

Xenia Zip Reaches Pinnacle of Sport

By BOB PHELPS

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XENIA — During winter and parts of spring and fall, the closest Dean Chenoweth gets to a body of water is a stinky little creek that ripples past his Pontiac sales firm in Xenia. He has lived and worked in that area all his life, yet, he is now the reigning king of marine racing.

The Xenia Zip added another bauble to his crown last Saturday when he was inducted into Gulf Oil company's Marine Racing Hall of Fame. That honor finally came after he was named champion of the unlimited hydroplane racing circuit as the top money-winner, points-man and Gold Cup winner last season.

Tell Chenoweth he has only been at it for three years, and he'll quickly correct you. Although he is just 33, he asserts, "I have been boat racing for about 20 years now." He was splashing around the boat courses on the smaller classes of power vessels when he was in junior high school.

But Chenoweth first took the controls of the aircraft-engine-powered unlimited hydro three years ago, and already it appears he may be carving a dynasty in the sport.

Chenoweth did not lower himself into the cockpit of the Seattle-based Miss Budweiser until the beginning of last season. His first two years in the boat big-leagues were at the wheel of Miss Smirnoff out of Detroit.

"I THINK this year will be much better for us," Chenoweth predicts. "I think it took me about half the season last year to adjust to the boat and for the crew to adjust to my habits."

Then, after this period of orientation, he had to survive the shock and slight injury from a spectacular high-speed crash in Seattle in which the front deck of his huge boat disintegrated. Fortunately, he was thrown high and free of the sinking boat that could have killed him.

With a miracle salvage and repair effort by his mechanical team, the boat was back afloat in two weeks. Chenoweth proved that the crash did not instill in him any great fear of the break-neck speeds of the big boats by winning the Gold Cup in San Diego, the World Series of the water jockeys.

"With that year of experience under our belts," Chenoweth says, "we're going into this season with a lot of confidence." He hastens to add, though, "I'm not going to sell my competition short. The boats now are much more evenly matched and it would be harder to dominate the circuit like Bill Muncey did in the 1950s and Ron Musson in the early 1960s."

Dean accepted the Hall of Fame honor in New York and recently attended a national beer sellers convention for his sponsor in St. Louis. Otherwise it has been a quiet winter of selling automobiles on S. Detroit St.



Outdoor Notebook

out. It was like one of these paint jobs on a custom show car."

AS TO THE MECHANICS of the 200-mile-per-hour craft, it is back in its Seattle garage complex, being given the complete R and R (rest and rehabilitation) treatment.

"We build up 8 or 10 engines and gear boxes every season," Dean explains. "The races begin in the last part of May and by the time the races close in September, the spares are pretty well used up."

Six men are employed year-round to keep the Bud afloat during the season, and to prepare it for the next rounds during the winter.

"Our boat shop is across the field from the Boeing Aircraft company, so it is easy to get engine parts," says Dean.

Purses for the races are not as spectacular as the boat crashes. Total earnings including about 12 per cent contingency money for the big Bud boat was \$40,000. Chenoweth gets a piece of this plus a guaranteed salary of \$1,000 per race and all expenses paid reports Unlimited Hydroplanes headquarters in California.

"Actually for a guy like Dean," says Phil Cole, an officer of Unlimited Hydroplanes, "it's like a hobby." The money to keep the big boats going obviously has to come from the sponsors. You couldn't find a kit for one of those jobs at your local hobby shop.

TRAIL TALK Mother Nature pulled a slicky slicky on some enterprising business men in the Dayton area recently. The Great Dayton Snowmobile Race, announced several weeks ago to mark the Imperial Snow Trails opening in Huber Heights, was called off Monday for lack of snow. Tuesday it snowed slightly, Thursday there was a blizzard and by Friday there was three inches of the white stuff on the ground. But the Snowmobile race waits until next year . . .

Ice fishing was good for at least one angler on Acton lake a week ago Saturday. Glenn Hemmich of Arcanum in one sitting took 42 crappies and bluegills on waxworms, mousies and minnows. Happy scaling . . .

Ohio's beaver trapping season opens in eastern Ohio on private land only, Monday and



THIS WAS DEAN CHENOWETH'S COLLECTION IN 1957 AT AGE 19

Today, He's Power Boat Hall of Famer and Champ of Unlimited Hydroplane Circuit