

Gardner wins 2 rounds of title

Frank Gardner coolly won both rounds of the Australian sports sedan championship at Symmons Plains yesterday in his controversial white John Player Corvaire.

Tasmania's Tony Edmondson, in his familiar Ansett Charger, finished second in both races.

Gardner's Corvaire handled perfectly on the circuit, which is regarded by drivers as being hard on brakes.

The Corvaire raised cries of protest from the racing fraternity for its unconventional design.

Edmondson and New Zealand's Jim Richards were the only drivers to offer any threat to Gardner.

But bad luck forced Richards off the circuit in the second race.

Richards developed clutch trouble in the first race and could not repair it before the start of the second race.

He push started his Mustang and drove eight laps without a clutch before withdrawing.

Richards finished third in the first race. He did not gain championship points in yesterday's heat — the sixth in the seven-heat series — and dropped from second place to fourth.

Third place

Gardner's win pushed him into third place behind Edmondson and Allan Moffat.

Gardner has competed in only two heats of the series and could topple Edmondson in the final heat at Calder next month.

Moffat clearly leads in the series and cannot be defeated.

Gardner told the 15,000 spectators that Edmondson had him worried:

"It's young blokes like him that make old blokes like me older," said the middle-aged former five-times British champion.

Edmondson issued a challenge to Gardner and was with him from when the starter's flag dropped.

In both races Edmondson justified his boss Don Elliott's frantic race to Hobart on Saturday night to get a replacement differential for the Ansett Charger.

Elliott used 90 litres of petrol in his Rolls Royce to get the part. The Charger crew and Edmondson worked until 3 a.m. yesterday to get the machine ready.

Edmondson finished three



• Frank Gardner

seconds and four seconds respectively behind Gardner.

Both drivers had lapped the 23-car field almost midway through both races.

Richards featured well in the first of the 20-lap races until he slightly slackened pace in the 18th with clutch and brake trouble.

Pat Crea finished third, although a long way back, in the second race.

Gardner said his car, with lightning acceleration and a rear-mounted F5000 Chevy motor, had handled the Symmons Plains track extremely well.

Mechanics in Gardner's pit reported slight brake fade after the first race, while other cars were being prepared with new brakes for the second event.

Loud protest

On the controversy surrounding the car, Gardner said: "When we built it everybody cried unfair."

"But if it brings the crowd, it's a good thing."

Gardner first appeared in the Corvaire at Oran Park on August 1, but the car was black flagged out of the lead by scrutineers who said the car was ineligible.

He altered the car to scrutineers' standards and has since won two consecutive meetings in the sports sedan championships.

The Corvaire is making a name for itself as the ideal sports sedan. Other top drivers are believed to be building one — including Gold Star series champion John McCormack.

Gardner in two all-way victories

LAUNCESTON. — Five-times British touring car champion Frank comfortably won the sixth round of the Australian sports sedan championship at Symmons Plains yesterday.

Gardner, driving the John Player Corvaire, led from flag to flag in both 20-lap heats after setting fastest time in practice.

Tasmanian driver Tony Edmondson in the Ansett Charger took two second places to retain second position overall, but he cannot win the title.

Touring car star Allan Moffat, who did not compete yesterday, has an unbeatable lead of 34 points to Edmondson's 21.

Moffat elected to remain at his Melbourne workshop yesterday to finalise preparations for his assault on the Hardie-Ferodo 1000 touring car classic at Bathurst next weekend.

New Zealander Jim Richards did not figure in the overall result yesterday after failing to finish the second heat and dropped from third to fourth with 16 points, two points behind Gardner.

Richards' Mustang developed clutch and brake trouble in the first heat, and he dropped back from second to finish third behind Edmondson.

Despite frantic work on the car between races, Richards was forced to have a push start from the rear of the grid. He battled grimly for seven laps before crashing into the safety fencing on the circuit's hairpin bend.

With one round left in the series, at Victoria's Calder Raceway, the battle for overall second place should prove an exciting tussle between Edmondson, Richards and Gardner.

Results:
AUSTRALIAN SPORTS SEDAN CHAMPIONSHIP, Heat 1: F. Gardner (Corvaire), T. Edmondson (Charger), J. Richards (Mustang), V. Gregory (Volkswagen), P. Crea (Cortina), J. Stevens (Viva), G. Rogers (Escort), M. Sinclair (Torana), S. Birrwhistle (Torana), E. Conacher (Torana). Heat 2: F. Gardner, Edmondson, Crea, Gregory, Conacher, P. Wells (Viva), T. Smith (Torana), G. Parsons (Torana), M. Sinclair, G. Crick (Torana). Provisional pts.: A. Moffat 34, Edmondson 21, Gardner 18, Richards 16, J. Dillen 10, I. Geoghegan 8, B. Potts 7, Rogers 6, C. Bond 5, G. Walker 4, Crea 4, Gregory 3, Wells 2, Conacher 1.

— AAP