

# ALPINE RALLY



## Hill Hath No Fury. . .

**W**ITH ONLY TWO stages to go the battle was down to just two men, and the gap between them was two seconds. Into that second-last stage Ian Hill held the advantage, but he apparently threw it away when he drowned his Escort RS in a series of deep puddles.

It seemed he had handed the 1983 Enka-Fill Alpine Rally to Hugh Bell on a plate, but his Victorian rival did not hear of Hill's problem and went into the final stage balls-to-the-wall. On the very first corner he made a costly error and dislocated his Dazda's front suspension, having to limp through the stage with the front wheels splayed and the time slipping by.

Hill was convinced that Bell had won when he finished the last stage, but when he heard of his rival's problem it sent the two navigators into a huddle to determine the result. When Phil Bonser, for Hill, and Paul Patterson, for Bell, had finished their

sums the outcome was a nine-second win to Hill and this was soon confirmed by the officials.

Back at the Bright Sportsground with the top-10 runoff in progress, it seemed that the final dramas of the '83 Alpine had been played out. But then Ross Dunkerton arrived and sent the organisers scurrying back to their results computers with his claim of a Group A win and his fifth national rally championship.

He was eventually proved right, and his Commodore V8 survived a protest, to make Dunkerton and Peter Johnston's co-driver, Geoff Jones, the Australian champions for 1983. In all the excitement it was easy to

overlook the other highlights of a fitting end to the championship year.

David Officer and Kate Hobson's fourth third place of the series; Greg Carr's stunning performance for the first three divisions; the storming drives by

---

By Paul Gover

---

Clive Slater and Peter Glover; and the superbly professional effort by George Fury and Monty Suffern.

The entry for the Alpine was the best of the 1983 national title series, lacking only a big-name international and Colin Bond.

Geoff Portman and Ross Runnalls headed the capacity 90-car field in their Nissan Bluebird, followed by Dunkerton and David Kortlang in an ex-Marlboro Precision Driving

Team Commodore purchased by Kortlang to try and win the title, Hugh Bell in his rotary-engined Datsun, Ian Hill, George Fury back for a guest appearance in Jamie Drummond's superb 120Y, Chris Brown in his own 180BSSS, Clive Slater in the Japanese Connection Celica and Greg Carr in the Pacific Property Finance Fiat 131, looking retirement squarely in the face.

Among the others expected to do well were SA champion Barry Lowe, ACT titleholder Jon Waterhouse in his Reliance Automotive Mazda, David Officer in his Galant, Peter Glover in the BFGoodrich Escort and Victorian star David Adams in his Stanza.

But the Alpine has a habit of throwing up new names, and destroying reputations and 1983



was to be no exception. The weather was different, however, for there had been snow in the Bright region in the week before the rally and the weather for the first day was unusually mild and dust-free.

But things did warm up in more ways than one on Sunday.

The rally began with the traditional blast around Bright speedway and it was Hugh Bell and Murray Coote, in the radical 1200 coupe, Carr and Barry Lowe in the Dazda who set the pace. But once Carr hit the forest he began to clear away at a rapid rate, with David Officer best of the rest in pursuit and upsetting more fancied names like Hugh Bell and Ian Hill.

Portman was to get only four stages before his rally was run. The front suspension in the Bluebird had been screwed down after the Dunlop-2GO but it was too low for one big rock, which destroyed the front suspension and fractured the oil pickup in the sump from the impact. Scratch the champ.

Among the others to take a very early shower were Graeme Wise, who crashed his Datsun 1600; Ron Cremen, who blew a head gasket in his Corolla; and Peter Thompson, who rolled his



Stanza. With Carr clearing away in front, and Officer doing everything to stay in touch, the big interest was in the three-way battle between Bell, Hill and Fury. The trio were swapping times in a scrap which was to last throughout the event.

By the mealbreak, at Beechworth, Carr led by nearly 90

seconds from Officer, Bell, Hill and Fury and reported that the Fiat was "perfect".

John Berne had not been as lucky, hitting a stump in his BDA Escort, and he was also suffering from a loose alternator problem which was to dog him throughout the event.

Hugh Bell had to change a

bent trailing arm after a minor excursion, and was prevented from getting on the boil later in the day by a broken driveshaft. Nevertheless, he was pressing on, intent on preserving his record of having led every ARC event he has entered. He was even the only Australian to lead Malcolm Wilson in the Dunlop-2GO.

Fury's only problem was that he was enjoying himself too much to keep his concentration up, while Dunkerton was losing the Group A battle with Peter Johnston and also had oil surge trouble with the V8.

The early sensation was Ian and Ross Greenwood from Canberra, who were well into the top 10 in their Mk1 Escort. They were to make a big impression, and hold onto sixth or seventh, until putting their car off the road late in the final division on the same stage which claimed Murray Coote.

Clive Slater had lost a lot of time with fan belt troubles in the Celica but the determined Sandgroper simply took the bit between his teeth and charged away to make up time.

In the afternoon, as the rally moved north towards Albury and the tarmac stages at Bandianna and Hume Weir, Carr and Gocentas continued to move away in front.

By the end of the daylight it was Hill who had got going to move his Escort into second, ahead of Officer, Bell and Fury.

Rod Jones, from Bathurst, was up to 10th in the car he had converted from his wife's shopping machine two weeks before the event, while Chris Wall was doing well to be ninth in his similar 1600.

Still the retirements came thick and fast, and among those who failed to reach the division break at Manns of Wodonga were Brian Smith, who crashed the same Galant he had taken to a top 10 place the previous year; Ian Swan, who blew the engine in the Datsun he shared with Derek Rawson; and Hannu Ropola, who broke his Datsun's differential.

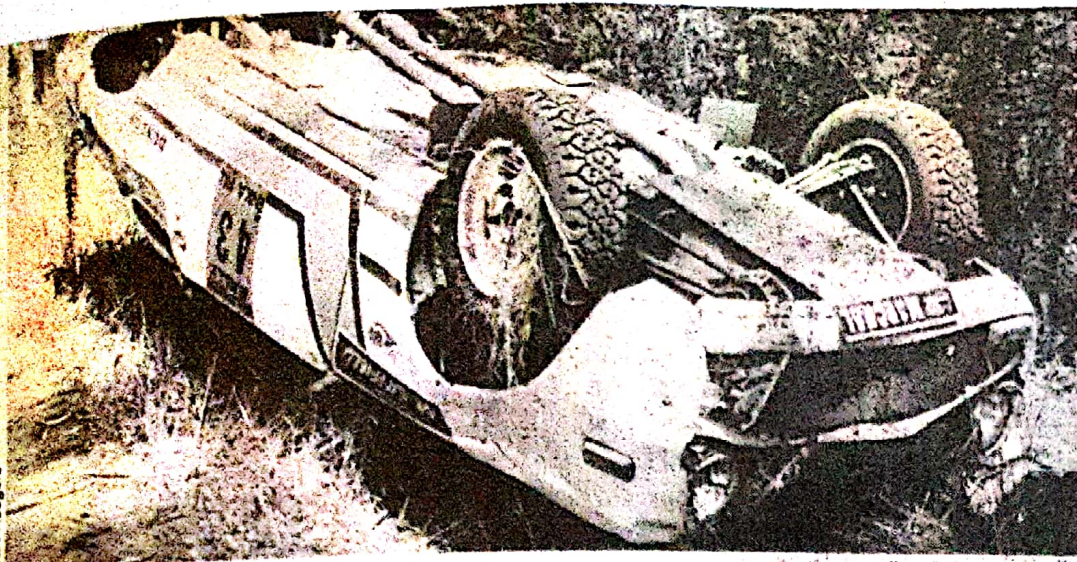
There was only one night stage after a transport all the way back to Bright, and it was Hugh Bell who took the honours to move into second behind Carr and the end of the first day. Hill was still third ahead of Officer, followed by Fury, Coote, Lowe, Greenwood, Jones and Wall.

On Sunday the organisers warned the remaining crews that the hard work was about to begin, and with the weather

*Hugh Bell (above) and Dinta Officer (below) challenged Ian Hill for the lead throughout the Alpine, until Bell slowed with overheating and diff problems, and Officer experienced trouble with his limited slip diff unit.*







warming up it was a prediction which was to soon come true. Hill, Fury and Berne were quickest of the front-runners on the second run at the Sportsground, but then Carr took over again in the forests towards Ovens.

But it was not to last, and the Fiat "timebomb" went off in the differential after only three stages and Carr was out. This left a fascinating battle between Bell, Hill and Fury which Officer could not join because of a faulty limited-slip unit in the differential.

It was Bell who held the advantage in spite of some very quick times from Hill, while Fury was hampered by strange hand-

ling in the 120Y. The rear roll bar, damaged the previous day, was eventually repaired and with soft tyres fitted Fury was making the big attack when the 120Y's engine failed. Monty Suffer's calculations later showed they had been in the lead at the time, a sad end to a good effort gallantly financed by Jamie Drummond.

While the battle at the front continued, Slater had clawed his way up into the top half-dozen and Peter Glover was making a mighty effort in his much-abused Escort, while Steve Ashton was again making a good Alpine effort in his Datsun 1600. But it was Dunkerton who was work-

*Ouch! This is what was left of Mike Bell's Lancer after Wayne Stapylton lost an argument with the vegetation.*

ing hardest, with new soft-compound tyres on the Commodore, and he was ripping time from Johnston and the other Group A contender, Russell Worthington in a Mazda 626. Johnston and Jones were not to know of Dunkerton's speed until it was far too late.

Waterhouse and Lowe were also going well, although both were to strike problems late in the event. The ACT champ lost a top 10 spot when his Mazda stopped in the same water which delayed Hill, while the SA titleholder overturned his Dazda and was lucky to recover to 10th after earlier overheating problems.

As the rally wound down, with Fury out of the battle, it was all down to Hill and Bell after the final service. The Dazda had overheating and differential troubles but still both prepared for the final onslaught in those two fateful stages. As crews began to trickle into the finish, the stories began to unfold.

With the winners decided, and Dunkerton's claim confirmed, the spotlight moved to lesser lights.

Slater, Berne, Wall and Ashton had all done well to take top 10 places, while Rod Jones was cock-a-hoop with his seventh after so little preparation.

But there were also those who did not make it through the final division, including Adrian Taylor, who broke an engine mount in his Civic; Bob Watson, who had gearbox failure in the R5 Turbo; John Dean, who blew the engine in his Galant; and NSW clubman champion Wayne Stapylton, who destroyed Mike Bell's Lancer in a horrendous multiple rollover. In all, 42 crews failed to finish.

Still, for Ian Hill and Phil Bonser it was a sweet victory. It proved their Dunlop-2GO win had been no fluke, and made them the only crew to win two events in the 1983 championship series. For Hugh Bell there were only thoughts of what might have been. "It is a shock, but it was my own fault", he said of his second place. ■

# Rally Data



## RESULTS

1. Ian Hill/Phil Bonser (Escort RS)	4:04.57
2. Hugh Bell/Paul Patterson (Datsun-Rotary)	4:05.08
3. David Officer/Kate Hobson (Galant)	4:06.46
4. Clive Slater/Steve Owers (Celica)	4:12.42
5. John Berne/Bruce Fullerton (Escort RS)	4:14.39
6. Chris Wall/Jim Maude (Datsun 510)	4:14.46
7. Rod Jones/Mark Blume (Datsun 510)	4:15.39
8. Peter Glover/David Burns (Escort)	4:16.13
9. Steve Ashton/Bernard Peasley (Datsun 510)	4:16.28
10. Barry Lowe/Ted Dobrzynski (Datsun-Rotary)	4:18.09

## FINAL POINTSCORE

Drivers	Points	Navigators	Points
Rose Dunkerton	56½	Geoff Jones	55
Peter Johnston	55	Kate Hobson	54½
David Officer	54½	Phil Bonser	48
Ian Hill	48	David Kortlang	44
Russell Worthington	39	Gary Kabel	39
Caroline O'Shannessy	35	Meg David	35
Clive Slater	27	Brian Marsden	26
Murray Coote	26	Fred Gocentas	24
Greg Carr	24	Stephen Treadwell	20
Peter Lockhardt	20	Noel Richards	20