

Targa Tasmania 2012 – our daily log



In 2012 the White/Yelds 1961 Volvo 122S was again entered in the world's longest and most demanding Classic Tarmac Rally. This car was first entered in 2009 after being built by the crew with help from a few mates over an eighteen month period. In the first three years the results were two 3rd places in Early Classic (2009 & 2011) and a DNF (crash - 2010). Andrew and Ashley had run previously from 2005-2008 in Andrew's works built 1967 Volvo 122SR with a 10th, 8th & 7th in Classic (1947-1992).

The current car features a 1950cc built by Gary Comerford of Volpro, 4 spd+Overdrive and 4.9:1 LSD and is built to the 'Limited Modified' regulations. As usual we had some last minute dramas leading up to the event. This included a malfunctioning overdrive (fitted a new one Sunday morning – still didn't work) and getting the certification of our roll cage finalised by CAMS.

Our car again ran in the "Classic Competition" for pre-1982 cars. There are various sub categories and classes according to age of vehicle and level of modification – we are in Category 2 for 1946 to 1961 vehicles, and in "LMS" for Limited Modified" (classes include "SS" - stock standard and MS for almost-anything goes). This year, we'll have some tough competition from three Ford Perana's (a Capri with a 302 Windsor V8 stuffed in the engine bay), a gaggle of Datsun 240Z's, and a various others including XU-1's, Falcon GTs, a few Alfa's, almost a dozen Porsches, plus a deceptively quick Ford Anglia, while trying to keep within coo-eee of the Batten (Volvo) and the Freestone (Holden FX-215) hotrods. Additionally, there is an absolutely mad (extreme) ex Carrera Panamerica Oldsmobile 88 'Mockett Rocket' (Doug Mockett is a historic F1 driver and collector – Olds is built by ex F1 Lotus mechanic) to set the pace in the outright competition. To keep things interesting, handicaps are applied dependent upon age, engine size and modification, the idea being that cars driven to its full performance potential with handicap should all take an equal time to finish each of the competitive stages.

The organisers are claiming this will be the most challenging in the event's 21 year history, with the longest course ever and the majority of the route new to competitors. For the first time, the number of competitive kilometres will exceed 600. An additional challenge to face the field of around 240 cars is that only 40 per cent of last year's course will be used this time around, and as such any advantage that some competitors have from running the event multiple times will be minimised. This will favour the crews that can totally commit to the

Pos	No	Crew	Vehicle	Cat Cls	Pen Time Base Time
1	465	Siddins Ferguson	1970 Datsun 240Z	4MSD	03:20.72 00:00.00
2	411	Todd Tighe	1971 Ford Capri Perana	4MSH	03:27.43 00:00.00
3	440	Gainer Conduit	1971 Datsun 240Z	4MSE	03:31.04 00:00.00
4	383	Ullrich Ullrich	1963 Jensen CV8	3LMSF	03:34.04 00:00.00
5	471	Wilson Wilson	1971 Ford Perana	4MSH	03:34.54 00:00.00
6	215	Freestone Freestone	1948 Holden 215	2MSF	03:37.12 00:00.00
7	407	Goodwin Hughes	1969 Datsun 240Z	4MSD	03:38.28 00:00.00
8	414	Thomas Towell	1971 FIAT 124 Sport	4MSB	03:40.71 00:00.00
9	222	White Yelds	1961 Volvo 122S	2LMSD	03:41.06 00:00.00
10	421	Lowe Lowe	1971 Datsun 240Z	4LMSC	03:43.75 00:00.00
Results: TS – 0 Georgetown					

notes, drive on the call of their co-driver and not what they know is around the corner. To achieve that though it has also meant though a significantly greater effort was required on our reconnaissance of the course, where we have prepared pace notes for each and every corner of the course.

Despite our problems in the lead up we made it to the start line on Tuesday 17th April for the Prologue - this year two stages, one a warm-up stage at Lilydale in the countryside, another the regular town stage in Georgetown. The times over these two stages gives us our running order for the week, and are a good measure of absolute speed. On Lilydale, we placed 10th, some 20 seconds off the fastest in our category (the Siddins' 240Z and 3.5 sec's down on the Batten Volvo. On George Town though, we finished 9th, and put in our fastest ever pace on that section, and almost five seconds up on the Batten Volvo which we use as somewhat of a yardstick (though not necessarily a peer!)

The rally kicked off in earnest on Wednesday 18th April, heading in a northwest loop from Launceston up to Devonport and back. The first proper day starts in reverse to what has been done in the past, with Quamby Brook and Deloraine the first two stages of the day. Lunch remains at Sheffield, and what will follow will be the first test of the teams as they make their way back to Launceston for the overnight stop and the official Targa Expo at the Silverdome.



Launceston Silverdome (where the cars are held overnight)



Thanks again to all our supporters for getting us to the start line, especially our primary sponsors (Heather and Sherrin), trust you'll enjoy the ride through the week - hopefully nothing big will fall off the car, and that we get some wet weather to offset our lack of power.

Leg One - Launceston - Sheffield - Launceston

The first full day of competition comprised eight stages in a loop to the north and west from Launceston. The first two stages, Quamby Brook and Deloraine are set up to "warm up" cars and teams and get them assimilated to the above ordinary speeds on public roads. As such, the Base Times (the time beyond which crews accrue time penalties) are set quite high so that they are easily "cleaned" (zero penalty time). The next six stages are significantly tougher and require full attention and commitment to achieve a good result.

The competition therefore really intensifies as the day progresses. Stage 3 (Merseylea), a favorite of ours from previous years, runs in open country along a river valley before crossing a bridge and climbing a rough, steep road to a ridge with a fantastic sequence of corners through the middle of the 10 km stage. We erroneously held back on the pace as we (mis)understood the stage to be yet another of the pre-lunch warm up stages and wanted to preserve our tyres for the heavier competitive stages later in the day (and the rest of the week).

Fortunately, some things you enjoy doing well sometimes are hard not to do well, as the stage was "full competitive" and despite holding back on some of the corners, we were one of just four cars to "clean" (no penalty time) the stage despite a sticking throttle in the closing km's. We solved that with a roadside repair on the transport section to the lunch break - removing one of the Webers, partially dismantling it and extracting a broken spring from the internals. Apart from the added challenge of our service crew setting up outside of a honey factory (the bees seemed to like the colour of our car and our race suits), we managed to get things back together before the 40 minute lunch break was over and we set off for the afternoon session.

Merseylea set the tone for the rest of the day, and we pulled off 2nd fastest on Nook, just two seconds down on the Siddin's 240Z and two seconds up Byrne/Stoopman Alfa, five seconds on the on the mad Mockett/Fuentes Garcia Carrera Panamericana Oldsmobile 88 and six seconds on the Ulrich's mighty Jensen CV8. All very tight, but well placed nonetheless, and for a bit more of a thrill we just caught a GT3 Porsche at the 5½ km finish line. The next stage, Paloota, is one from a previous year, and unarguably one of our favourites for which we have a developed set of

Pace Notes. We placed 2nd again, just one second down on the 240Z, and 11 seconds up on the Ullrichs. On Moriarty, we placed fourth, but still within seven seconds of the lead. Stage 7, Holwell, placed us 2nd once more, just three seconds off the lead. 188km/hr over a blind crest in heavy rain certainly got our attention and resulted in a top ten outright result.

The last stage of the day, Kayena, again saw darkening skies and rain – a test for our "softs" strategy; this year we've elected to use a softer compound tyre that is meant to be very effective in wet weather. We



Freestone's Holden 48/215



Todd/Tighe Perana



Batten/Batten Volvo 544

usually do fairly well anyway in the wet, and typically the leader board changes with rain. For this stage, the little Mini Cooper of the Drapers moved up to second, the Siddin's 240Z fell back to fourth, and we picked up first place! This had us close out Leg One in second place, just five seconds off of the 240Z and 40 seconds up on the third placed Byrne/Stoopman Alfa GTV.

We're naturally rather chuffed with that result, especially when we look at outright (non-handicap) times for this stage and a few before them; we're 19th outright (non-handicap) just one second down from the Oldsmobile. Comparing us to "modern" category entries, we would have placed 26th outright as we were faster on the last stage than a 2010 Audi R8 V10, a Porsche 911 GT2CS and a number of Impreza WRX STi's and Mitsubishi AWD EVO's.

Service at the end of the day involved just making sure nothing else was loose, investigate a few new sounds, and dismantling the other carb' to proactively remove the spring that might also fail (we have twin external throttle return springs to keep things in order). Somewhat sadly for competitive reasons, the Freestone Holden 48/215 and the Batten's rocket ship Volvo had mechanical issues, the latter terminal, which has knocked them out of podium contention – each were contenders for Outright. Top three for those are the Broadbent Porsche 911 Carrera RS, the Siddins 240Z and the Todd/Tighe Gulf-Oil-liveried Ford Capri Perana V8.



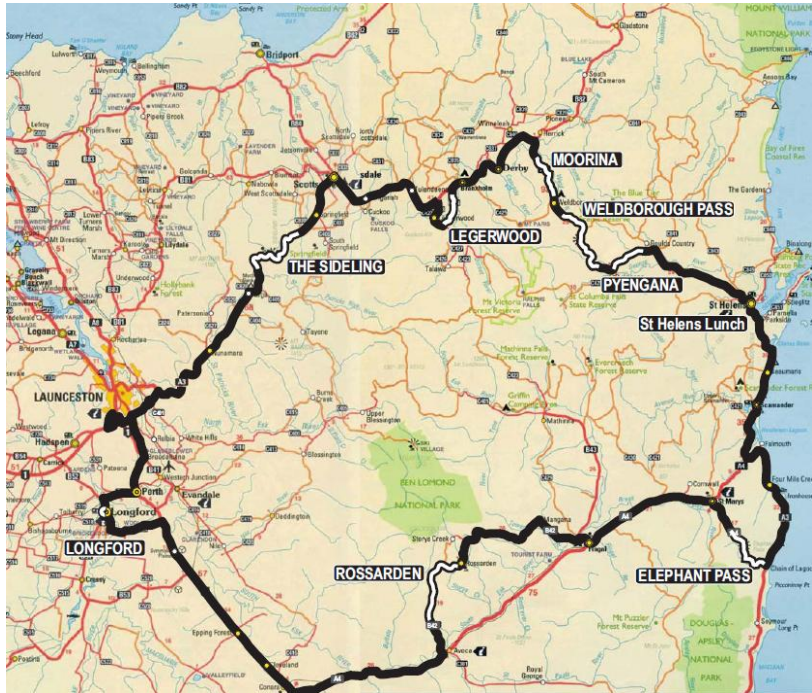
Tomorrow offers another great day along the east coast, circling back to Launceston via Longford, where the final stage is a blast through the township itself, always entertaining and typically good for photo opportunities. Notably, all Leg Two's stages bar the last are "new", so it will be a test of our trust in each other (Andy in my calls, and me in his ability to respond accordingly). With just 1/8 of the competition's distance gone after Leg One, the real challenge lays ahead in keeping the car together, and of course on the black bits.

Pos	No	Driver / CoDriver	Nat	Vehicle	Cat / Class	Penalties	Gap to Prev/First
1	465	Siddins, Jon Ferguson, Darren	QLD QLD	1970 Datsun 240Z	4MSD	02:25	
2	222	White, Andrew Yelds, Ashley	NT UK	1961 Volvo 122S	2LMSD	02:30	00:05 00:05
3	487	Byrne, Colin Stoopman, Paul	VIC VIC	1971 Alfa Romeo GTV 2000	4LMSB	03:10	00:45 00:40
4	383	Ullrich, Peter Ullrich, Sari	NSW NSW	1963 Jensen CV8	3LMSF	03:18	00:53 00:08
5	411	Todd, Donn Tighe, Dean	Qld Qld	1971 Ford Capri Perana	4MSH	03:43	01:18 00:25
6	421	Lowe, Robin Lowe, Peter	VIC VIC	1971 Datsun 240Z	4LMSC	03:55	01:30 00:12
7	233	Draper, Henry Draper, Roslyn	VIC VIC	1961 Morris Mini Minor	2LMSA	04:05	01:40 00:10
8	288	Mockett, Doug Fuentes Garcia,	USA	1954 Oldsmobile Super 88	2MSF	04:07	01:42 00:02
9	361	Steuart, Ross Steuart, Jill	Vic Vic	1962 Ford Anglia 105e	3LMSB	04:16	01:51 00:09
10	364	Edwards, Bob Wright, Craig	VIC TAS	1964 Ford Falcon Sprint	3MSF	04:30	02:05 00:14

Leg Two – Launceston – St Helens - Launceston

Leg 2, a loop over to the East Coast of Tasmania in increasingly wet weather comprised eight competitive stages, finishing with a spectacular run around streets of the historic town of Longford. This leg of Targa takes in classic stages across mountain ranges and mountain passes requiring both handling and horsepower, and uses the same stages in previous years but in reverse direction.

The Sidling normally greets competitors first up on day two on the East Coast loop. But this year the first competitive stage of the day finishes in Rossarden in bleak mountainous area of the state that presents as a candidate for where unknown bodies might be buried. The road itself features big drops off the roadside and many rough and fast corners. We fell back from the Siddin's Datsun, and the Byrne/Stoopman Alfa equalled our time, both of us 15 seconds up on the Ulrich's Jensen.



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Siddins/Ferguson Datsun 240Z

The last “full” run for the day was the Sidling stage about 45 km East of Launceston. We started this in heavy rain and ascended into the clouds, running down high speed straights into the fog, trusting that both our estimate of distance and information as to what was over the blind crests and around the next corner was valid. Although a longish climb to start, we stitched together a solid run, seven seconds clear of the Siddin's 240Z to post our first winning Stage Time.

The final stage was a blast though the township of Longford - short straights, tight corners and occasional fresh roadworks (seems the same every year) making for some great photo opportunities. Perhaps not being as mindful of tyre preservation as we should have been, we had a fun little hoon and managed to impress the recently redundant service crew of the Batten/Batten Volvo team reporting we were quickest around the cemetery and past the church. The kiddies were happy (both the spectator ones and those

Next up we tackled Elephants Pass, a 13km largely downhill run from Central Plateau to the coast, where the Stoopman/Byrne Alfa excelled, grabbing first place some 13 sec's ahead of the Datsun and almost 20 seconds ahead of us. The Stuart's Anglia made a strong showing just four seconds behind. The pattern followed at Pyengana and Weldborough and Moorina until Legerwood, where, despite our little car almost peaking in overdrive top (which equates to a speed of 205kph – rather exciting in a 50 year old Volvo!) the Jensen pipped us for a third place and the Freestone's Holden placed a convincing second.

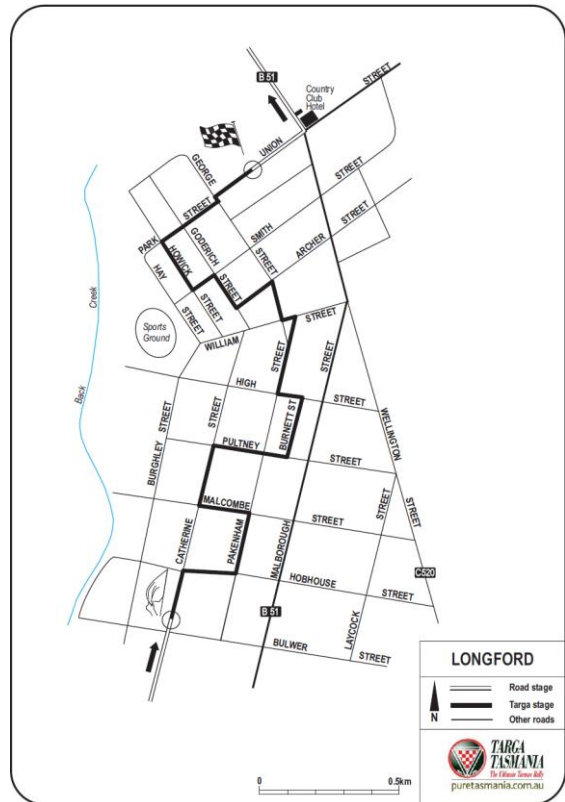


inside the car).

After finishing Leg One in second place just five seconds down on the Siddin's Datsun, we are somewhat chuffed with how the Leg Two finished, albeit now some 42 seconds behind. We're definitely at the pointy end, and in a place we've never been amongst some quite hot competition - less than a minute separates the first three cars after the two days as the Byrne/Stoopman Alfa has closed their gap in 3rd place to just 12 seconds.

Although there's a further 2½ mins to Ulrich's Jensen in fourth place, the Steuart's quirky 1962 Ford Anglia 105E is just 23 seconds behind them and a minute and a half ahead of Donn Todd and Dean Tighe in a Ford Capri Perana. As such, the tussle for a podium spot is nowhere near sorted – sage advice is that we need to look ahead and let those behind us worry about themselves.

On a comparative basis to other teams not in our category, we're gaining some cred' having taken quite a few scalps on the stages through the day – from a 19th outright yesterday, we kept mostly in the top 20, with a best of equal 9th on the Sideling stage just four seconds behind the Freestone FX Holden, and ahead of a suite of Porsche Carrera's and Ferrari's, six seconds quicker than the Ulrich's Jensen, and would have placed us just outside the Top 20 in the Modern Category (ahead of things like Impreza WRX STi C-Spec, Corvette Z06, Mitsubishi Lancer EVO's, and an Audi R8 V10)



Hunting Porsche 911 Carrera RS's in Tasmania – we're running nine sec's behind the orange one, and seven sec's ahead of the blue one



Dick Johnson contemplating how he'll pay for a stuffed Z06 Corvette

Top 10 Overall at end of Leg 2					
Pos	No	Crew	Vehicle	Total	Gap to Prev/First
1	465	Siddins Ferguson	Datsun 240Z	02:41	
2	222	White Yelds	Volvo 122S	02:57	00:16 00:16
3	487	Byrne Stoopman	Alfa Romeo GTV 2000	03:37	00:40 00:56
4	383	Ullrich Ullrich	Jensen CV8	04:00	00:23 01:19
5	411	Todd Tighe	Ford Capri Perana	04:25	00:25 01:44
6	421	Lowe Lowe	Datsun 240Z	04:41	00:16 02:00
7	233	Draper Draper	Morris Mini Minor	05:06	00:25 02:25
8	361	Steuart Steuart	Ford Anglia 105e	05:09	00:03 02:28
9	364	Edwards Wright	Ford Falcon Sprint	05:55	00:46 03:14
10	414	Thomas Towell	FIAT 124 Sport	06:21	00:26 03:40

For Leg Three, the field starts its journey to Strahan, where we will spend two nights before heading to Hobart on Sunday and we are hoping for an incident free day.



With longer and higher speed stages it will be somewhat testing should we have further problems with our overdrive, as without it we will be limited to not much more than 160km/h. Otherwise, the car's holding together, but we're mindful we don't hit the halfway point on competitive distance until we get in to Strahan at the end of Leg Three.

Leg Three: Launceston to Strahan

The impact of the course revisions are most evident on Legs Three and Four with the base for the rally moving from Launceston to Strahan for two nights with seven of the sixteen stages new for 2012. With over 1,000kms of touring and competition, these legs will be the first piece of the endurance part of the event (which is why this slightly belated update is coming to you late on the Saturday).

Although closing out Leg Two in 2nd place 42 seconds down from the leading Datsun 240z, we were under no illusions that a podium finish was in the bag; just 12 seconds back was the Byrne/Stoopman Alfa Romeo GTV 2000 and some 2½ minutes back from that was the Ulrich's Jensen CV8. With a mixed weather forecast, we headed off for the start of Leg Three still unsure how well our soft tyre strategy would play out, especially as if there was much dry weather we may be at risk of running out of tyres in trying to keep with the Datsun and the Jensen, but if it was really wet, the Alfa would likely easily gobble our margin and be a contender for the win in the Classic Competition. Regardless, we were still on a high to have held 2nd place, and very satisfied that on outright time we were sitting 16th between two Carrera Porsches.

Minor mechanical issues are still a challenge - although having rebuilt the overdrive unit before the event, we were finding that once warm it would either not engage, or would "freewheel". As the purpose of the overdrive is to facilitate high speed by giving us an "extra" gear, to have it not working would make it a long and likely uncompetitive week. As a safeguard, we sourced a brand new unit from Melbourne, had it brought over by one of our fellow competitors on the Saturday, and installed it on the Sunday.



However, quite frustratingly, it didn't work. At all. Despite assurances that "of course it would".

With less than 36 hours to the start of the event, and needing to have the car officially scrutineered and approved for competition sometime over the following day, we began considering changing differential ratios (to give us some element of speed greater than the 160 km/h we would be otherwise limited to) or somehow finding another solution to getting the overdrive working. Although it would be expected that Tasmania is not exactly a hotbed of expertise in 1960's era Laycock de Normanville electric overdrives (fancy brand name for the English-made overdrive fitted in our car) we were directed to such an expert in Hobart – some 2 ½ hrs from Launceston. Cutting a long story short, we were given dispensation for a delayed scrutineering, and Andy set off with our new Service Crew recruit and Volvo specialist Ted Warner for a lightning fast trip south to solve the matter. The possibilities ranged from highly complex to rather mundane, suffice to say, a brass drift hit with an array of increasing in size mallets awoke the recalcitrant overdrive while the car was aloft on a hoist running flat out in top gear. This approach was one of the solutions we had already identified (thanks Ted!), just we didn't know exactly where, nor how hard to hit.

As the week has progressed, it is somewhat inconsistent as to if or when the overdrive will awake, meaning that as we run up to the 160km/h mark, we're never sure if we have another gear left. For Leg Three, this will be a bit of an issue. For Leg Four it will be quite an issue. For Leg Five, well, for most of the day it will be the major issue. As for the rest of the car, all seems solid and in good health, and our ego's are being nicely burnished with the newfound respect (and equally burnished with the disdain from others) our team has from yesterday's performances. An added benefit is that the quicker we go, the further back in the field are our start times, giving us more sleep time ahead of the day's competition. Speaking of which, we stepped right in to the fray once more with the run over to Strahan.



Mole Creek is a short (5km) stage that is tight and twisty running through magnificent rainforest-type landscape – with mossy, slippery roads. We managed 2nd, dropping 8 seconds from the Datsun, with the Alfa just four seconds behind. Next up was Cethana, the archetypical Targa Tasmania road – almost 40 km's of very varied road across ridge tops, down into a valley and across the Mersey Forth river and back up to the ridge top. Although the downhill sections play to our handling and our bravado, the long uphill climbs do not – nonetheless, we set off as determined as ever to play to our strengths and see how the cards fell. None too shabbily as it turns out (even overtaking a Subaru WRX STi along the way at over 170km/h) - we won the stage, besting the Datsun by two seconds, the Alfa by 17. On real (non-handicapped) time, we placed equal-16th in Classics, just six seconds slower than the Ulrich's Jensen (our total time on the stage was 21 minutes and twelve seconds). Our equal was the Ralph/Gibson 302V8 Ford Perana!

A new stage for 2012 is Castra – a take no prisoners run along a ridge top, then a severely steep run down in to the base of the valley, with a set of very fast and very steep corners following a very tricky oblique-angled and narrow intersection that we enter at over 120km/h. Completing the stage safely and quickly, we were content that if someone could beat that time they more than deserved the win



– they didn’t and we won another stage, just two seconds quicker than the Datsun, and twelve up on the Alfa. On non-handicap, we placed equal 8th, just one second off of the Jensen.

The next stage, Braddon’s Lookout, saw us take our only other second place for the day – for each of Oldina, Hellyer Gorge, Plimsoll and Rinadeena we took first place, with a mix of the Jensen, Datsun, Alfa and the Perana in places two to five for the rest of the day. This pulled our 2nd place deficit to the Siddins Datsun back to 15 seconds, and increased our margin to the Alfa from just 12 seconds to one minute 18 seconds.

Our outright times are consistently splitting the Porsche 911’s and Mazda RX7’s and we managed 8th fastest O/R

Classic Competition - end of Leg Three						
Pos	No	Driver CoDriver	Vehicle	Cat Class	Stage Penalties	Gap to Prev/First
1	465	Siddins, Jon Ferguson, Darren	1970 Datsun 240Z	4MSD	18:03	
2	222	White, Andrew Yelds, Ashley	1961 Volvo 122S	2LMSD	18:18	0:15 0:15
3	487	Byrne, Colin Stoopman, Paul	1971 Alfa Romeo GTV 2000	4LMSB	19:36	1:33 1:18
4	383	Ullrich, Peter Ullrich, Sari	1963 Jensen CV8	3LMSF	23:54	5:51 4:18
5	411	Todd, Donn Tighe, Dean	1971 Ford Capri Perana	4MSH	26:08:00	8:05 2:14
6	361	Steuart, Ross Steuart, Jill	1962 Ford Anglia 105e	3LMSB	27:15:00	9:12 1:07
7	233	Draper, Henry Draper, Roslyn	1961 Morris Mini Minor	2LMSA	29:15:00	11:12 2:00
8	421	Lowe, Robin Lowe, Peter	1971 Datsun 240Z	4LMSC	30:17:00	12:14 1:02
9	471	Wilson, Bernie Wilson, John	1971 Ford Perana	4MSH	33:47:00	15:44 3:30
10	407	Goodwin, Geoff Hughes, Mary	1969 Datsun 240Z	4MSD	34:33:00	16:30 0:46

on the tight Castra stage. Servicing at day’s end focused on the overdrive – cleaning and checking filters and replacing the oil with a heavier grade to encourage it to hold pressure – as well as an oil change and close underbody inspection and tightening given some hard hits we encountered where the car bottomed out on the faster and bumpier stages.



Leg Four: Strahan – Ulverstone - Strahan

Reece Dam kicked off the day, with six of us “cleaning” the Stage – no penalty time, but no advantage gained either, so we were still holding 2nd place some 15 seconds down from the Datsun. Pieman saw us take another win, banking two seconds over the Datsun, and six clear of the Jensen. The Byrne/Stoopman Alfa asserted some authority by taking a Stage win on Mt Roland, besting the Datsun by two seconds and us by four. We held 2nd on Sheffield to the Datsun, with the Freestone’s FX Holden just eight seconds behind. After the lunch break it was an Alfa/Datsun/Volvo 1/2/3 Gunns Plains and Riana stages, but we claimed another win on the Mt Black stage to the Datsun and the Holden, and closed out the day with a final win on Roseberry, this time to the Datsun and the Jensen.

For our main competition, the Classic Handicap, this places us 39 seconds off of the Datsun, and one minute 36 seconds off of the Alfa. We’re mindful of how we were placed at this time in 2011 (where on Saturday evening we were almost three minutes off of a podium place but



chiseled it away to pick up 3rd by just 11 seconds by day's end) and so are not counting anything as a certainty – navigator oversight, driver error or mechanical malady can easily toss any chance of glory right out the window. On outright times we were sitting in 14th outright with the Morris/Molocznyk Alfa GTV6, Cook/Cole 911 just ahead and the Power/Power RX7 and Ralph/Gibson Perana just 0:29 and 1:14 behind.

Servicing tonight involved swapping our tyres to balance wear and seeking out the cause of a driveline vibration we encountered a number of times today at high speed (190km/h +). Putting to one side that 50 year old Volvo's should perhaps not be doing this sort of thing, we set about replacing the centre driveshaft mount and along the way found some binding universal joints. Replacements fitted, albeit late in the evening, the car's fueled up and ready as can be for the final push home to Hobart, where it will be tears of joy that we've managed to garner a podium place or big smiles regardless from having survived the week with some brilliant stage times on the record. Getting this far only possible with the concerted and generous efforts of our intrepid service crew Terry, Ted, Norrie and Claire plus fellow competitors Ross and Jill Steuart – a big thanks to all from both Andy and Ashley. Hang on for the final word from Hobart on Sunday night.



Leg Five – Strahan to Hobart

Leg Five comprises the final six of the 38 stages of the rally. By the time we get to Hobart, we will have driven almost 2,500kms, with over 620kms of them in full competition mode where every second is counted and counts. Two stages on this leg are particular favourites; the almost 60km long Mt Arrowsmith stage and the final stage, Grasstree Hill (this year being run in “reverse” direction.) Additionally, the organizers have added another new stage, Woodsdale, a very technical and demanding 18km stage just north of Richmond near Hobart.

Having closed out Leg Four with wins on the last two Stages, we were sitting surprisingly well in 2nd place, 39 seconds behind the leading Datsun 240Z and one minute 36 seconds clear of the 3rd placed Alfa Romeo GTV 2000. Back in 4th a further 5½ minutes down were our regular stalwarts the Ulrich's in their massive 6.3 litre Jensen CV8. With 135 competitive kilometres to go, and wet weather on the radar, it could be anyone's win.

With patchy rains overnight, the roads were inconsistently damp, and we kept our tyre pressures low. We noted the Siddin's Datsun held themselves back in the running order to allow the road to dry out before they ran the stage – we had deployed a similar strategy in previous years, however the risk is that if the rains move back in, they'll get caught on a slower piece of wet road. The weather was moving through quickly, and it was hard to assess whether it would get wetter or dry out – we took the gamble that rain might come through again soon, whereas the Datsun 240Z sat it out and used some late time in the hope that our car and others would dry the roads out somewhat.

The Datsun went hard on the first stage, Strahan, and picked up a further nine seconds over our position with the Jensen just 23 seconds behind us. For the



Queenstown's 100 bends

Alfa though, the event seemed all but over, dropping over nine minutes with throttle problems putting them an overall three minutes behind the Jensen. We then won the Queenstown stage, some seven seconds quicker than the Datsun and closing our gap to first back to 41 seconds.

Mt Arrowsmith is perhaps our favourite stage. Over 58kms long, it is an event in itself. We hammered through a mix of dry roads, very slippery sections through tight forest, and light rain, and not only won the Stage, but bested the Datsun by 29 seconds, pulling their lead back to just 12 seconds.

With just three more stages to go, the fight was on – although we were still mindful that given the hard work from previous days, a 2nd place was reasonably safe as long as we kept the car on the road and in one piece.

Tarraleah saw us lining up with heavy rain drops beginning to fall, but the stage itself largely dry. The Datsun run-late strategy would prove to be imprudent, as they encountered a wet road and were some 30 seconds slower than us. We were now in the lead with a 20 second margin!

However, the penultimate Stage, Woodsdale, was one that would suit the Datsun well, with a long and tough climb and a number of very high speed sections. As we lined up for the Stage, all was dry, but with just three minutes to start, the heavens opened. As expected, the Datsun blitzed our time, bettering us by 14 seconds and reducing our lead going in to the final stage to just six seconds. Definitely game on!

Sitting in the staging area ahead of running Grasstree Hill, the rain had stopped and we were debating delaying our start to allow the roads to dry somewhat. We've always enjoyed Grasstree Hill, as although there's a long hard climb for the first few kilometres, the downhill run over the other side of the hill suits our car well. Looking at the weather radar for storm cells, we decided a "go now" strategy was best, and we headed off. Those of you who recall last year's 3rd place result might remember we had a similar situation on this closing Stage (at



the time we were 4th, just six seconds behind the 3rd placed Mustang - we bettered them by 17 seconds to garner a podium by 11 seconds!)

We blasted off up the mountain, confident we could do a solid time, but realistic it would be open to an equally good effort from the Datsun. Barely 800metres in to the six kilometre stage, a bad misfire developed, with the engine barely running over 4,000 rpm, and our road speed dropping rapidly. We crawled up the hill for next 2½ kms, ready to jump out and push if need be, as if we could get to the top we could roll down the other side with enough of a margin to the Jensen's in 3rd place that our podium 2nd was still achievable. As we breached the crest of the hill, the engine came fully back to life, and we screamed down the other side – spectators witnessing a Jekyll and Hyde performance from the little Volvo. As we crossed the finish line, we congratulated each other for a fine effort and finish. As the Datsun crossed the line, we were working on our car, they pulled over and we congratulated them on their stellar win, as our six second lead had been surely shredded with the misfire. We were happy, elated really, as we'd improved on last year's third place in a much expanded and stronger field.

The real surprise though was when the times came in - the Datsun had driven just seven seconds faster over the stage – and had won the six day event won by just one second! We're not quite sure how we achieved second fastest time, just seven seconds down on the Grasstree stage. To say we were/are a little chuffed was/is an understatement, enhanced by the thrill of the chase once again to the very last Stage. With an Outright (non-handicap) result of 13th Outright, ahead of Ferraris and hard charging Porsches it has been a very fine year. Room for improvement is marginal, but still a goal!

At the finish we were greeted by service crewmen Terry and Ted (thanks again guys!), and Andy's daughter Claire. We were fortunate to be able to celebrate a podium finish once again, with the champagne (still stings when it gets in your eyes), trophies and flags and then retired to the Targa Bar to share tall tales and true.

Thanks again too for all of those who helped us get to the start, (especially the major sponsors Sherrin and Heather), and through the event as well (Ashley's brother Norrie), sponsors Barry Brookes of Topperformance (those lovely adjustable Koni shocks) and Andrew Williamson of Pacific Motors in Pymble. That's all for 2012!!

EARLY CLASSIC - RESULTS AFTER DAY FIVE (FINAL)

1. Jon Siddins / Darren Ferguson, 1970 Datsun 240Z
2. Andrew White / Ashley Yelds, 1961 Volvo 122S, +1 second
3. Peter Ullrich / Sari Ullrich, 1963 Jensen CV8, +11m08s
4. Ross Steuart / Jill Steuart, 1962 Ford Anglia 105E, +16m02s
5. Henry Draper / Roslyn Draper, 1961 Morris Mini Minor, +19m53s

