

*Darniche 'tiptoes' across the very slippery Sopotka main street during the "Speed test." The team are now off on holiday before preparations begin for the Tour de France.*

# Holiday time

our hundred and sixty points now stand to the credit of Bernard Darniche in the European Championship after his latest win, on the Polish Rally. His nearest rival, Ari Vatanen has a lowly score of 170 whilst other challengers have considerably fewer points. The Chardonnet team have satisfied their own demanding standards and have announced that now it is time for a holiday before preparations begin for the Tour de France in September. Darniche and Mahe have now won eight international championship rallies this year with their first blue Lancia Stratos.

Spanish driver Antonio Zanini finished second for the second year running, whilst third place went to a surprising entry, the Czechoslovakian Skoda of Vaclav Blahna, which naturally won the G2 category and Darniche won five of the 50-odd special stages.

The group one category went to the Belgian entered Opel Kadett GT/E of Guy Colsoul who was eventually awarded sixth place overall after some confusion about the times at the end.

Not many rallies can claim to be celebrating their 10th anniversary these days, but this is just one of the typical surprises that will greet an enthusiast visiting Poland. Apart from a few relatively minor problems, most of which only manifested themselves at the finish, the rally was very well run. Another surprise was the computer-produced results applied at the finish, although this excellent service did not readily compensate for the inaccurate supply of results during the event.

The rally this year started at 10am on Friday morning and proceeded almost non-stop until 10pm on Friday evening. There was one one-hour and one half-hour halt, but this apart it was an unrelenting struggle for any competitor who suffered any form of trouble with his car.

The stages themselves were mainly asphalt, and cars were faster than many would have preferred, but the main challenge came from the weather. With its remarkable fickleness the weather would change in minutes. There were many accidents due to the slippery surfaces.

Most of the stages were repeated many times which allowed for repeated training. Darniche, the current master of the quick practice, spent two days although he was a bit confused by the lack of accurate maps and could not make notes of all the stages. The nearest stage about one hour away from Wroclaw, the rally was, but the furthest stage was less than two hours. The real danger of rallying in Poland are the trees that line the roads. These are completely unyielding and a car that leaves the road and hits one is due for a serious accident.

Earlier this year there had been a fatality on a road event for this reason, and on this rally there was another. The rally was held in the south-western part near the borders with Czechoslovakia, in hilly very beautiful countryside.

ECR EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP 25  
POLISH RALLY

## ENTRY

Around 100 entries were received. Factory entries came from SEAT (two 124 Especials) for Zanini and Canellas, three Skoda 130RS (plus two others from the Barum team), the Russian Lada and Moskvich cars, three Polski-Fiat 126P and one 126P (entered in the 600cc G2 class, a real scourge for the Trabants!) and the Wartburgs, but perhaps the strongest challengers were the other cars, like the semi-official Stratos of Darniche, the private Stratos of Jaroszewicz, the RS1800 (David Sutton built) of Spanish driver Beny Fernandez and the private Eastern European cars. Of these the two Poles Blazej Krupa and Jerzy Landsberg, who this year have been rallying in various countries in Europe, East and West, were the most experienced. Krupa had a Renault 5 Alpine and Landsberg a 17 Gordini.

## RALLY

Trying to follow the events on a rally like the Polish is somewhat problematical! There came stories of amazing adventures, some of which were true and others false. Immediately came rumours that Jaroszewicz had crashed. This seemed to have been a confusion. He had had an accident during training (he was showing the Polski-Fiat 126P driver how to drive at speed when he himself went off the road!) but surely the Polish Lancia man could not have destroyed two Stratos within a week? The wreckage was removed as quickly as possible, so nobody could say whether the damage was serious or not, but it quickly became evident that he had retired through an accident.

Then came stories of more. Frenchmen Andre Kempf/Roland Spitz had gone off the road in their Ascona and needed an ambulance, then later the Bulgarian, Boris Radickov, left the road in his Lada, hit a tree and sadly no ambulance would be able to give him any help. With all these stories circulating the rally office at Wroclaw, anything might well be true.

Who was leading? Before Darniche's time had been corrected it seemed that Jaroszewicz had been ahead and after that Fernandez, but later it seemed that after the second stage Darniche was in fact pulling ahead steadily. Fernandez was certainly going well, he was ahead of the two team-SEATs, whilst Servia was in miseries with fuel pump problems. Stasis Brundza with his very racy looking Lada was in no better shape. He had a broken float chamber which led to misfiring and eventually a backfire which set fire to the engine compartment.

We talked afterwards to this Russian rally master and asked how many of these super looking Ladas there were. "As many as I want", he replied. How many actually exist? "Actually two at the moment!"

After 12 stages the rally came to a town called Sopotka. Here there was a 'speed test', which in reality was a race around a 3km loop in the town itself. It began to rain, but nevertheless the 40,000 spectators stayed rigidly to their vantage points through it all. Darniche arrived first and had the best

of the conditions. Gradually the surface became more slippery. From here the rally headed south again and into the night. Darniche was now safely ahead, leading Fernandez by 24 minutes. Then came Zanini, Canellas, Blahna and the first Polish driver, Landsberg.

The best Polski-Fiat, Stawowiak, was seventh but soon he was going to be in problems. A rear caliper broke and in turn the wheel studs snapped as well. It was a long and difficult job to change the halfshaft. Then when this was sorted out he had alternator failure and had to drive through the night with a supply of batteries changed at every service point.

Then Landsberg had even worse problems. He arrived at a corner on stage 21, braked—and the pedal went to the floor. He was committed to going off the road and the car was badly damaged. His second rally running (the other being the Antibes) had ended when he had crashed thanks to the same problem.

Just after dawn the cars arrived back in Wroclaw for a short break before the restart. Subject to various errors being resolved, the order was like this: Darniche 11587.8, Fernandez 11971.7, Zanini 12159.1, Blahna 12558.3, Havel (Skoda) 12631.0, Krupa (the best Pole) 12666.3, Canellas 12755.4 and Vovkowsz (a Russian with a Lada) at 12766.6.

The pattern of the first half was to be repeated. Rain, sun, rain, sun. Fernandez's car sounded a little sick at the start of stage 33 and then it did not appear at the end of 34. Eventually came the news that the unlucky Spaniard had in fact gone off the road and was out. Zanini was up to second, once again with only a Stratos ahead. Canellas was in problems with missing second and third gears, and finally fourth went as well. Not only this but the organisers seemed to have found things to affect him. There was a report that his exhaust had broken. 100 points were awarded against him. Aguilera, the team's service manager, reminded the organisers that this was a scrutineering penalty, and that the scrutineers had said that both the team's cars were good. No go, 100 points.

Then, another blow! A one-minute time control penalty. "Please may we see the time card, to check? Ferrater says he lost no time at all".

"No, you may not see it, penalty 60 points".

More after-event problems were to come. Havel was no better off. Having restarted with part of the front of his Skoda missing, he then had a deadshort in the electrics and had to retire. Colsoul moved up the field, even though now he was driving simply '50%' and when the provisional results were announced he was fifth. He appeared to have a real 'flier' on stage 37, where most of the penalties appeared to be a jumble, but without warning, a fresh set of penalties for this stage were announced, after the prizegiving, which put him back to sixth.

By general consent the Polish Rally, 1977 edition, had been considerably better than previous years, and apart from the matter of handling, the results were excellently run. Darniche returned to France having virtually achieved his championship after only seven months had elapsed.

MARTIN HOLMES

### 37th Polish Rally

ECR coeff 4 round 28 7-8 July 1977

1. B. Darniche/A. Mahe (Lancia Stratos) 18455.8;
  2. A. Zanini/J. Ferrater (SEAT 124 Especial) 19314.1;
  3. V. Blahna/L. Hlavka (Skoda 130RS) 19754.3;
  4. B. Krupa/P. Mytekowski (Renault 5 Alpine) 20268.3;
  5. J. Sevelinge/A. Jeannard (Opel Kadett GT/E) 20270.1;
  6. Guy Colsoul/Alein Lopes (Opel Kadett GT/E) 20306.5;
  7. Salvador Canellas/Daniel Ferrater (SEAT 124 Especial) 20368.4;
  8. Jiri Sedivy/Jiri Janacek (Skoda 130RS) 20410.4; 9. Siergiej Vovkowsz/Wiktor Moakowski (Lada 2101) 20827.0; 10. Leo Pavlik/Oldrich Gotbarek (Skoda 130RS) 20885.7.
- ECR championship: Darniche 480; Vatanen 170; Brookes 120; Coleman 116; Fernandez 106; Pond 101; Zanini 84; Altenheimer 76 etc.
- Fastest on stages: Darniche 37; Blahna 5; Fernandez, Zanini and Stawowiak 4; Canellas 2; Krupa 1.