



'73 INBOARD NATIONALS

by Bill Holdre, Bob George, and John Tate

Photos by Bob George and John Tate

Tasting a worried look at the choppy waters of Dayton, Ohio's Eastwood Lake, a veteran 5-liter driver said, "And I came 2400 miles for this!" He felt the high wind would make flips abundant. His forbidding prophesy would prove to be false—with a few expected exceptions. The light chop of this former gravel pit did prohibit the setting of any new marks by any of the record 233 boats that gathered there the last weekend in July.

The host for the annual event was once again the highly ambitious Dayton Motor Boat Racing Association, which carried off the event with its usual high efficiency.

Unlike years past, Mother Nature decided to smile this year - despite her heavy breath the first day which caused several ski and super stock events to be pushed into the following day. Old timers said there was some of the best nose-to-nose racing they had ever seen.

Several unusual events highlighted the occasion with probably the strangest happening in the 145 cc hydro class. Everything was normal, with veteran Willard Wilson of Wilmington, Delaware slipping *L'il Lectron* across the line with plenty to spare. His speed was a brisk 67.189-mph, but Willard's apparent third straight 145 cc championship was short-lived. The engine tear-down disqualified him.

Willard's Falcon engine had one illegal rocker arm out of the 12. The illegal arm, which was (undoubtedly) inadvertently installed, had been bored and a sleeve inserted. It didn't buy a thing in the way of performance, but it *is* against the rules. That enabled Chip Hanauer in *Little Rambler* to break the Wilson chain at two straight.

Even though no new records were set, all times were quite respectable, considering the breezy conditions on the first day. Harrison Quirk, of Ypsilanti, Michigan, cruised to victory with nearly half a lap separating *Miss Muf* from the rest of the field. His speed in the 850 class was 64.470-mph. Mrs. Gayle Smith, a 19-year old from Cincinnati, was the only woman among the finalists in the same class. She earned her position finishing fourth in the first elimination heat, but couldn't cut it in the finals.

The 225 class had a real veteran in Miami's Stan Polhamus. With his Lauterbach-built rig, Stan was the Grand Prix and High Point Champions in '72, and the '71 Eastern Divisional Champion. He lost the '72 World and National Championships to St. Louis' amiable John Woods. But, neither of these chargers were able to pull it out this time as Joe Siracusa in *Country Boy* showed the way against the class field.

Jerry Bangs of Seattle brought his brand-new 5 liter boat, *Champagne Lady*, full of confidence. After all he had, only the Sunday before, set a world speed record. The beautiful rig sported a tail taken from the *Miss Bardahl* unlimited. A tubular extension ran from behind the cockpit to the tail and Jerry admitted that "It was just for looks." Bangs' winning time in the 5-liter event was 86.331-mph (about 1-mph faster than runner-up Ron Armstrong of Lakewood, California). Ron was wheeling the boat that was National Champion last year and holds the world 5-liter record of 152-plus. The 5-liter class provided some of the most intense competition of the event.

Duff Daily looks like every beach boy from Florida should look, with his mod-long blond hair and easy-going ways. But get this 20-year old behind the wheel of a flat-bottom boat and he becomes a real tiger. Duff was the only double winner at Dayton, showing the way in both the super stock and ski boats.

Duff pushed his *Mona V* ski boat to an easy victory with



an 86.166-mph clocking. Just a couple of weeks before the Nationals, he set a world's ski record at Raleigh, North Carolina, with a speed over 91-mph. His impressive stats also include a second place finish in last year's Nationals.

Floyd Murphy of Whittier, California, was a distant second in the ski class. Although there were no serious accidents in the two day event, the ski class did provide some anxious moments. During the first final heat, Dick Sutton, of Opa Locke, Florida, flipped while leading down the straightaway. A collision with another boat was narrowly avoided and the efficient chopper pulled him from the drink with cracked ribs and an injured ankle.

A super stock timing of 78.913-mph was the winning pace for Daily in *Mona's Ghost*. Duff was trailed by Jim Gaskins of Denton, North Carolina, and George McDougall of LaHabra, California.

The hotly-contested 280 cc event produced (apparently) another Sunshine State winner in Marty Niles while piloting *Wildcat*. Once again the engine inspection told the bad news. Marty's engine had some extra goodies, so he too joined the growing list of the disqualified. This enabled runnerup Tom Baker of Queenstown, Maryland, to take first prize. Tom drove the '73 280 cc Canadian championship boat, part of an excellent representation of Canadian boats and drivers. 225 winner Joe Siracusa took additional laurels with a second place in the 280.

Veteran John Leach was one of the pre-race favorites in the 280 but was disqualified, this time during the course of the race. John's E-101 pushed another boat into the bank

Commission after the day's racing, the decision was made to bar Leach until the 1974 season.

Sitting in the pit judges' stand was last year's 7-liter champion, popular Gene Whipp of Dayton. Following his win last year, Gene retired from racing except for a single fling at unlimiteds. His lone attempt was successful as he won the President's Cup race in Washington, D.C., the first weekend in June. Last year's championship boat was also sitting on the shore. *Heavy Hauler* lost a cam and stayed high and dry.

The name Lauterbach has become a byword in hydroplane racing. The Lauterbach boats are assembled in Portsmouth, Virginia, by 26-year old Larry and his dad. Larry showed that not only could he build boats, but he could also drive them. Larry's apparent 7-liter victory was also invalidated in the engine inspection area. Lauterbach was found in violation with a pop-up piston and illegal carburetion. Tony Piazza was then declared the winner of that Division II 7-liter contest, with a speed of 81.411-mph. Howie Bennis of Grand Island, New York, piloted *Sudden Seven* to the Division I honors. His winning speed was an impressive 93.409 on the tight course.

In retrospect, most felt that Dayton '73 was the finest Nationals ever held. The cooperation of the weather allowed large throngs of fans to support this event. Although outbid for the '74 Nationals, Dayton will undoubtedly become the scene for many more such events as the Dayton Motor Boat Racing Association and local supporters push to make this the home of the National championships.

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