



Centerville's Al Schide roars across the water during a race in Madison, Ind.

High-speed thrills

Centerville racer is ready to go in powerboat nationals

By **RON JACKSON**

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It's a sport that leaves outsiders wondering why the participants do it.

It costs a small fortune to compete, yet the prize money in most races won't even pay the winner's expenses.

And public acclaim is so confined that the sport's leading driver would be a natural for one of those American Express Card "Do You Know Me ..." commercials.

It develops avid fans and curious onlookers, numbering 40,000 at national races.

It's inboard powerboat racing and its season will reach the high point Aug. 7, 8 and 9 with the National Inboard Championships at the Dayton Hydrobowl, located at the intersection of Harshman Road and Ohio 4.

NEARLY 175 OF the country's leading drivers will compete for prize money, trophies and high-speed satisfaction in 10 different classes. The boats are divided into 10 classes, a caste system determined by engine size and specifications laid down

class and the 5-liter division of hydroplanes.

"This is our version of the Gold Cup (the unlimited's most coveted prize), the highlight of our season," said Schide, better known as "Bo" on the hydroplane circuit. "This competition brings in the best boats from all over the country — Alaska, California and even from Australia, New Zealand and Canada."

"**PERSONALLY, THIS IS** my biggest event ever," continued Schide, whose best national finish in five races was a second place. "I've been looking forward to it all summer. I've been powerboat racing for eight years and I feel I've got the best equipment I've ever had. I've got a burning desire to win a national championship. Saying you're a national champion is incentive enough for every driver."

His 17-foot, 280-cubic-inch boat is powered by a 273 Plymouth engine and can attain speeds of 120 miles an hour on a straightaway. The 18-foot, 5-liter craft has a 350 Chevy engine and can reach speeds of 145 mph. The 280 is owned jointly by

"**I'VE ALWAYS HAD** a sensation for speed," said Schide, an active member of the Dayton Motorboat Racing Association for eight years. "This sport provides a lot of that. It's a lifetime sport I can stay with, too."

The tight turns and the long straightaways present a physical challenge to all competitors.

"Your body takes a pounding," the local contender said. At 6 feet and 195 pounds he looks like he can handle a physical challenge.

"You've got to be aggressive enough to beat the other guys at the first turn. That's a major part of the race. You're dealing with the 'G-force.' Your body wants to go one way and the boat the other."

While the engine is the large part of the success in inboard power boat racing, the driver is not incidental.

"**THE SPORT REQUIRES** tremendous concentration out of the driver," said Schide, a football player of note at Fairmont East High School in the early 1970s. "It does become a thinking man's game

He races by a commandment — or maybe a strategy — "never let the foot take priority over the head."

Dan Rogge, owner of the 5-liter that cost upwards of \$13,000 has complete confidence in Schide as driver of his craft.

"**HE'S COMPETENT,** physically fit, mentally alert and experienced," Rogge praised. "He has all the ingredients you like to find in a driver. He gets all he can out of a boat in every race."

Powerboat activities have been a real family affair for Schide, with his children, Troy, 10, and Jeff, 6, and wife Karen attending the races from Valley Field, Canada, to Madison, Ind., to St. Petersburg, Fla.