

They've broken records in a home-built racer

By LIANE MAXFIELD

STARTING with a charred junkyard wreck, "cannibalising" other cars, and "transplanting" many parts, a Brisbane doctor and his wife have built for themselves the fastest car of its model ever to hit the Australian motoring circuits.

Dr. Iain Corness and his attractive wife, Carole, completed the mammoth assembly job in a four-week whirlwind of welding, wiring, and testing in a makeshift garage under their Hawthorne home.

They worked at nights and weekends while fellow motoring enthusiasts said they had taken on a devil of a task, and harassed neighbors prayed for the return of peace and quiet.

The Cornesses bought the shell of an MGB — which is the B model of the famous MG marque — from a Brisbane junkyard.

The car had been stolen, completely stripped and burned.

They also bought front and rear suspensions from the yard.

The engine and gearbox

came from another MGB. More parts came from spare-parts dealers, other cars, and enthusiasts.

The results have been spectacular.

To date, Iain has broken the lap record at the picturesque Lakeside Motor Racing Circuit, 20 miles north of Brisbane, cutting the previous fastest speed by three seconds. His time was 67.1 seconds.

He has also knocked four seconds off the MGB lap record for the Surfers Paradise International Racing Circuit. His time was 29 seconds.

In the overall race at the circuit, in which a sophisticated English Lotus Elan took line honors, Iain roared past the checkered flag in third place.

"It was quite a fillip to get so close to victory in a home-built car against such heavy competition," he said.

In hill-climbing, Iain recently set a new class record at Mount Cotton of 53.7 seconds — a 4.5-second improvement.

Iain told me, after he had rushed in from his surgery to enjoy a delicious Spanish omelet Carole had made for lunch, that in hillclimbs the driver races solo against the clock.

Only one competitor is

allowed on the steep winding track at a time.



● Wearing fire-resistant overalls, Brisbane husband-and-wife racing team Dr. and Mrs. Iain Corness, of Hawthorne, stand beside their fiery, home-built MGB. Medical symbols for "man" and "woman" are embossed on one shoulder of each suit.

The Cornesses, who have been married three years, collected vital components — crankshaft, camshaft, pistons, and valves—during a prolonged honeymoon in England, where Iain completed his medical studies.

They estimate that complete assembly cost them roughly \$2000.

price assembly cost them roughly \$2000.

Iain was quick to point out that to buy the same high-performance parts in Australia would cost the earth.

Maintenance costs are also high. A family Holden can be completely outfitted with tyres for the price of one tyre on their iridescent avo-

tyre on their iridescent avocado MGB. Two different sets of tyres are required — for wet and dry conditions.

Racing gear

Their racing gear includes flame-resistant overalls — which look rather like boiler suits — specially made of treated fabric. On contact with severe heat or flames the overalls form a protective casing.

Neck-to-ankle underwear of the same materials as the overalls, or of wool, must be worn to stop burning overalls having contact with skin.

On July 1, the Confederation of Australian Motor

Sports, the ruling body, will make the use of these suits mandatory for all competitors.

To protect their eyes, Dr. and Mrs. Corness wear shatterproof goggles with polycarbonate lenses. Before these were introduced, several drivers had their eyesight badly injured in racing accidents.

They also wear gloves, face-masks, and socks made of double-layered synthetic fabric.

Iain and Carole make a dashing couple in their white overalls banded with avocado stripes.

Embossed on one shoulder of each suit is the medical symbol for "man" and "woman."

Carole can pull a car to bits and reassemble it as efficiently as any mechanically minded male. It was while she was mulling over the exploded engine of her Austin-Healey Sprite at a Queensland meeting that she and Iain became friends.

A gay, three-month romance followed. On their

A gay, three-month romance followed. On their wedding day, the bridal party motored to the Brisbane church in a cavalcade of sports cars.

Iain, now in general practice, has Carole as his receptionist. Their first "patient"

at the surgery was a scraggy black-and-white orphan kitten which wandered in out of the gutter looking sad.

Now handsome and arrogant, "Harry Lime," as they've called him, has developed the same passion for sports cars as his master and mistress.

He insists on hitching a ride with them when they go driving and whenever Iain is tinkering with their cars (he drives another MGB, Carole a Mini Minor), Harry Lime perches on the bonnet, boot, or driver's seat and casts a critical eye over the work.

The other feline member of the family, "Cammy" (for camshaft), reclines at the head of the car.

During a tour of inspection of the home-built car, Iain, accompanied by Harry Lime and Cammy, demonstrated how the doors open downward, like those on an oven, to rest in a horizontal position. They are supported by small cupboard hinges.

He explained that this eliminates unnecessary weight, which contributes to faster getaways from the starting line.

Lightweight aluminium replaces chrome. The bonnet is fibreglass.

Accidents

Iain and Carole never travel without safety belts. As a doctor, Iain has seen

travel without safety belts. As a doctor, Iain has seen many road-accident victims in the casualty departments of hospitals who could have escaped injury had they been wearing a lap-sash or shoulder harness—or a combination of the two.

"Then there are inexperienced drivers who have to prove they are world champions undiscovered when they give you a lift. They set out to scare the pants off you, racing at lunatic speeds round the city," Iain said.

"The racing driver realises the capabilities of his car and drives within his skills."

The Cornesses are firm advocates of defensive driving to lessen the road toll.

"For instance," Carole explained, "never presume that a car approaching a stop sign will stop. Always be on the lookout for the unexpected, and be prepared to act immediately."

"If more people scanned the road ahead, fewer accidents would occur. Too many drivers simply watch the car in front."

Among plans for the future, the energetic young pair hope to build, as Carole said, "a low-slung Spanish villa on acres and acres of land with an eight-car garage at the back."