

THE MODERN SPORTS LIGHT CAR *(Continued from page 550)*

reliable, competition motoring was by no means "plain sailing." For example, genuine racing cars, if not stabled at the Track, had to be taken there for practice and racing, and practically the only satisfactory method was at the end of a tow-rope behind another car of more ordinary pretensions. The "hotted-up" standard models could most likely be driven down—it depended upon how "hot" they were. But such journeys were seldom of the joy-ride order. Low-speed pulling and easy-starting qualities, previously beyond reproach, happily, succumbed to overlap valve-timing and high-compression pistons with big clearances. And plugs would either oil-up at every traffic stop, or, surviving this part of the run, would overheat very thoroughly on the open road. Some of these early "sports-racing" jobs may possibly have gained awards for their owners in reliability trials, but, generally speaking, the more suitable they were for Track racing, the more difficult it was to gain an award with the same car on a road course.

Fortunately conditions are now very different, and the amateur racing man of to-day, thanks to the all-round efficiency of the modern sports light car, has a vastly easier time. For some seasons past, a large proportion of the entry for B.A.R.C. events has consisted of ordinary sports light cars, of which the M.G. seems to be by far the most popular. It is a very fine tribute to Mr. Cecil Kimber and the craftsmen at Abingdon that these cars represent such a great advance over the early "sports-racing" type of car. Just think of it! They can be used for touring or pottering; for "my lady's" shopping trip in Town; or for the most arduous reliability trial work. And then, with no special attention, and little or no alteration, these M.G. products can be driven to the Track for a spell of serious racing. When they come down to Weybridge for practice their owners merely pause in the Paddock to tighten shock

absorbers and lower the screen, after which they go straight out for a spot of high-speed motoring. In the same way the cars can be driven down on the day of the race, stripped of road equipment, and they are in perfect order for their appointment with "Ebby." Any tuning modifications that *have* been effected are only done to satisfy an owner who is interested in this aspect of the pastime, and they are hardly ever of a very extensive nature. Prove that for yourself when next you wander round the Paddock! After the race meeting the road "additions" are replaced and in nine cases out of ten the car is in perfect trim for the homeward run, only a trace of racing numbers on the body panels or doors remaining as evidence of the day's hectic sport, which side of the machine's career would certainly never be suspected otherwise. An excellent example of this all-round ability of the better-class sports light car is provided by those hardy folk who spend active bank-holiday week-ends driving through a long-distance trial, and then turning up at Brooklands early on the Monday morning to round off a motoring holiday with a race or two on the concrete.

To those people who are anxious to take up racing at Brooklands—or, for that matter, road-racing at Donington or sprint-work—the all-round adaptability of the M.G. is a very real benefit. Apart from the fact that one car serves, as it were, for both business and pleasure, the amount of driving done in the ordinary way on the road will result in the driver feeling absolutely at home in the car when running on the Track. The position of the controls; the arrangement of the instruments on the dash, and the general feel of the car will all be perfectly familiar, which naturally makes for better and safer driving—in fact, "Safety Fast." Another factor worthy of consideration is that the standard racing model is properly backed by the makers' Service Station, whereas when a racing car of individual kind, or an extensively-altered sports car, experiences trouble, spares will very probably be difficult to obtain—they may even have to

be made up specially with the aid of drawings.

After all, it is rather comforting to be able to "wire" the makers and have a new part dispatched at once, after a spot of bother on the eve of a race. And that is only possible when the part concerned is absolutely standard. Moreover, it is pleasing to reflect that the various "odds and ends" that were inseparable from the racing car of earlier days—such as special "dopes"; obscure plugs, which alone would survive a race; odd-size tyres and rims; non-standard tools, etc.—can be conveniently forgotten when one races a more or less standard production job of recent date.

Even from the point of view of the manufacturer the racing of standard, or only slightly modified, cars has much to recommend it, a big reduction in expenses and a more practical advertising value being important points.

To what does one owe the amazing reliability and wonderful performance of the present-day sports light car? The modern sports car races, run under rules which became popular about seven years ago, have been largely responsible. The fact that cars entered for these contests have to be catalogue models, modified only along certain specified lines, has resulted in the very noticeable increase in efficiency and performance without sacrifice of desirable touring characteristics. The general adoption as standard equipment of such useful racing fittings as quick-action filler caps; rev. counters; folding screens; bonnet straps; spring-spoke steering wheels; underslung frames, etc., has also been due, in the main, to racing of the Tourist Trophy and Le Mans kind. The development of the supercharger—again a result of racing requirements—has assisted, providing as it does a big increase in power output and volumetric efficiency which could otherwise only be approached by the use of extreme overlap timing, quick-action cam contours, high compression ratios, and similar factors that ruin a car for road work. Incidentally, the M.G. Company has been well to the fore in the

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