SOUTHERN CROSS INTERNATIONAL RALLY





George Fury/Monty Suffer/Datsun Stanza - winners for the second successive year

1979

13 - 17 OCTOBER

Start: Sydney (Amaroo Park) - Finish: Port Macquarie

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PREAMBLE

Although the Southern Cross International Rally was a 'must' for many crews, the once in a decade attraction of a Round Australia Trial affected the size of the rally's field this year. Finishing only six weeks before the 'Cross', the Repco Reliability Trial absorbed much in the way of energy from crews, time away from businesses and homes, wear and tear on cars and not much time to bring them back to full competition status, and of course, finances, for the Repco was heavy on the pocket. It also attracted much media coverage which distracted from the Southern Cross International Rally.

SUMMARY

Spearheading a magnificent 1-2-3 result for the Datsun Team, George Fury, navigated by long-time navigator, Monty Suffern, took the winner's laurels for the second consecutive year. It was the third successive win for Datsun in the event, with Rauno Aaltonen winning in 1977.



Fury drove a consistently fast and careful event and had his equally consistent team-mates Ross Dunkerton/Jeff Beaumont and Rauno Aaltonen/Adrian Mortimer to finish immediately behind him. All were in Datsun Stanzas.

But they had a mighty opponent in the Ford Team, of Colin Bond, Greg Carr and Bjorn Waldegard in the Escorts, with Geoff Portman running a Repco Reliability Trial Cortina.

The drama and excitement went on well into the fourth and final night, until Waldegard's Escort broke a differential four stages from the end, shattering Ford's hope of a win and leaving Colin Bond/John Dawson-Damer's Escort in fourth.

From the outset, Waldegard showed his wort, Carr was the only driver who could stay with him in the early stages. Then the Fords were threatened from within when Carr's car retired after a broken axle and then a blown differential. From then on the Ford mechanics worked continuously on the remaining Escorts changing axles and the resultant time losses let the Datsuns stay within reach.

Waldegard's Escort broke an axle on the second night but although not stopped by the incident it let Fury close the gap. Then, on the third night, after another broken axle, Fury took the lead.

However, on the last night Waldegard grabbed the lead back and was leading by a few seconds when the Escort's differential failed (obviously because of the axle problems) and Fury was the winner again.

Frank Johnson/Steve Halloran's Mazda RX3 front end failed towards the end and he had to nurse the car to the finish, to be fifth; followed by Nabihiro Tajima/Kioshi Kawamura in their Toyota Levin TE25 – they had a fine run.

The frontrunners had a great battle, overshadowing some good efforts further down the field, with Doug Stewart/Col Parry (Holden Commodore) and Geoff Portman/Ross Runnalls (Ford Cortina) having a real tussle with each other in the big cars, and finishing seventh and ninth; they were split by Gordon Leven/Robbie Wilson in the Datsun H510.

Rounding out the ten was Ron Marks/Chris Heaney after a mighty drive in the Datsun 120Y.

Final Placings

1	George Fury	Monty Suffern	Datsun Stanza	20:36:09
2	Ross Dunkerton	Jeff Beaumont	Datsun Stanza	20:49:20
3	Rauno Aaltonen	Adrian Mortimer	Datsun Stanza	21:53:53
4	Colin Bond	John Dawson-Damer	Ford Escort RS1800	22:05:19
5	Frank Johnson	Steve Halloran	Mazda RX3	23:18:13
6	Nobuhiro Tajima	Kiyoshi Kawamura	Toyota Levin TE25	23:32:26
7	Doug Stewart	Col Parry	Holden Commodore	23:41:35
8	Gordon Leven	Robbie Wilson	Datsun H510	23:46:30
9	Geoff Portman	Ross Runnalls	Ford Cortina	24:05:36
10	Ron Marks	Chris Heaney	Datsun 120Y	24:36:41

Class placings are not available.

VEHICLE ELIGIBILITY

Vehicle eligibility based on FIA Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4, and homologated in Appendix J of the 1979 International Sporting Code:

1. Series Production Cars: 5000 units produced within 12 consecutive months;
2. Series Touring Cars: 1000 units produced within 12 consecutive months;
3. Series Production Grand Touring Cars: 1000 units produced within 12 consecutive months;
4. Special Grand Touring Cars: 500 units produced within 12 consecutive months.
5. Special Production Cars; from 1976 the FIA introduced a new Group 5 "Special Production Car" category, allowing extensive modifications to production based vehicles which were homologated in FIA Groups 1 through 4.

- Fitting of a safety roll over bar or cage protection was compulsory for all cars;
- Helmets were not compulsory, but it was recommended that safety helmets be worn on special stages;
- A fire extinguisher system with a minimum capacity 5kg to be fitted within the passenger compartment.

The Holden Commodore had been homologated with the FIA, as it was linked with the 'Opel World Car' concept, so there were no problems with this entry. The Ford Cortina, used in the Repco Reliability Trial, was unique to Australia and had not been homologated. However, CAMS approved the vehicle to run, with the consent of competitors and the organisers, thus giving Geoff Portman his first run in the event.

EVENT DETAILS/ ORGANISING TEAM

Event Details

Division	Distance km	Competitive km	Comp % km	Longest stage (km)	Late Time	Number Entries	Number Starters	Number Finishers
One	765	330	44	95	150 min			
Two	600	410	69	98	150 min			
Three	710	380	54	103	150 min			
Four	665	440	66	216	150 min			
Totals	2730	1560	57			45	40	17

Organising Team

ASCC President: John Arter
General Manager: Tony Webb
Secretary: Pat Kinnear
Road Director: Peter Berriman
Assistant Directors: Bill Adams, Hayden Gooch
Competitor Liaison: John Arter
Committee: Above plus Nick Munting, Jack Mullins. Joy Roser, Tony Warrener
Checker: Terry Bain

Sponsors

Port Macquarie Business Houses
Gestetner

Southern Pacific Hotel Corporation ('Travelodge')

Headquarters
Sandcastle Motel Port Macquarie

ENTRIES

40 crews started the event, of which nine drivers and four navigators came from overseas. Only a couple of Japanese crews made the journey, together with a few entries from New Zealand and the Philippines.

The entry list was dominated by the clash between Ford and Nissan and the field saw the inclusion of a number of cars and drivers from the Repco Round Australia Trial that had been run just a couple of months earlier. This included Portman in Carr's ex-factory Ford Cortina, as well as Frenchman Jean-Paul Luc in the Toyota Celica that had placed 6th in the Repco.

Ford's RS1800s included Bjorn Waldegard/Bjorn Thorzelius (both from Sweden), Greg Carr/Fred Gocentas and Colin Bond/John Dawson-Damer. The cars were a mixture, with the one for Waldegard being brand new (with the engine replaced from England after a mishap during 'practice'!). Carr's car was lining up for its third Southern Cross International Rally, being the original Boreham car built in 1977. It had done only one 1979 Australian Rally Championship event since a rebuild. Bond's car was the one he had used in the 1979 Championship with a few new bits.

The Datsun Stanzas contained George Fury/Monty Suffern, Rauno Aaltonen/Adrian Mortimer and Ross Dunkerton/Jeff Beaumont. All three Stanzas (one being left hand drive, driven by Aaltonen) were 'Australianised' to avoid the disappointing problems of the overseas cars of 1978. Fury's car was direct from Japan, whilst the other two had been run in New Zealand, where they were both disqualified when, at post-event scrutiny, the team mechanics refused to remove the heads for inspection!

The Australians had been 'at each other' all year in the Australian Rally Championship with Fury/Suffern winning from Bond/Dawson-Damer – 31 points to 27.

The Holden Dealer Team entries of the turbo-charged Gemini PF 60 was for Wayne Bell/Dave Boddy while Arthur Jackson/Steve Owers ran a 'normal' Gemini, with bits and pieces provided by the HDT.

France's long time Citroen works driver, Jean-Paul Luc (7th in the 1977 London to Sydney Marathon), made an appearance to drive a Toyota Celica, with Ann Heaney navigating. This car had been used in the Repco Reliability Trial.

The Repco produced a couple of new (big) cars to rallying and these were crewed by Doug Stewart/Col Parry, Jean Jones/Joan Bennett and John Murray/Jeff Stevens (all in Holden Commodores) and Geoff Portman in the Ford Cortina.

Australia's leading privateers made the event – Frank Neale/Phil Dodd, Mitsubishi Lancer (5th in 1978) and Frank Johnson/Steve van der Byl in the Mazda RX3. Unfortunately for Ian Hill, his Lancer crashed in a rally a few weeks earlier and the car didn't make the event. This allowed Ann Heaney to run with Jean-Paul Lac when Barry Lake became unavailable.

Peter Janson turned up in a Saab, with navigator Paul Patterson, as a test run for Saab's potential involvement in 1980.

Overseas cars that managed to get into the country, despite the carnet difficulties experienced this year, was Nobuhiro Tajima/Kioshi Kawamurra's Toyota Levin, with which they started 48th seed in 1978 and were just out of the top ten for much of the event until it expired just before the finish; and the Mitsubishi Lancer of Eichi Suzuki/Masashi Tan.



Nobuhiro Tajima rolled his Toyota Levin but still came through to a fine sixth place

ENTRY LIST

(and start order)

NO	DRIVER	STATE	NAVIGATOR	STATE	CAR MAKE	CAR MODEL
1	Bjorn Waldegaard	Sweden	Hans Thorszelius	Sweden	Ford	Escort RS1800
2	Rauno Aaltonen	Finland	Adrian Mortimer	SA	Datsun	Stanza
3	Greg Carr	ACT	Fred Gocentas	ACT	Ford	Escort RS1800
4	Ross Dunkerton	WA	Jeff Beaumont	Tas	Datsun	Stanza
5	Colin Bond	NSW	John Dawson-Damer	NSW	Ford	Escort RS1800
6	George Fury	Vic	Monty Suffern	Vic	Datsun	Stanza
7	Jean-Paul Luc	France	Ann Heaney	NSW	Toyota	Celica
8	Wayne Bell	NSW	Dave Boddy	NSW	Holden	Gemini PF60
9	Geoff Portman	Vic	Ross Runnalls	Vic	Ford	Cortina
10	Doug Stewart	NSW	Col Parry	NSW	Holden	Commodore
11	Frank Neal	NSW	Phil Dodds	NSW	Mitsubishi	Lancer
13	Arthur Jackson	NSW	Steve Owers	NSW	Holden	Gemini PF60
14	Peter Janson	Vic	Paul Paterson	Vic	Saab	900
15	Frank Johnson	WA	Steve Vanderbyl	WA	Mazda	RX3
16	Nobuhiro Tajima	Japan	Shoichi Hara	Japan	Toyota	Levin TE25
17	Gary Mecak	NSW	Graham Gillies	NSW	Mazda	RX3
18	Gordon Leven	NSW	Robbie Wilson	NSW	Datsun	1600 SSS
19	Gary Meehan	NSW	Greg Gifford	NSW	Toyota	Celica
20	Ron Marks	NSW	Chris Heaney	ACT	Datsun	120Y
21	Peter Nelson	NSW	Greg Nelson	NSW	Mitsubishi	Lancer
22	Brian Hilton	NSW	Graham Roser	NSW	Toyota	Celica
23	Brian Clark	NSW	Bruno Ryan	NSW	Volkswagen	Golf
24	Eiichi Suzuki	Japan	Takashi Yafune	Japan	Mitsubishi	Lancer
25	Allan Lawson	Qld	Gerad Byrne	ACT	Triumph	TR8
26	Dante Silverio	Phil	"Boy" Saycon	Phil	Toyota	Corolla
27	Bob Johnson	NSW	John Urquart	NSW	Mitsubishi	Lancer
28	Wayne Griffiths	NSW	Tim Francis	NSW	Honda	Civic
29	John Berne	NSW	David Peiti	NSW	Ford	Escort RS2000
30	Paul Bramble	NSW	Arthur Evans	NSW	Mitsubishi	Galant
31	Arthur Tuason	NSW	Dennis Russell	NSW	Ford	Escort RS2000
32	Dan White	NSW	Greg Hannant	NSW	Ford	Escort RS2000
33	Keith Page	NSW	Peter Neal	NSW	Datsun	
34	Ron Cremen	NSW	Alan Brooke	NSW	Datsun	120Y
36	Bob Clarke	NSW	Ray Stubbs	NSW	Datsun	1600 SSS
37	Bob Holden	NSW	Ken Smith	NSW	Ford	Escort
39	Peter Fenner	Qld	Richard Kelly	Qld	Ford	Escort
41	Jean Jones	Vic	Joan Bennett	Vic	Holden	Commodore
43	Edward Knowles	Vic	David Officer	Vic	Ford	Escort
44	Doug Carmen	NSW	Ian Cameron	NSW	Datsun	1600 SSS
45	Bill Dufty	ACT	Bob Comley	ACT	Datsun	1600 SSS
48	Graham Stockley	Vic	Kevin O'Neill	Vic	Porsche	911
49	John Murray	NSW	Jeff Stevens	NSW	Holden	Commodore

50	Jim Casey	NSW	Les Oliver	NSW	Ford	Escort RS 2000
53	Murray Cleworth	NSW	Kim Bellestrin	NSW	Morris	Mini GT
54	Dennis Turnbull	NSW	Jacob Emmelkamp	NSW	Ford	Escort
55	Steve Blair	NSW	Ross Ferguson	NSW	Datsun	Stanza

Only 45 cars started the event; 47 listed above

THE EVENT

Division One

The event started with a four-kilometre stage at Amaroo Park, Waldegard asserted himself immediately by being quickest, followed by Bond and Carr, then the three Stanzas. Arthur Jackson took 27 minutes after the Gemini's oil filter seal came off and had run its oil-starved bearings. He was out.

The field charged up the coast via Gosford, Newcastle, Bulahdelah and Taree to Port Macquarie, using the usual areas on the first night north, with four short, but sharp stages near Stroud.

Waldegard won eight of the special stages, Carr one (by one second) and Dunkerton one (by nine seconds). At the end of the division the Swede was eight minutes ahead of Fury, with less than three minutes to Aaltonen and Dunkerton. The Stanzas' rear shock absorbers were set too hard and this made handling all that more difficult.

Carr had an 'off' early and bent the front wheel of the RS1800, which suffered a flat tyre. This was changed and he soon had another flat and, not having another spare, drove the seven kilometres to control, arriving only on a rim. The suspension was changed at a service break and then an axle broke; the stress caused a second one to go and the car had to be pulled out by the service crew Carr ran out of late time, his second early departure in two years.

Bell had been among the first five for some time, enjoying the fifty percent more power the turbo-charger was giving his Gemini over 1978 when he finished third. But the extra power was the car's downfall, with the centre being torn out of the clutch plate because it wasn't strong enough for the kind of pressure being constantly applied.

On the 95-kilometre last stage Bond's RS1800 broke part of the locker differential and he limped on one axle all the way to Port Macquarie, after a pull up a hill by Portman, lost 23 minutes in the incident, putting him back to 15th place.



Colin Bond made an astounding recovery from well back in the field after early troubles

Frank Johnson and Frank Neale showed consistent times, as did Nobuhiro Tajima, to be fifth, sixth and seventh.

Doug Stewart did well with the Commodore to be eighth. However, Portman in the Cortina was 13th, after clutch problems and, at one time, no brakes.

Jean-Paul Luc in the Celica was well back in 26th, having had several punctures and, with Luc off the pace in a slow car (compared to what he was used to) the team was robbed of time, and enthusiasm; whilst Keith Page/Paul Neal in their Datsun 1600 started 33rd, built themselves up to 18th and then fell back after a roll-over curbed their enthusiasm.



Frenchman Jean-Paul Luc had an unhappy run with the Toyota Celica

Eight crews dropped out on this first night.

End of first division

1	Bjorn Waldegard	Hans Thorzelius	Ford Escort RS1800	4:01:54
2	George Fury	Monty Suffern	Datsun Stanza	4:09:59
3	Rauno Aaltonen	Adrian Mortimer	Datsun Stanza	4:10:56
4	Ross Dunkerton	Jeff Beaumont	Datsun Stanza	4:12:36
5	Frank Johnson	Steve Halloran	Mazda RX3	4:36:20
6	Frank Neale	Phil Dodd	Mitsubishi Lancer	4:36:32
7	Nobuhiro Tajima	Kiyoshi Kawamura	Toyota Levin	4:36:27
8	Doug Stewart	Col Parry	Holden Commodore	4:37:42
9	Gordon Leven	Robbie Wilson	Datsun 1600 SSS	4:39:34
10	Bob Clarke	Ray Stubbs	Mitsubishi Galant	4:40:56

Division Two

Division Two was a hard 600 kilometre run to Taree, Wingham and Yarrowitch, Mt Seaview (on the Oxley Highway), then returning Port Macquarie via Elands, Comboyne and Wingham, with ten stages – three of which were over 80 kilometres. The dramas started right from the beginning.

Waldegard managed to foil the system on the very first stage. A road closure barricade wasn't in place and he simply followed the road off the course and, after re-joining it, had cut some three kilometres off, and saved 90 seconds. The sudden lead of almost ten minutes caused a bit of panic whilst the organisers investigated and when it was found what had happened the stage was neutralised.

Bond was desperately trying to make up for lost time on the first night and was quickest over three stages, never dropping below fifth on a stage.

During the middle of the night competitors were confronted with a Y-intersection where the instructions said 'straight on'. Waldegard kept left and it was some 15 minutes before the crew realised their mistake and turned back; by this time the Stanzas had gone through, keeping right. Several other crews lost time here (including Dunkerton, Johnson, Stewart) so it was obvious something was wrong.

The Datsun Team worked on the handling problems overnight and the Stanzas were going considerably quicker. At the end of this second night Fury was almost three minutes ahead of Dunkerton with another four minutes to Aaltonen and then 17 to Waldegard. However, a protest was lodged and during the hearing it was found that a few days before the event a new road had been bulldozed from the Y-intersection, turning what had been a set of tracks into a 'main road'. The Stewards upheld the protest and the stage was neutralised.

So, when all this was sorted out, Fury was fastest over the division, with Dunkerton two seconds behind (5:11:09 to 5:11:11), followed by Waldegard (5:13:01), Aaltonen (5:16:58) and then Colin Bond (5:29:11). This left the Swede first by more than six minutes from Fury, with Dunkerton overtaking Aaltonen, who had lost time with a flat tyre early in the night. Waldegard lost time after the incident mentioned above by having to trail in dust from much slower cars through two longish stages. It is to the credit of many crews that they pulled over at the sight of his lights, but he was still slower. But that's rallying!

Bond, with a great show of driving strength, rocketed from 17th to fifth. He was fastest on two of the first four stages and picked up five places but lost them on a liaison section owing to differential problems; then fought his way to fifth by night's end despite having difficulties in the final stage after the Escort's alternator packed it in.

The private battles were going on in earnest further down the field. Johnson, Portman (who hit a rock and substantially rearranged the front left suspension of the Cortina), Leven and Stewart were fighting each other tooth and nail behind the Datsuns, and ended up sixth to ninth, with Stephen Blair's Stanza moving into tenth place (11th on night one). Tajima dropped from seventh to 14th, having rolled and, at the service point, left without anything being done to the car after some minutes of excited discussion! Sitting just outside the top ten was Ron Marks/Chris Heaney in the Datsun 120Y, but they were having rear brake problems.



Gordon Leven was an impressive eighth in the Datsun 1600

26 cars completed the division. Frank Neale in the Lancer put up an incredible fight against the works crews but fell out with a bent stub axle which resulted in a seized bearing; Peter Janson fell out in the seventh stage after the Saab's gearbox shattered; Jean-Paul Luc hit a gutter and did a bit of damage to the Celica, he became so depressed about being so far back in the field, and feeling fatigued as he wasn't used to the roughness of the course, gave it away; the Lancer of Peter and Greg Nelson broke a rear end; and the Triumph TR7 of Bill Nolan gave up with electrical problems.

Over the night, Fury was fastest with 5:11:09, followed by Dunkerton only two seconds slower! (5:11:11), Waldegard 5:13:01, Aaltonen 5:16:58, Bond 5:29:11 and remarkably, Ron Marks 5:31:44 (now placed 16th).

End of second division

1	Bjorn Waldegard	Hans Thorzelius	Ford Escort RS1800	9:14:55
2	George Fury	Monty Suffern	Datsun Stanza	9:21:08
3	Ross Dunkerton	Jeff Beaumont	Datsun Stanza	9:23:47
4	Rauno Aaltonen	Adrian Mortimer	Datsun Stanza	9:27:54
5	Colin Bond	John Dawson-Damer	Ford Escort RS1800	10:15:59
6	Frank Johnson	Steve Halloran	Mazda RX3	10:16:46
7	Geoff Portman	Ross Runnalls	Ford Cortina	10:18:46
8	Gordon Leven	Robbie Wilson	Datsun 1600 SSS	10:29:41
9	Doug Stewart	Col Parry	Holden Commodore	10:20:49
10	Stephen Blair	Ross Ferguson	Datsun Stanza	10:32:23

Division Three

This third division of nine special stages covering some 700 kilometres took the event north through Kempsey, Bowraville, Bellingen and Coffs Harbour, then via the steep ups and downs of the Taylor Arm area before returning to Port Macquarie.

The top drivers were flying and the status quo remained until the fifth stage during which Waldegard dropped nearly seven minutes when a nut came off the front sway bar and he drove 90 kilometres with the damage, the last eight with a flat tyre. Fury dislodged a plank on a bridge and got through okay to be first at the end of the stage but his teammates were not so lucky. Dunkerton hit the loose plank and bent his rear axle assembly, and Aaltonen spun as he was crossing and hit a bank on the far side, bending the Stanza's rear axle. They both had to get new axles fitted and as Dunkerton got to service first he lost four minutes but as Aaltonen had to wait for his turn, he lost 36!!

The picture had now changed, with Fury just leading Waldegard, Dunkerton not far behind, and Aaltonen and Bond closer to each other, with the latter running through stages with alternator problems again.

Waldegard declared that he would 'now attack'! And attack he did and he took 41 seconds off Fury to retake the lead from the three Stanzas. After a service in Coffs Harbour, the Swede increased his lead over the next three stages but it then changed again when the Escort suffered the fate of the other Escorts when it snapped a rear axle. Waldegard struggled through the stage but lost eight minutes to Dunkerton, who was quickest.

Dunkerton was flying, was quickest over three stages, second three times, fourth twice and fifth once.

Once repaired, Waldegard had the Escort flying and he destroyed the times of the Stanzas, beating Fury by more than three minutes on the famous 'Horseshoe' and almost 90 seconds on the following stage.

Waldegard was quickest on the night with 9:22:28, 19 seconds faster than Fury (9:22:47), with Dunkerton on (9:31:10), Bond (10:12:40), Aaltonen (10:16:38), Tajima bouncing back with 10:38:27, then Johnson, Stewart and Portman, to round out the ten. Fury moved to the overall lead, less than two minutes to Waldegard and a further three minutes to Dunkerton. The rest didn't count in the race to be first. The scene was set for a tumultuous fight on the last night.



Bjorn Waldegard led the event for a long time in the Ford Escort RS1800

Back down the field, more drama was unfolding.

Portman and Stewart, in the big cars (Ford Cortina and Holden Commodore), were having a ding-dong battle and swapped positions all night long. Early in the division Portman had brake problems and the same problems to the suspension and engine mounts that had surfaced in the Repco Trial. Leven and Tajima were in the mix with these two, and Johnson was right behind, clinging to his sixth place, although the RX3 was sounding progressively more like a souped up lawn-mower with each passing stage.

There was a severe electrical storm with torrential rain over the forests and mountains. The leading crews made it through just before it started. Stewart passed Johnson and then was bogged so Johnson passed him; both Leven and Portman took a fair amount of time to get through the affected stages.



Doug Stewart/Col Parry in one of the 1979 Repco Reliability Trial Holden Commodores finished seventh



Geoff Portman/Ross Runnalls had some problems with the 1979 Repco Ford Cortina but finished ninth.

Former water ski champion Ron Marks, with Chris Heaney in the Datsun 120Y, had some experiences. A tie-rod broke after the car hit a stump, costing 37 minutes; the Halda broke down; rear brakes gave trouble; the car (or at least Marks) ran off the road; dust was a major problem (before the electrical storm); then getting through the boggy areas was a struggle; the service crew wasn't in place so the fuel level was too low to continue – at least until the Ford Team provided some fuel. As Marks said ..."otherwise we were having a good run"!!! He was 12th at the end of the night.

Six crews didn't finish the night, including Gary Meehan/Greg Gifford's Celica, which blew a differential; John Murray/Jeff Steven's Commodore broke its Halda, they became hopelessly lost and ran out of late time; Brian Hilton/Graham Roser's Celica had problems blowing tyres, then hit a gutter far too hard and damaged the steering box; the Datsun 1600 of Bob Clarke/Ray Stubbs broke a stub axle; Jean Jones/Joan Bennett were hopelessly bogged in their big Commodore and ran out of late time; so were Ted Knowles and David Officer in their Escort.



Ron Marks finished tenth in the Datsun 120Y

End of third division

1	George Fury	Monty Suffern	Datsun Stanza	14:33:56
2	Bjorn Waldegard	Hans Thorzelius	Ford Escort RS1800	14:35:29
3	Ross Dunkerton	Jeff Beaumont	Datsun Stanza	14:42:21
4	Rauno Aaltonen	Adrian Mortimer	Datsun Stanza	15:33:56
5	Colin Bond	John Dawson-Damer	Ford Escort RS1800	15:41:51
6	Frank Johnson	Steve Halloran	Mazda RX3	16:43:22
7	Doug Stewart	Col Parry	Holden Commodore	16:45:19
8	Gordon Leven	Robbie Wilson	Datsun 1600 SSS	16:46:22
9	Geoff Portman	Ross Runnalls	Ford Cortina	16:51:33
10	Nobuhiro Tajima	Kiyoshi Kawamura	Toyota Levin	16:56:59

Division Four

It was still anyone's rally, as regards the first three placings, when the cars headed off on the fourth and last division.

Both Fury (first on the road) and Waldegard poured on the pace right from the start and for some stages the positions had not changed. Then, at a tricky corner where the road went to the left but appeared to go straight on, Waldegard left the road. However, he managed to plough his way through the undergrowth and continue on the right course, picking up 50 seconds on Fury. At the Kempsey service Waldegard needed new rear shock absorbers, and Fury had a gearbox replaced it had jammed in second gear on the previous special stage.

But on the stage after service disaster really struck Ford. A short way into the stage Waldegard passed Fury changing a flat wheel and must have felt confident he had regained the lead. Then a few kilometres further his Escort's differential broke, too far away from the service crew to reach him before time ran out. So, Fury undisputedly took the lead. So the Stanzas cruised to a one-two-three win whilst the Escort of Bond came home in sixth.

Bond had Halda problems at one time and took a wrong turn, only to reappear back on course some minutes later. He then found Portman firmly stuck in the scenery. He tried to pull him free but it was useless, and Portman lost around 30 minutes winching the Cortina back onto the road.

Over the night Fury was fastest with 6:02:13, followed by Dunkerton (6:06:59), Aaltonen (6:20:17), Bond (6:23:28), followed by Johnson (6:34:51), Tajima (6:35:27), Leven (7:00:08), Marks (7:00:25) and Portman (7:14:03).

Behind the leaders, Frank Johnson was holding his own in (now) fifth place in the RX3, with Tajima (Levin) now only just behind him, having made a tremendous move up the leader board from tenth overnight (and being sixth fastest in this last division); Doug Stewart (Commodore) was lying seventh ahead of Gordon Leven (Datsun 1600) and Geoff Portman (Cortina), despite suspension problems resulting from putting a wheel into a bank on a muddy patch and being lost for a little time (navigator Parry was better known as a driver!).



Ever-consistent West Australian Frank Johnson took his Mazda RX3 to fifth place

Marks and Blair were fighting for tenth placing, with Mecak not far behind, and then the rest were hanging on just to finish.

With the demise of Waldegard, fastest on the night went to Fury with 6:02:13, then Dunkerton on 6:06:59, followed by Aaltonen (6:20:17), Bond (6:23:28), Johnson (6:34:51), Tajima (6:35:27), then Stewart, Leven, Marks and Portman.

In all 17 crews finished.

Final Placings

1	George Fury	Monty Suffern	Datsun Stanza	20:36:09
2	Ross Dunkerton	Jeff Beaumont	Datsun Stanza	20:49:20
3	Rauno Aaltonen	Adrian Mortimer	Datsun Stanza	21:53:53
4	Colin Bond	John Dawson-Damer	Ford Escort RS1800	22:05:19

5	Frank Johnson	Steve Halloran	Mazda RX3	23:18:13
6	Nobuhiro Tajima	Kiyoshi Kawamura	Toyota Levin TE25	23:32:26
7	Doug Stewart	Col Parry	Holden Commodore	23:41:35
8	Gordon Leven	Robbie Wilson	Datsun 1600 SSS	23:46:30
9	Geoff Portman	Ross Runnalls	Ford Cortina	24:05:36
10	Ron Marks	Chris Heaney	Datsun 120Y	24:36:41
11	Steve Blair	Ross Ferguson	Datsun Stanza	24:37:08
12	Gary Mecak	Graeme Gillies	Mazda RX2	24:44:29
13	Ted Knowles	David Officer	Ford Escort RS2000	25:27:18
14	Paul Bramble	Arthur Evans	Mitsubishi Galant	25:40:43
15	Ron Cremen	Alan Brooke	Datsun 120Y	25:57:11
16	Eichi Suzuki	Masashi Tan	Mitsubishi Lancer	26:12:39
17	Jim Casey	Les Oliver	Ford Escort RS2000	26:37:43

EVENT SIDELINES

Dan White as Competitor

Dan White, Road Director of the Southern Cross International Rally from 1972 to 1977, was driving his Ford Escort RS2000 very well only to have clutch failure towards the end and, although he eventually completed the course, could not be classified as a finisher as he exceeded the late time limit – and no doubt the ghosts of many, many competitors who participated in the event during Dan's directing years felt a sense of justice had been served!!!!!

Summary of 1979 Event

Quote from Australian Motor Racing Yearbook, page 206: *"Not a great Southern Cross International Rally but a close struggle for most of the way. A well-run event with excellent scoring and a demanding route. But a most important factor was lacking – public interest on the scale needed to bring in a major sponsor. Until both are found, the future of the rally as a major international event lies in the balance."*

PHOTOGRAPHS



Ed Knowles and David Officer in their Escort RS2000



Unleashed Fury. The winner in typical style



Waldegard provided spectators with a brilliant driving exhibition