

# Run inquiry told of race 'mistake'



Mr James ... driving query

The Ferrari involved in a four-fatality crash in the NT Cannonball Run may have mistaken the position of the checkpoint, Darwin Coroners Court was told yesterday.

The car could have been travelling as fast as 270 km/h a few kilometres from the checkpoint when it passed a Porsche, the navigator of the Porsche said.

He estimated the Ferrari's speed as 200 to 220 km/h "or more" when it began to brake coming in to the checkpoint.

But he believed the Ferrari driver could have pulled up easily had the car stayed on the bitumen highway and not gone into loose gravel at its edge.

## Sweeping

Bruce Robert Wallace, of Sydney, the navigator of the white turbo Porsche that was following the Ferrari, said the Ferrari slowed down about 7 km from the checkpoint.

There was a "triple caution" on this tight, sweeping bend with flag marshals waving yellow (caution) flags.

Mr Wallace said he believed the Ferrari crew thought they were approaching the checkpoint and slowed "well in excess" of what was necessary to negotiate the bend.

Their Porsche, doing about 220 km/h to maintain an average of 200 km/h for that competitive section, passed the Ferrari.

Mr Wallace said when they were decelerating to 120 km/h, as required before the checkpoint, the Ferrari came up behind and passed them about 1 km before the checkpoint.

He said: "There was a slight crest before the checkpoint and it was not until you came to the top that you saw it.

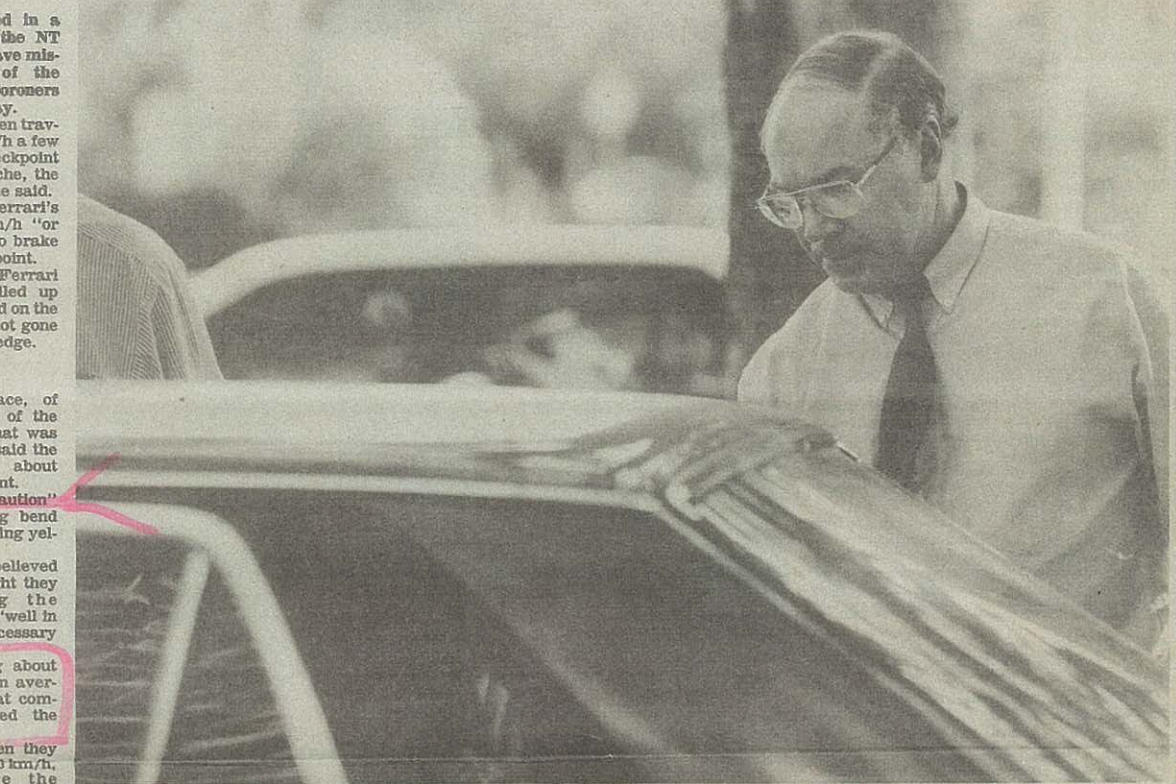
"His (the Ferrari's) brake lights came on as soon as he saw that.

"I would estimate he was travelling at 200 to 220 km/h when he started to brake."

Mr Wallace said Run organiser Allan Moffat arrived at the checkpoint very soon after the crash and "took control".

He said Mr Moffat had managed to get the Ferrari's bonnet open and disconnect the battery to turn the engine off.

Questioned by John Waters, counsel for Mr Moffat and his company Raceage, Mr Wallace said those at the scene were con-



ABOVE: Allan Moffat yesterday ... the coroners court was told he "took over" at the Cannonball Run crash scene, disconnecting a battery lead to stop the crashed car's engine from running

## 270 km/h speed possible: witness

cerned the Ferrari's engine was running while fuel or oil was coming out of the rear.

Mr Wallace was the first witness to give evidence at the inquest into four men who died when their Ferrari F40 skidded into a checkpoint about 95 km south of Alice Springs on May 24.

Those who died were Japanese competitors, Ferrari driver Akihiko Kabe, 40, navigator Takeshi Okano, 35, and voluntary Run officials, Territorians Keith Pritchard, 31, and Tim Linklater, 22.

The inquest before Coroner John Lowndes is due to continue to-

day, with witnesses giving evidence of the actual crash.

Counsel assisting the coroner Michael Adams QC said Mr Kahlbetzer, the Porsche driver, was overseas but was returning to give evidence early next week.

## Old lady

Mr Lowndes disallowed a question from counsel for the Pritchard family Geoff James, who wanted to ask Mr Wallace if he heard remarks about Mr Kabe's driving, particularly by Mr Pritchard.

To Mr James' question as to whether he

had seen Mr Kabe driving in a "risky" manner, Mr Wallace said he did not see him do anything silly.

Alice Springs resident John Ross Hayward told the court he was watching the fast cars in the Run go by on an unrestricted speed section of the Stuart Hwy, about 7 km south of Alice Springs airport.

He said two cars whizzed past "a little old lady in a little old car" who was doing 70 km/h to 80 km/h, also going south. She had pulled off the road after the cars passed at what he estimated was over 200 km/h.

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