

DES WEST

Drove with and against some of the greatest names in Australian motorsport history.



In a career that spanned more than half a century, West consistently proved he was in the upper echelon of the sport. He first shot to prominence in 1953 when, with his father, West entered the Redex Trial. This negotiated nearly 10,500km through some of the toughest terrain in Australia the West's finished 19th from 197 entries.

Mt Panorama, Bathurst, is the spiritual home of motor racing in Australia. West competed in the Great Race in October on 13 occasions. Back in 1969, he finished third. A young driver who was also set to make a mark on Australian motor racing was his apprentice. His name was Peter Brock. West recalled the early days racing at Bathurst. It was a far cry from the slick production of today. "Back then, we were dodging potholes," he said.

West and his co-driver thought they had won the big race in 1968 in a Monaro. However, there was a discrepancy in the laps and the

matter ended up in court. Eventually it was awarded to Bruce McPhee.

In 1979, West completed the Repco Round Australia Rally. This is regarded as the toughest ever held in the country. West finished 13th outright. In 1993, he drove and navigated in the Lombard London to Sydney marathon. This covered 16,000km and 12 countries in 28 days. With George Reynolds he finished first in class in a VW. "We were a bit unlucky there," he said at the time, "our car was built for specific sections in Australia, but there had been a lot of rain in Western Australia and when we arrived there they had to bypass them."

He has driven in races, rallies, hill climbs and sprints. West also helped establish the Central North Coast Sporting Car Club in the Manning. In 2002 the Confederation of Australian Motor Sport (CAMS) presented him with the Service award for his involvement, dedication and

achievements. He has worked as an advisor on race cars for GMH, Ford and Chrysler.

West built his own cars for racing and rallying and later modified and rebuilt the motor for Peter Geoghegan's Mustang, which went on to win the Australian touring car championship on five occasions.

In 2010 he was invited to attend the 50th anniversary of the Holden Dealer Team and the Champions Brock Museum at Yeppoon where the Monaro GTS 350 he drove with Brock is on view in the entrance. He is a life member of the Australian Racing Drivers Club and an honorary life member of the VW Club of Bombay.

He was once asked which type of motor sport he preferred, "I don't care, as long as it's motor sport," he replied, "I just love it."

Des West lost a brave battle with cancer in 2013.