

# Johnson's the name; boat racing's the game

By Jim Nichols

In 1966, Johnny Johnson was working on the railroad and went to see his first motorboat race at what was then called Eastwood Lake. He was so impressed that he bought his first racing hydroplane the next year. He has been racing, or rather owning, a racing boat ever since.

Meanwhile, Eastwood Lake has become Hydrobowl, site of the annual Hydroglobe racing program, which again will feature the Inboard Nationals Aug. 7-9.

Johnson, retired from Conrail where he last served as yardmaster, says the Dayton Motorboat Racing Association will hold a Hydroglobe '81 Preview on dry land next weekend. It will be at the Wegerzyn Garden Center, 1301 E. Siebenthaler Ave., from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sunday, April 26.

"ALL THE FASTEST racing hydroplanes in the country will be on display, and there also will be slide shows and movies of past Hydroglobe races and other championship events," he said.

Cost is \$2 with the proceeds divided between the garden center and the 1981 Hydroglobe budget. Johnson's current racer is in Seattle, Wash., being modified for the upcoming racing season, but it will be back in time for the show. The boat is sponsored by the Justice brothers of Monrovia, Calif.

After his first taste, as a spectator in racing, Johnson purchased a boat in 1967, joined the American Power Boat Association as well as the Dayton club and got his boat "wet" in 1968. That first time he raced was in Decatur, Ill.

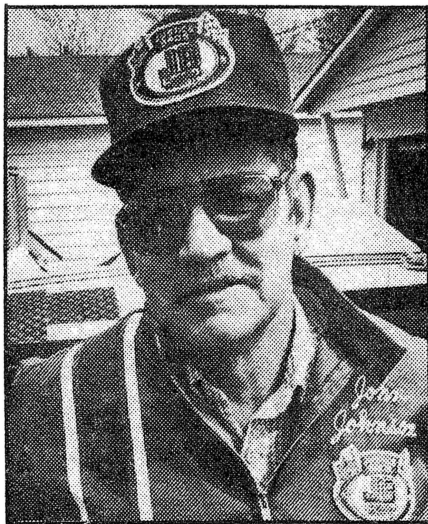
"I guess the thing that impressed me about the hydroplanes was their speed, the ability to go 100 plus miles per hour," he says.

He enters his boat in 15 to 18 races a year from his home base of Ohio to Florida and Louisiana. He won the American Power Boat Association's regional high point honors in 1976 and 1979.

"I HAVE NEVER won a race here,"



Joey Kreitzer does the driving in Johnny Johnson's boat, sponsored by the Justice brothers of California.



Johnny Johnson

Johnson says, "just about every place else in the country, but not at home."

Neighbors who were involved in racing gave Johnson and his wife, Henrietta, his

first taste of racing. After that, boat owning and racing became his major hobby.

Johnson served five years on the American Power Boat Racing Association race committee and was inboard chairman at the regional level for five years.

"I have been co-chairman of racing at the lake and for two years was commodore of the Dayton club," he says.

Johnson also has been on the United States inboard racing commission for the past five years. But he has been a crewman and never a driver on his boats. He leaves that to Joey Kreitzer.

Sometimes, it has been less than fun, like last summer in Michigan when his boat had to go completely over another boat to avoid a major collision.

"THE BOAT WAS extensively damaged, but the driver wasn't injured," Johnson said.

Terry Huecker, an aircraft mechanic on NCR's corporate plane, is special events chairman of the Dayton Motor Boat Racing Association. Huecker, Johnson and other boat owners, drivers and crew members

will be at next Sunday's show.

"At this preview, we will try to give people a broad view of the type boats we race," Huecker says. "They will have a chance up close to see what the boats are made out of. There will be people with the displays to fully inform people of what is going on."

Huecker says the star attraction of the preview will be the boat Country Boy, owned by Mike Weiner of Cincinnati. It's a 225 cubic inch inboard that is the world record holder in its class and has won the world championship in that class five years in a row.

Johnson says 152 boats entered the inboard nationals last year, bringing people to Dayton from as far away as Alaska, Canada and New Zealand.

He hopes the preview will get more people in the Dayton area interested not only in the inboards, but in all boat racing.

Profits from the races are donated to Box 21, and the rescue organization will have a display at Wegerzyn to give show-goers a better idea of what it does.