

Grudge Match

Words by John Stoneham.

Photos by various.



Stoney trying to find a car park in the main street of Hay in his Clubman GT - 1972

A one-off event as revenge for a drunken party, led to the start of one of Australia's iconic motorsport events.

In 1968 the NSW Mini Car Club tried to knock out the South Aussie competitors in the Caltex Mini Monte Rally, by trying to get them drunk the night before the final event motorkhana. It didn't work, but the SA club challenged the Sydney boys to another motorkhana six weeks later, half way between the two cities; at a God-forsaken place called Hay.

By the time the last competitors arrived at Bankstown Square shopping centre after the last of the Mini Monte's road stages, the South Australian Mini club had a brace of competitors in the top 20.

Led by the legendary "Rooster" Vaughan, the NSW Club mafia deliberately set a plan in motion to sabotage the crowd-eaters, by plying them with alcohol at the night party so they would be unable to perform in the final day's motorkhana.

It only worked on one competitor – ME – I dropped from 10th to 13th, because of a hangover from a drinking game our Sydney "friends" called "Signs".

The SA crew of Adelaide BMC dealer Dave Potter and Jack Lock won the event outright, followed by a rash of other place awards and team trophies going to the Southern State – much to the horror of the NSW Mini Club.

The whole event was an absolute hoot, under the brilliant directorship of Gus Staunton. The South Aussie and NSW clubs really struck a camaraderie nerve, that was to flourish as a Drinking Team with a rally problem.

Sadly because of the Rum Corps attitude of the NSW Police department, road rallying was banned from 1968 onwards, and the Mini Monte concept would never return.

However, I was still smarting that NSW boys got me sloshed the night before the motorkhana, and on the long drive home, in a very tired Mini Deluxe, I plotted revenge.

In correspondence to new-found friends Tony French (NSW president), and other deviates like Graham Uttley and Rooster Vaughan, I suggested that a "rematch"



I once drank a fish this big! - Stoney, 1968.

should happen, to see if They would like to have another shot at beating Us.

It would be a one-off event, as soon as possible, before we sobered up and forgot everyone's names.

Under a cloak of indifference I opened a map of SA-NSW and pointed to about mid-way between Sydney and Adelaide. The location was a truck stop called Hay, about 475 miles from Adelaide and 430 from Sydney.

This is where the clash of Mini testosterone would happen. Oddly enough, it was only an afterthought to extend an invitation to the Victorians, but they seemed to be wounded beyond repair after the Monte.

The gauntlet was thrown down and one month after the Easter 1968 Mini Monte, a date was announced for the inaugural Hay Motorkhana "Challenge" to be held on the very next long weekend, which happened to be June, for the Queen's Birthday.

The wounds from the Monte were still raw, so why not strike while the iron was hot? There was no time to travel to Hay to arrange a motorkhana site or check the standard of accommodation.

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Hatching plans for 1969? Stoney at left.



Rod Morris, 1968, making a dust screen.