

COMPETITION

FALCON AND VALIANT INVADE EUROPE

American compacts dwarf some European competitors, run for wins in the Monte Carlo Rally

by Charles Nerpel, *Editor*

NOW THAT AMERICAN auto makers are competing in the world market, it's logical that they compete in European performance contests. Ford Motor Company wet its feet at the Monte Carlo Rally last year with their Falcon Sprints. They were back again this year for the 33rd running of the World's Longest Road Race. However, they weren't the only American-built entries in the '64 rally. Chrysler Corporation chose this event as the competition baptismal for their new V-8-powered Valiants.

Since the first Monte Carlo Rally in 1911, European car

manufacturers have used this rugged test of speed, handling, and endurance to promote the performance of their cars. A win at Monte was a *real* win, with cars and drivers fighting for points over winding, icy roads, drifting snow, and night driving through this mixture, with dense fog blanketing some dangerous mountain stretches.

There were nine starting points for the 1964 rally: Paris, Oslo, Frankfurt, Glasgow, Lisbon, Monte Carlo, Athens, Warsaw, and Minsk. Routes from these points wind around central Europe with as near-equal mileage lengths as possible. The routes are corrected as to speed and average time to eliminate handicaps from any one starting point. Average speed is calculated at 37 mph over open roads, except for



Bo Ljungfeldt's skill on snow-covered speed sections like this one gave Ford Falcon Sprint a second-place-overall position.



Small wheels and low horsepower were no handicap in the snow to driver Paddy Hopkirk in his top-winning BMC Mini-Cooper-S.



Team driver Scott Harvey wheels the V-8-powered Valiant over the curving Grand Prix course in the spa city of Monte Carlo.



Sleep where you can is the rule for Valiant team navigator. Valiant team captain Scott Harvey is 1963 SCCA rally champ.

PLYMOUTH VALIANT V-8 NEGOTIATES A SNOW-COVERED PASS AT SPEED. AIDS HERE ARE STUDDED TIRES, GREAT DRIVING SKILL, STEEL NERVES.



MONTE CARLO RALLY *continued*

the speed sections, where the roads are closed for flat-out runs over five sections.

All rally routes converge at Reims, France, and then take a common course along the 800 miles to the finish at Monaco. The speed sections along this 800-mile route are some of the toughest in the world. Narrow roads cut into mountain slopes have neither guard rails, guide lines, nor markers. Ice and snow make traction impossible without special studded tires, and the course demands skill and nerve that defy explanation.

The total width of two-lane roads, one each way, in this mountainous section is equal to about 1½ normal American traffic lanes. European cars are scaled down to this width, but American compacts on these highways look as big as locomotives. Fortunately, the snow hazard was lighter along these sections than they were in 1963. But hurtling heavy cars along an unfamiliar, narrow road that may be ice-coated or obscured by fog around the next switchback isn't for the unskilled or faint-hearted.

Surviving this section of the rally is quite a feat in itself. Of the 299 cars that started, 272 made it to Reims, but the last night of the fourth-day, 800-mile final leg took its toll. Only 72 cars were without penalty, and 105 were abandoned along the route.

The final phase, three laps against the clock around the famous Monte Carlo Grand Prix course, had to be completed by the 120 top finishers of the road rally section. No repair work of any kind (except tire changes) is permitted between the rally's end and the hot-lap section of the event.

European car makers, using Finnish and Swedish drivers who're used to driving on snow and ice, have been participating and winning this rally for years. Chrysler and Ford entered their teams in this maze of tough competition. Ford had eight well prepared and managed Falcons. Chrysler entered three V-8 Valiants under the direction of Scott Harvey, a Chrysler engineer who's SCCA American National Rally Champion for 1963.

Despite the fact that the Valiants were well prepared, the Finnish drivers of one car went out along the high-speed mountain section, leaving the two remaining cars to battle the long road of experience (or lack of it). Harvey and his navigator, Gene Henderson, finished 88th, while the Valiant team of Jarman and Reiger placed 146th.

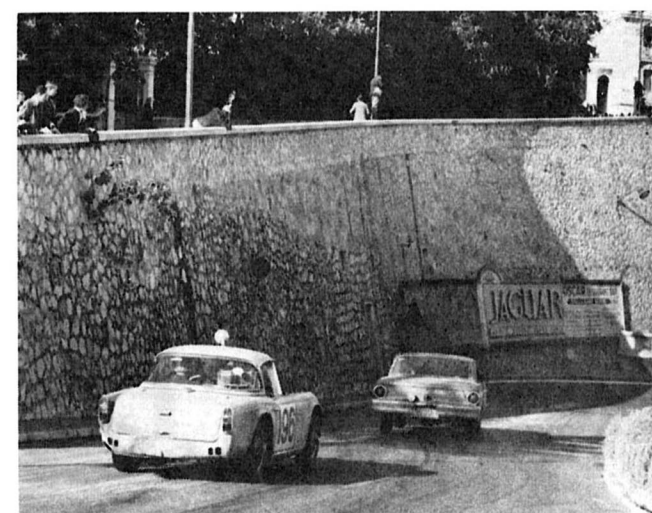
With a year's experience under its belt, the Ford team distinguished itself with brilliant driving and a list of class wins under the capable hands of Swedish driver Bo Ljungfeldt. He repeated his Class Eight win of 1963 and took home five trophies: Best in Class, Fastest Time over five of the six special stages, Fastest Time on Grand Prix Circuit, NASCAR trophy for highest-placed American car, and Highest Finish for a Swedish driver. Falcons also finished third, fifth, and sixth in Class Eight, and the female team of Anne Hall and Denise McCluggage took first in Class Five for modified cars with the same engine displacement as Class Eight, 289 cubic inches.

Who was the top winner overall? A tiny British-built BMC Mini-Cooper-S, driven by Irishman Paddy Hopkirk. No newcomer to racing or rallying, Hopkirk was third overall in the 1963 Monte, won the Tour de France event last year, placed in the top three in the Alpine Rally in 1960 and '61, won the two-liter class at Le Mans last year, and is well known on the American racing courses of Sebring and Riverside.

American auto makers learned a lot at Monte Carlo. They showed a willingness to play, win or lose, in someone else's unfamiliar backyard. Both Chrysler and Ford teams were well prepared, enthusiastically accepted, and will undoubtedly be back there next year for another try at the world's toughest road race.



British driver Peter Harper corners one of the team Falcons around rugged Monte Carlo course in final phase of the rally.



Ford Falcon's superior acceleration made passing possible on very short straightaways of Monte Carlo Grand Prix circuit.



Erik Carlsson won last year, finished third this year by wheeling his Saab around like this through the entire course.