

as 'Happy Hooker' zips to win

• Complete results, 2-C

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Tom Sheehy had a Catholic priest bless his boat Saturday. It didn't help.

Nothing seemed to help Sheehy or any of the pre-race favorites in the 7 litre, division II boats in Saturday's 37th annual running of the Southland Sweepstakes Regatta on Lake Maggiore in St. Petersburg.

The expensive, well-cared-for, speedy fleet of stock engine 7 litre boats was torpedoed by engine problems that knocked out three of the top five boats and left Don Lostumbo's Happy Hooker and Darwin Coffield's Miss Advance United battling for first place.

Lostumbo, of Hillsdale, N.J., finished first in both final heats while Coffield, of Minneapolis, Minn., was second in both.

"This is the first time this boat has been in the water," said Coffield, who is the chief driver in the Advance United team which has three boats. "I wish the other boats would have been out there because I kind of wanted to see how we could do against all of them. Sunday (today) should be a flat-out race."

THE 7 LITRE BOAT OWNERS or drivers will change the engines in their boats and will run in 7 litre, division I class in today's events.

Many of the 7 litre drivers could have used another engine Saturday as a crowd estimated at more than 10,000 persons lined the shores of Lake Maggiore to watch favored boats Edelweiss, driven by Larry Lauterbach, Streaker, driven by Jim Kropfeld and Irish Miss, driven by Sheehy, encounter engine problems and pull out of the race.

But those engine problems didn't affect the other classes as the Exchange Club of Northeast St. Petersburg kept boats racing virtually all the time and ran off eliminations and final heats in the 850 cc hydros, 145 cubic inch hydros, Super Stocks, 7 litres plus the Little Southland Invitational and elimination heats in the 2½ litre hydros.

The first elimination heat of the 2½ litre hydros featured one of the most spectacular accidents of the day as Woody Pliescott flipped over and demolished his boat in the first turn on the first lap.

Pliescott, one of the pre-race favorites in his class, was thrown into the water but never lost the sunglasses he was wearing. He was taken to Bayfront Medical Center, X-rayed and released.

The only other accident of the day came in the Super Stocks when Richard Dunham of Fort Lauderdale, running in his first race ever, flipped at the south end of the lake and was thrown out of his boat, The Sting. The boat narrowly missed him when it came down. Dunham was not injured and came back to take third place in his division.

ED PERRY OF ST. PETERSBURG, driving a boat owned by Jim Appley of St. Petersburg, was a runaway winner in



St. Petersburg Times photo by Fraser Hale

Boat demolished, Woody Pliescott and sunglasses escaped unscathed

the 850cc hydro class in Super "J" Too. National 850 champion James Sellers, also of St. Petersburg, was second.

"We tested it out here last week and we knew it was flying," said Perry. "We had engine problems here one year and we flipped another year but we kind of felt this year would be our year. I had it wide open all the way around."

Beau Adams, an 18-year-old high school senior from Winter Haven, outclassed the 145cc hydro field in his Miss R. C. Cola, winning his elimination heat and both final heats. National 145cc champion and world record holder Willard Wilson was scratched from the race due to illness.

In the Little Southland Invitational, which was for 850cc and 145cc boats, Wes Carman of Freeport, N.Y., was declared the winner when three boats jumped the starting line and were disqualified.

Carman had finished second to Adams in the 145 class, but Adams experienced engine problems in the Little Southland and had to settle for second. Ed Perry was third in an 850cc boat.

Dick Bullard of Ontario, Canada, in Mama's Mink came in first in the Super Stocks while Lee Anderson of Mineapolis, Minn., finished second.

TODAY'S RACING PROGRAM begins at 12:30 p.m. and will feature finals and eliminations in the 2½ litre hydros, the 225 hydros, the 280 hydros, the 5 litre hydros, the 7 litre division I hydros, the SK racing runabouts and the Jersey speed skiffs.

In addition, the Flat Bottom Invitational, the Sweet Sixteen and the Southland Sweepstakes Invitational will be run.

All proceeds from the Southland go to the All Childrens Hospital in St. Petersburg, and in the past three years nearly \$30,000 has been given to the hospital by the Exchange Club.