

ENTHUSIASM DOWN UNDER—

—BEING A DESCRIPTION OF THE PERFORMANCE PUT UP BY AUSTRALIA'S FIRST K.3 MAGNETTE IN ITS FIRST ANTIPODEAN RACE—THE AUSTRALIAN GRAND PRIX RACE OF 1934

THE race for the Australian Grand Prix, a handicap event, took place on Monday, 19th March, in baking heat and clouds of dust.

The winner was one of the limit cars, a Singer driven by R. A. Lea Wright, who received no less than 35 minutes' start on an oblong course barely 200 miles in length, and which included corners necessitating sixteen gear changes on each of the 31 laps of the gruelling $6\frac{1}{4}$ miles long circuit.

Thus, the back-markers were set a terrific task. Nevertheless, Bill Thompson, driving what was to him a strange car—for his K.3 Magnette (the first ever seen in Australia) had only arrived at Melbourne the previous Thursday—ran into second place from the scratch mark only 10 seconds behind the winner, at an average speed of 77.8 m.p.h.—the fastest time for the race.

But for a pit stop of six minutes to adjust the throttle control, Thompson would undoubtedly have won.

M.G. cars also secured third, fourth and sixth places and

Thompson recorded the fastest lap at a speed of 83 m.p.h.

The Magnette was disembarked at Melbourne from the *Port Huon* on Thursday, 15th March, under the personal supervision of Mr. R. Lane, of Lane's Motors Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, who had imported it especially for the Grand Prix Race.

It was necessary to obtain special permission from the Customs Department to take delivery of the machine in view of the shortness of time between the arrival of the steamer and the day of the race. In order to help expedite delivery, Mr. Lane, accompanied by Mr. G. A. Lloyd, went specially to the wharf and would not leave the crate until such time as he had inspected the car himself.

Then followed many hours, both by day and by night, of hectic preparation and trials.

On the day of the race, Thompson found himself faced by tremendous opposition. He had to concede four minutes to a supercharged 1540 c.c. Bugatti, ten minutes to an unblown 1992 c.c. car of the same make, twelve



Unloading the K.3 from the "Port Huon" on its arrival at Melbourne Docks.

minutes to one 1496 c.c. unblown Bugatti, fifteen minutes to another, and as much as seventeen minutes to two others!

One 1087 c.c. Riley received thirteen minutes from him, and another was favoured to the extent of thirty-two minutes, while a Salmson of similar capacity had a start of nineteen minutes.

Twenty minutes was received by a supercharged Austin, and so it went on—a formidable proposition indeed!

The handicapping was such that Thompson was forced to drive throughout at tremendously high speeds under most unfavourable conditions. Clouds of dust and the narrowness of the road made it necessary for him to drive at the top of his performance, and in the words of one who witnessed the race:—

"When it is realised that the course is only $6\frac{1}{4}$ miles, which necessitated 31 laps and called for approximately 590 gear changes in the 200 miles, the performance put up by Thompson was certainly magnificent.

"I have had a great deal of

(Continued on page 428)



Close-up of Thompson at speed, showing the face protectors worn (even in the prevailing heat) by Australian drivers—such is the dust.