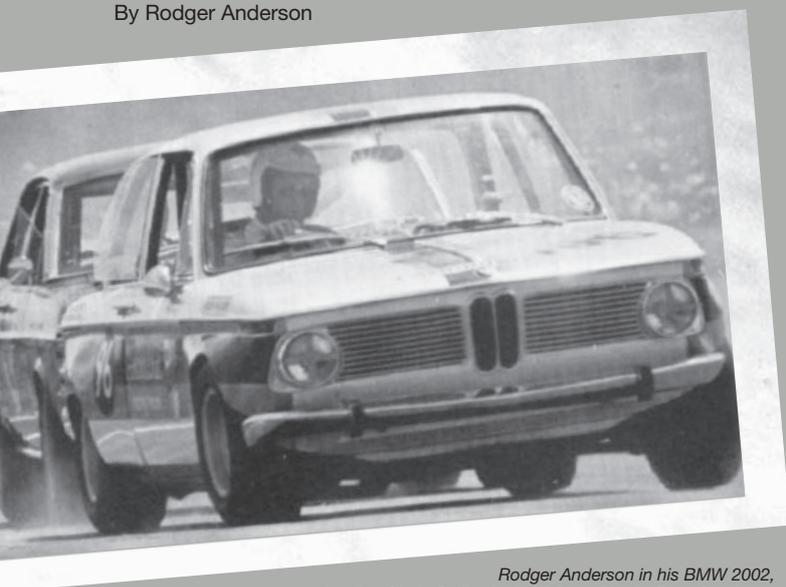




WINNING WITH BMW IN NEW ZEALAND

— THE 1970s AND THE BMW 2002 Ti ALPINA

By Rodger Anderson



Rodger Anderson in his BMW 2002, leading Clyde Collins in the Falcon. Photo: Euan Sarginson

My memory of the BMW 2002 Ti Alpina I owned and raced in the New Zealand 1969/70 and 1970/71 seasons are that it was a wonderful car. I had just finished two seasons racing a Mini Cooper with a 1000cc engine in my NZ Championship-winning 1967/68 season and a 1275cc in 1968/69. I needed a new car. With the help of Ross Jensen of Ross Jensen Motors in Newmarket, Auckland, I purchased a new BMW 2002 from the BMW factory in Germany. The car was a standard 2002, fitted with twin Solex carbs and a 2.0 litre engine, giving only 120bhp — which was less power than my 1275cc Mini. I travelled to Germany to collect my new 2002, and spent three months in Kaufbeuren working with Alpina at their factory. At Alpina, my brand-new but standard BMW 2002, which came with an optional extra Limited Slip Diff, was upgraded to Group 5 power and specs — inlets, valves, cams, oil-ways, suspension, and many other parts were all worked on until not much of the original 2002 was left. The car arrived back in New Zealand in time for the 1969/70 racing season.

Back in New Zealand, the 2002 was race-prepared and painted in the colours of the Cambridge Racing Team.

My first race meeting in the BMW 2002 was the Rothmans Gold Star meeting at Pukekohe on 21 September 1969, and to my delight I got first place in the class for 1001cc–4200cc cars, as well as a class lap record. Round 2 of the National Saloon Car Championship was held at Baypark on 4 October 1969, and I was delighted to win again. I raced at Pukekohe in a 0cc–5500cc 12-lap event supporting the Benson and Hedges 500 at Pukekohe on 19 October, and finished second to Red Dawson in his Mustang. On 16 November 1969 I was off to Baypark for Round 3 of the championship, but I don't recall any results for this event.

After Baypark, we travelled to Levin for the meeting held on 29 November 1969. Phil Myhre was a crew member for me,

Jim Richards's #102 Carney Escort and Rodger Anderson's BMW 2002 Ti in a dead heat at Baypark, 1970



having spent time with the team preparing my car. Phil came with me for our first event at Levin, and recalls 'we dropped the 2002 off the trailer on the Desert Road and I [Phil] had a superb quick 10 kilometres in it on the open road, thanks to Randers'. Of course, Officer, I cannot recall the event and cannot confirm such conduct took place. Although I was third-fastest in practice at Levin, a head gasket failed, the engine overheated, and I withdrew for the day — one of very few problems I had with the 2002. We later found that a special head gasket should have been used, not the standard 2002 part that we used.

I was back at Levin for the international meeting on 3 January 1970, and secured a fifth place overall in a qualifying six-lap race, behind the Coppins Camaro, the Sprague Escort Twin-cam, the Riley Mustang, and the Nazer Escort Twin-cam, and ahead of the Collins Falcon. The big race for me that day was a 12-lapper, where again I was placed fifth, this time behind the Riley and Coppins Mustangs and the Nazer and Sprague Twin-cam Escorts, and once again ahead of Collins in the Falcon.

From the outset I thought that my BMW would be quicker on the straights than the Escort Twin-cams, including Jim Richards in the 'Carney' Escort — a car that had won the British Touring Car title — and that the Twin-cams would be quicker than me on the twisty bits. However, race experience showed the opposite to be true. In one race at Baypark I had a ding-dong battle with Jim all through the race. We approached the chequered flag locked together, and my crew thought I had won the race. Peter Hanna, the promoter at Baypark, called both Jim and I to race control. I thought we must have been in trouble: but, no — Peter said that the officials were unable to decide who had taken the flag first, so 'how about we call it a dead heat?' Jim and I agreed and shook on the result. Later, Peter Hanna, in his usual generous manner, paid us both first-prize money. To my knowledge that dead heat is probably the only one ever recorded in a New

Zealand points-scoring championship race.

On 18 April 1970, I was back at Levin for the deciding race of the 1001cc–4200cc class of the National Touring Car Championship. A gruelling 17-lapper resulted in a most rewarding first-place finish, together with a class lap record (55.8 seconds). With the win, I was very pleased to take the Championship on 42 points, ahead of Gary Sprague in his Escort Twin-cam with 38 points, and Jim Richards in his Escort Twin-cam with 32.

I raced the 2002 again in the 1970/71 season, but by now the Escort Twin-cams were really the class leaders. We did no development for the season, and, although I managed a couple of second places, we finished third overall in the 1001cc–4200cc class of the National Saloon Championship. I was a long way behind points leader Jim Richards, who won every race in his Escort Twin-cam. Don Halliday was second in his Escort Twin-cam.

I sold the car to Steve Millen in 1972, and he fitted an American Rajay turbocharger to the engine — a year before the BMW 'works' fitted turbos to their own cars. I am told that while Steve's 2002 was very quick, the car with the turbo fitted was not very reliable. Steve's last race in the car was at the Singapore Grand Prix meeting in 1973, where he finished a fine second to Allan Moffat. Steve sold the 2002 to his friend Paul Swann, who raced it for the next couple of seasons.

I am very pleased to know that the car is now in the hands of a former president of the BMW Car Club of New Zealand — Alan Walker. Alan is undertaking a lengthy restoration of 'my' 2002Ti and intends to present it back in the Cambridge Racing Team livery it carried when I raced the car back in those two memorable seasons of 1970 and 1971.

Main photo: Rodger Anderson's 1969 BMW 2002 Ti Alpina, at Baypark in 1970. Photo: courtesy Jack Inwood/Bruce McLaren Trust