

Last Blast TII rips field, takes national hydro title

By MARY ORMSBY
Daily News Sports Writer

It's called the kamikaze class. And Saturday, owner Skip Gillam's hydroplane banzaied into a national title.

Gillam's 280 cubic inch *Last Blast TII*, driven by Perry Walter, clinched the victory with a 2-heat, 600-point total at the 1981 Hydroglobe National Inboard Championships at Dayton's Hydrobowl.

"It was great," Gillam said of the victory. "It was a hard win to get. The boats were all the same — they all had stock engines. We had some luck and the breaks went our way."

DRIVERS IN this class, usually cagey veterans, break with tradition and are seated in front of the engine. Despite the foreboding nickname, the safety record is renowned as one of the best in hydroplane racing and crowds are partial to the big machines.

Gillam put his foot on the fender of his camper and praised his Miami, Fla., neighbor's driving ability.

"He didn't have the ideal position, but he did the best he could. He was in

the middle of the pack in the first turn.

"Perry (an international ship captain) always said this was a 'drivers' race course.' All 12 boats in this race were so equally matched, any one of them could have been a winner."

WALTER LEFT immediately after his race to prepare for another in Alabama.

The owner-driver team met 21 years ago as competitors and became friends. Walter was the 1971 national champ in the 7-litre class with *Miss New Jersey*.

Gillam, a ferry yacht captain, ended up in Florida, not because of the heat, but because of the cold. He was an eastern division ice boat champion racer for nine years in his Redbank, N.J., home. During a race in 1969, his ski mask blew off. He won the race, but collected two frostbitten lungs.

He also had a bout of bad luck with his hydroplane four years ago. Gillam was in a three-boat collision in which he seriously damaged his left arm and his head went through the deck. He hasn't raced since and handed the driv-

ing chores to Walter, who Gillam considers to be one of the best drivers in the country. Walter has raced *Last Blast TII* since last January.

ALTHOUGH HE stands on the shore during a race now, Gillam said he gets a terrific personal feeling when his boat grabs the checkered flag. "I paid for it. I worked to buy it. It gives me a lot of satisfaction."

He labored two years to build the hydroplane from a kit and he is proud of it. "It's 19 feet long and weighs 1,330 pounds. We race against boats which are 1,000 pounds, and the driver (Walter) is 200 pounds, so we have a disadvantage."

Now he is considering buying an aluminum boat which would save him 500 pounds. But Gillam is holding off until he completes his son Paul's 1,200 midget outboard.

Paul will be 14 in September, which is the minimum age for racing in that class. His father said he is good with boats, but already has earned a dubious honor.

"He's the only one to ever flip a

Boat racing

NATIONAL INBOARD CHAMPIONSHIPS

At Hydrobowl

850 Hydro, overall winners — 1. Mark Tate, Canton, Mich., Anti Stock, 1,000 points; 2. Glenn Koutny, Palm Harbor, Fla., Super J Too, 800; 3. Steven David, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., Century 21 Special, 650. **First heat winners:** 1. Tate; 2. Koutny. **Second heat:** 1. Koutny; 2. Tate.

2.5 Litre, overall winners — 1. Jack Van Deman, Cheraw, S.C., Why, 700; 2. Richard Hallett, San Jacinto, Calif., Hardest Four, 625; 3. Christopher Oliver, Galesville, Md., Every Penny, 320. **First heat:** 1. Van Deman; 2. Bob Brown, W. Covina, Calif., Avenger. **Second heat:** 1. Hallett; 2. Van Deman.

225 Hydro, overall winners — 1. James Kropfeld, Cincinnati, Ohio, Country Boy, 600; 2. Karl Spandau, Indianapolis, Ind., Miss Nan Net, 569; 3. Patrick O'Connor, Depew, N.Y., Hot Ticket, 450. **First heat:** 1. James Deel, Worthington, Ohio, Deel-Me-In; 2. Kropfeld. **Second heat:** 1. Spandau; 2. Kropfeld.

5 Litre, overall winners — 1. John Gibbs, Costa Mesa, Calif., XL-Special, 800; 2. Rex Benedict, Bellevue, Wash., Plerors Pizza Special, 525; 3. Alex Stewart, Ontario, Canada, Summer Dream, 525. **First heat:** 1. Gibbs; 2. Benedict. **Second heat:** 1. Gibbs; 2. Stewart.

7 Litre 1, overall winners — 1. Ray West, Seattle, Wash., Snapper II, 569; 2. Larry Lauterbach, Portsmouth, Va., No Deductible, 400; 3. Terry Turner, Pomona, Calif., Deep Water Special, 300. **First heat:** 1. West; 2. Ron Martin, Cincinnati, Ohio, No Deductible. **Second heat:** 1. Lauterbach; 2. Turner.

Mon., Aug. 10, 1981

DAYTON DAILY NEWS

7



Staff Photo by Skip Peterson

Karl Spandau's Miss Nan-Net finishes 2nd in 225 final

Like father, like son
in Hydroglobe inboards