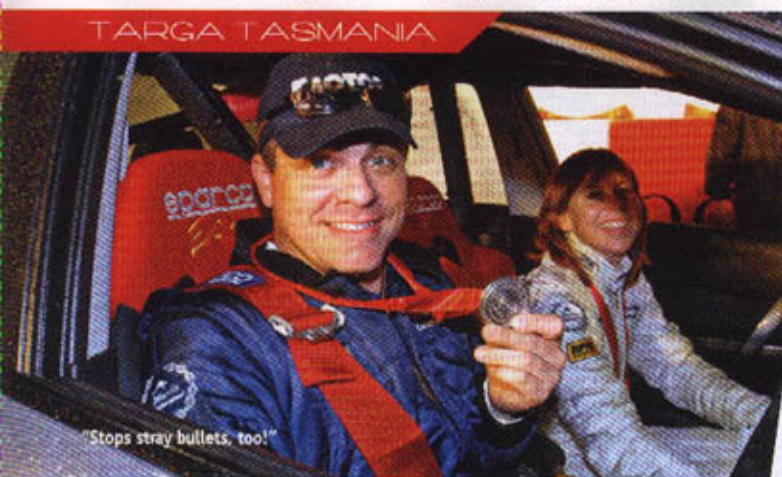




TARGA TASMANIA



"Stops stray bullets, too!"

LEG FIVE



'H': MR MAZDA

Allan Horsley's Mazda Motorsport handles everything from special projects (RX-7 SP, MX-5 SP) to race programs, often in conjunction with long-time rotary expert Jon Waterhouse. Horsley's motorsport pedigree is long, with a reputation for forthrightness and irascibility, the latter unfounded during Targa. While inextricably linked to Mazda since he managed Allan Moffat's successful RX-7 touring program in the early-'80s, he started racing in the '60s in a homemade 500cc openwheeler at Tarrawingee, raced Holden, Jaguar and Peugeot touring cars in the '60s/'70s before his last racecar, a 656kW tank engine open wheeler. He even built 25 turbo Mazda 929s, and dubbed the MX-929. His highlight is presiding over a fourth consecutive 12 Hour GT-P victory with Dick Johnson and John Bowe in an RX-7 SP, designed and built by Mazda Motorsport Australia.



The Mazda crew were impounded for being over-enthusiastic

Drake grabs a can of tyre sealant and a compressor and they make the start with seconds to spare. The mousse-filled Dunlop is only rated to 80km/h but the MPS will soon be topping 200 heart-in-mouth km/h. On the monster, the technical 47km Mount Arrowsmith stage, six or seven cars are crashed, one even upside down, but 5km before the finish, the prayed-for rain finally arrives. It's a treacherous deluge and Evans makes the most of it, placing 23rd.

On the 6.6km Tarraleah, stage 42 of 44, it's raining and the first full wet stage. But instead of setting a fast time, the MPS gets its first body modification on a slippery corner when the MPS clouts the rear into the Armco. It's a close call, and they lose 10 seconds and still finish the stage in 28th. Six cars later, an Evolution VI noses in and crashes out.

"On Mt Arrowsmith, ten corners from the end in the wet, dufus driver spins and we lose 10 seconds. We're 23rd fastest instead of 18th. On Tarraleah, I was pushing maybe six-tenths and we slowed for a 90-degree right with a 'caution bump'. I was crawling, but there must have been oil or something because I hit the brakes and it just went straight on. We were facing an Armco and weren't going to stop, so I ganked the handbrake and backed it in. - DE

Evans and Drake relatively cruise through the final two stages and to the finish in Hobart, from 58th overnight, they move up to 39th outright and, most importantly, first in class! On debut, the MPS has beaten all the production Mitsubishi Evos, Subaru WRXs and Porsches on one of the sternest tarmac tests anywhere in the world - delete the fuel problem, and it would have placed 24th. The 15th running of Targa Tasmania also proves to be the driest, from 450 competitive kilometres, it's wet for just 15 klicks. It's a top effort.

"If you really want to get your teeth into driving fast for a long time, this is it," observes Dean. "But there are just so many ways to stick it in!" The last word goes to Horsley. "I think Dean drove brilliantly; he didn't put a foot wrong. And Lyndall did a great job, too. The car was a huge surprise to us, it went better than we expected." And better than I expected. The victorious but battle-scarred MPS goes home to Sydney on the boat, and not in Evans' check-in luggage. And it rains in Tasmania for the entire next week. **LA**



"I couldn't find the boot release, so, you know, I improvised..."