wangaratta and the end of Division One. Scores at this stage show the close battle developing for the lead: Bond (Escort) 1:20, Bell (Gemini) 1:21, Morrow (Datsun) 1:26, Brock (Gemini) 1:30 and Harrowfield (Datsun) 1:35.

Division Two led through the Merriang Plantation towards the rally central con-

trol at Bright, with dust proving a real problem. A couple of International drivers from the Philippines were finding the conditions hard to handle and were proving to be very slow.

The second Autosport entry, the 180B of John Armitage/Phil Rainer, struck battery problems in this section and, despite swapping batteries with a spectator, couldn't continue and dropped out of the event. Not to be outdone, Graham Trounce/Max Sharrock (Datsun) once again had electric gremlins, this time inside the alternator.

With one spectator point to go before Division end most cars were sounding just a little tired. Portman woke up dozing spectators by cleaning up the flag barrier on his way through.

Fastest times on most of the stages had been set by Wayne Bell/George Shepherd in the MHDT turbocharged Gemini, a real flier. Bell was now well in the lead with 13:25 ahead of Colin Bond on 15:31, followed by Brock 17:25, having a great

Bond's Escort in action on the Hume Weir "Special".



**SAVE MONEY! . . .**

# DYNO-TUNE

## CASTLE HILL GARAGE

has the know-how and equipment to obtain optimum performance and economy

**PHONE ROY WOOD on 634-2312**

or call at . . .

**250 OLD NORTHERN RD., CASTLE HILL NSW**

# DEAN GALL

Steering and Suspension Service

**We'll sort out your handling problems**

- \* Wheel alignment
- \* Electronic balancing
- \* 4WD Repairs and wheel balancing

Selby Suspension Stockist

Call DEAN GALL or PETER ASQUITH on (02) 521-8369, Factory 2, 24-26 Flora Street, KIRRAWEE NSW 2232



Extra urge from Bell's turbocharged Gemini kicks up the dust.

run in a second HDT Gemini. Then came Rodgers 19:02, Coote 19:22, Harrowfield 19:59, Portman 20:17, Morrow 20:31, Neale 20:51 and Brown 21:07.

The locals at this stage were putting their money on local crew Phil Rodgers/Steve Owers (Datsun), who had put in a fantastic run to be fourth outright after two Divisions.

Division Three started from Bright Showground at

them how it should be done — though he rolled his newly painted Lancer, there was very little damage and he continued to finish the event with only a dented roof.

The end of Division Three was at the Albury Lunch Break. Portman/Runnalls were starting to make their presence felt and fastest times in a number of stages had moved them up into third place: Bell 21:96, Bond 24:52, Portman 25:53,

The Cutts/Browning Datsun saves rubber at the weir.



10am Saturday, with usual Alpine weather conditions — clear and hot.

The Ovens plantations proved a rally viewers feast, with fast slippery roads. One in particular was a hard right-hander hidden over a blind crest.

Peter Brock decided to face the problem head on and left the road going straight on instead of turning right and risking a roll.

The Gemini dropped down a long bank and ended in a quarry with a broken ball joint. However, the MHD service crew was not far away and managed to get him mobile again inside late time.

Next to arrive was Bob Watson, whose Peugeot left the road sideways and rolled several times, causing enough damage to force his retirement. Peter Corkran showed

Coote 26:14, Rodgers 26:21, Harrowfield 28:10, Neale 28:15, Brock 28:58, Morrow 30:16 and Brown 30:26.

Division Four started with a timed special stage around Hume Weir Racing Circuit, also taking in the quarry adjacent to the circuit with many dirt tracks and a number of bumps. Brock's experience on bitumen showed here and he set fastest time for the section.

Wayne Bell's great run ended soon after, when the Gemini broke a ball joint against a rock in the inaccessible Shelley area. Being unable to effect repairs within late running time he dropped out of the event.

Numerous competitors met their Waterloos in this area, with the scores at Shelley and the end of Division Four showing a few notables missing. Scores

Ask **GEORGE SHEPHEARD**

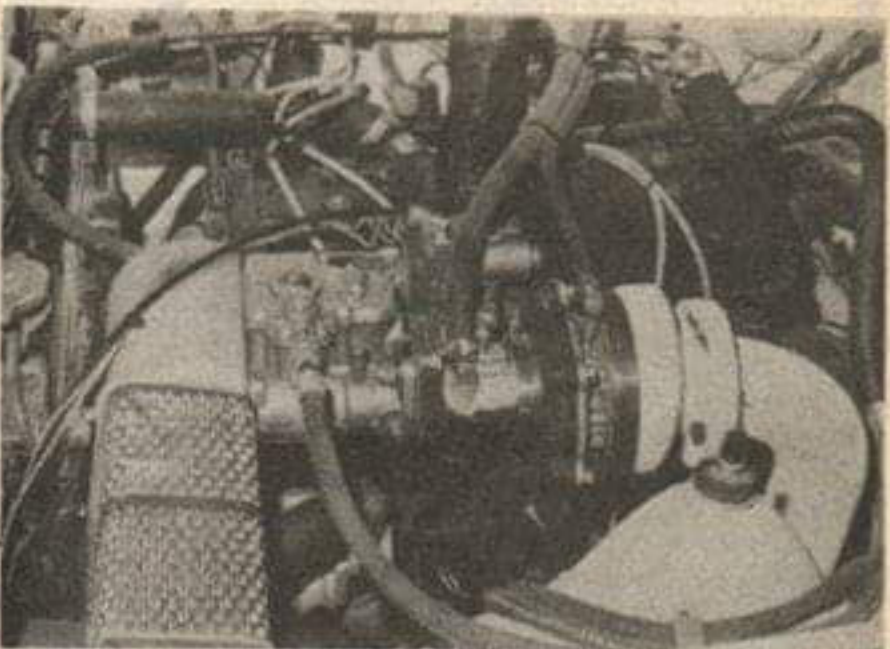


about **Rymec Turbocharging!**



... while you're at it,  
ask **WAYNE BELL**

They competed in the "Repco Alpine" Rally in the Rymec-turbocharged Gemini, and led the field till delayed by an occurrence not related to the turbocharger.



Producing over 225 bhp with smooth torque, no throttle lag and absolute reliability, the Rymec installation proves the practicability of turbocharging rally cars.

*Congratulations, Wayne and George  
... have you got 'em worried now!*



**81 STEPHEN ROAD, BOTANY  
NSW 2019 (02) 666-4703, 666-4672**

Turbochargers, kits and installations for all types of vehicles



Typical consistent run from Coote/Marsden gave them third place.

**"ALPINE" cont.**

were: Bond 31:03, Portman 33:00, Coote 35:22, Brock 37:45, Morrow 39:36, Neale 39:52, Brown 41:22, Uttley-moore 42:08, Jones 45:18 and Balmain 45.41.

Final Division for the night covered many sections around the rugged mountains of MittaMitta and led to the controversial last stage down to Bright. This consisted of a steep descent through Tawonga Gap, a twisty tight bitumen road dropping down the mountain to Bright.

Problems arose with the inability of control officials to stop locals, spectators etc. from using this road to return to Bright, instead of facing a rather long drive around through Myrtleford. Consequently, the section was deleted, but not before Bond, Brock and Portman left black lines from their winter treads all the way down the mountain.

The Division Five results showed Bond still leading, but with Portman moving ever closer: Bond 38:07, Portman 39:09, Coote 42:32, Brock 46:17, Neale 47:44, Morrow 48:35, Brown 51:46, Uttley-moore 57:07, Balmain 57:24 and Waterhouse 59:04.

The Alpine Rally's traditional romp in the dust around the Bright dirt track was first up on Sunday morning and Portman gave notice of things to come with a clear win by three seconds over Bond.

Out in the forests again, Portman put the pressure on Bond around the Bright plantations and with only two stages to go was only a half-minute behind. Max Hart/Andrew Roberts broke a rear axle on their Mazda R100 after a creditable performance with their immaculate little red flyer.

Peter Brock was next with dramas, managing to wrong slot and he collided with Morrow's Datsun,

causing some damage to both cars. Then, after finding the right road, he managed to bend the other side of the Gemini on Neale's Lancer.

Following this incident, the Blanchard Torana did much the same thing, efficiently wiping out the Lancer of Jean Jones/Joan Bennett, thankfully with no damage to Victoria's most notable rallying ladies.

Colin Bond trying hard to hold the lead, slid off on a slippery corner, bogging the Escort and losing just under a minute. Gone was any chance of winning the event, for Portman won the last two stages to come home a deserving winner by the narrow margin of 27 seconds!

This year's Alpine proved once again to be a spectacular event and must rival the "Southern Cross" as Australia's toughest, most interesting rally. Congratulations go to Director Ian Richards, The Light Car Club and the army of officials.

**RESULTS**

1. Autosport:  
G. Portman/R. Runnalls  
(Datsun 1600/710) . . . 46:12
2. Ford Motor Co:  
C. Bond/J. Dawson-Damer  
(Escort RS2000) . . . 47:39
3. Murray Coote Rallying:  
M. Coote/B. Marsden  
(Datsun 120Y) . . . 55:57
4. Marlboro-HDT:  
P. Brock/N. Richards  
(Gemini) . . . 61:23
5. Rallyequip:  
F. Neale/P. Dodd  
(Lancer) . . . 62:07
6. Ken Taylor:  
D. Morrow/I. Lincoln  
(Datsun 1600) . . . 63:02
7. Datsun:  
C. Brown/S. Brown  
(Datsun 1600) . . . 64:01
8. D. Balmain/T. Hanrahan  
(Lancer) . . . 69:14
9. J. Uttley-moore/T. Bond  
(Lancer) . . . 70:41
10. R. Waterhouse/P. Paterson  
(Datsun 1600) . . . 71:21

**STAGE RESULTS (Total 42):**  
Portman 20, Bell 9, Coote 6,  
Brock 4, Bond 3.



**BOND  
ROLL  
BARS**

**CAMS APPROVED**

- \* Half cages or full cages
- \* Sump guards \* Rally springs
- \* Fuel foam \* Rally preps
- \* Alloy welding and fabrications
- \* 6- or 4-point racing harnesses
- \* Roll-bar padding

Contact .. **GEORGE SHEPHEARD** or **DICK WATMAN**  
**644 8839**  
**32 CARLINGFORD ST., REGENTS PARK 2143**

**INTERSTATE AGENTS:**

VIC: G. DAVIS... 83-7868 ACT: G. BALL... 95-9518  
SA: CHAT MOTEUR. 79-6879 WA: KARQUIP... 68-2506  
QLD: T. MOTSON 391-6628 QLD: GP CARS 356-9544

**\* Holden Gemini**  
**ENGINE and SUSPENSION TUNING**



**• LOW RATES • A1 WORKMANSHIP**  
We can supply Cibie lighting . . . Recaro seats . . . Corbeau seats . . . light bars . . . Bilstein gas shocks . . . everything, in fact . . . and full fitting service

**\* The Gemini Centre**  
**32 CARLINGFORD ST., REGENTS PARK 2143 . . . (02) 644-8839**