

Edrich ready to 'uncoil' this weekend

By Bill Estep

Journal Herald Sports Writer

It wasn't a pleasure ride Jim Edrich and his "family" took Tuesday night on the Hydrobowl at Eastwood Lake.

The 40-year-old Wright Patterson AFB aeronautical engineer wouldn't normally have been behind the wheel of Eclipse, his 280 cubic inch hydroplane on a Tuesday night. But then, there isn't anything normal about Jim Edrich, his "family" or his sport.

Each even-numbered Tuesday of the month is "hydroplane day" at the Hydrobowl. Edrich usually bypasses the practice sessions, but he had his mind on a couple of races — last Sunday's Madison Regatta and this weekend's Dayton Championship for inboard hydros.

"We had a coil go out at Madison," the bachelor from Fairborn said, "and we didn't finish the race.

"**WE WENT** through the normal preparations," he said. "We put it in the water, started out of the pits and were ok around the first turn. Then we went into the back stretch

and around the second turn and it went sick and started to miss. I had a hard time keeping it above water."

But with a little help from his Wright Pat "family," which now only consists of fellow aeronautical engineer and hydro builder Russ Osborn, the problem was solved after two laboring test runs.

"It started to miss again when we went out the first time tonight," Edrich said, "but we changed the coil and went out again and it rode beautifully."

How beautifully? He'll find out the next time he puts his Plymouth-powered craft in the Hydrobowl this weekend.

The Hydroglobe, a five week affair in the past, has been reduced to two weekends of racing this year. The inboards will race both this Saturday and Sunday in two separate regattas beginning at noon, while the unlimiteds will follow two days of qualifying next Friday and Saturday with the race Sunday.

"Racing hydroplanes is a hobby, just something to do," Edrich said. "It takes your atten-

tion off the more serious things."

"**I STARTED OUT** by flying model airplanes. Then Russ and I got to talking at lunch once about what kind of thing we could build. We decided against airplanes because there were too many hassles, with the FFA and all.

"Russ likes to build things, so we built an eight-foot hydroplane, a runabout, to get our feet wet. That was in 1967. Then we were talking about what kind of inboard we could build. We picked the 280 class because it's the easiest to get started in.

"I scraped around for an old set of plans from 1955," he said. "We redrew them. This (Eclipse) is the same boat."

And yes, like all beginners, the six-year racing veteran bit the dust, or water if you like, his first few years.

"Our first couple of years, we brought up the back," Edrich said. "Then we switched engines, from a Pontiac to the 273 Plymouth, and now we're running in the middle of the pack.

"We've finished second and third some and picked up seven or eight trophies the last two

or three years."

And this year, for the first time, Edrich is a lone "family" driver.

"Russ and I raced two years ourselves," said. "Joe Lusczek, another aeronautical engineer who works in the same office as I, started helping out the third year. Joe and I both raced then he went to graduate school and hasn't been back.

"The fifth year, Ken Kreigzer drove and just myself this year."

And you can bet this weekend's Hydroglobe won't just be another "family" outing for Jim Edrich.

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TODAY IS the last day to purchase Hydroglobe season tickets. The ticket, a \$10 value, costs \$5. It includes entry to both inboard regattas, the qualifying and race days for next weekend's unlimited races and pit passes.

Tickets may be purchased at Main Auto Parts, Famous Recipe Fried Chicken, Burger Chix, Arby's Roast Beef, Pantorium Cleaners and Columbia Audio.