

After accident, boat driver displays no fear

By **DAVE LONG**
Staff Sports Writer

West German Herbert Lasch almost made it from the hospital bed to the world championship Sunday. But by his own mistake, he deprived himself of becoming the star of one of the great stories in power boat racing.

So Lasch had to settle for fourth place in the overall standings of the Union of International Motorboat Racing World Class OA (250cc) Championship Outboard race Sunday at Eastwood Lake.

Malcolm Harden of Portsmouth, Va., driving for Mexico, was the world champion, compiling 752 points in four heats of racing in the OA. Hoz Compton of Dallas was second and Ennio Manfredini of Italy was third.

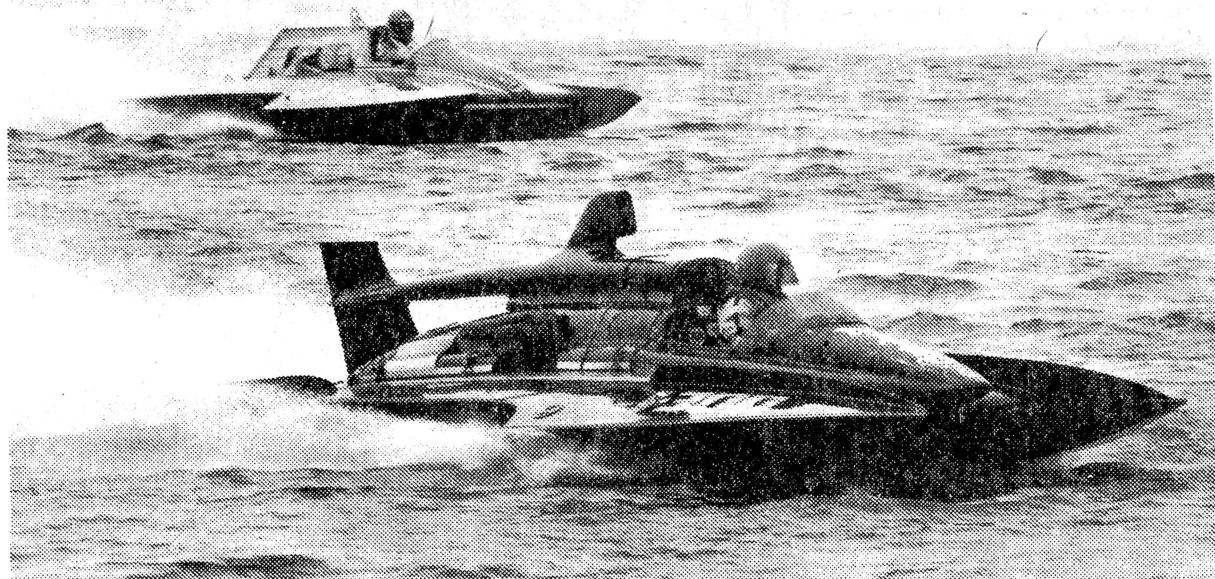
The OA World Championship was one of the highlights of the two-day Dayton Hydroglobe, which saw titlists crowned in six other classes. An estimated 20,000 spectators were on hand Sunday.

Lasch, a 34-year-old mechanic, took the most spectacular spill of the day during the first lap of the third heat. He hit a cross wave doing approximately 60 miles per hour and was thrown from his boat.

HE SKIPPED ACROSS the water four or five times like a rock skimming a pond before settling in the water. Several boats weaved around him and his craft until the race could be stopped.

He was fished from the water by the Box 21 rescue crew and checked out at a mobile unit provided by Miami Valley Hospital. He had no injuries other than cuts and bruises, but was taken to Miami Valley for observation.

The combination of the accident and rough water postponed the fourth and final heat of the OA class until almost 8 p.m. Doctors at Miami Valley found Lasch fit to drive and released him



Staff Photo by Charles Steinbrunner

J-300 Nitro explodes past J-9 Prime Mover in Stroh's Challenge Cup

from the hospital at around 7:30 p.m. "We returned to the course with no more than five minutes to spare prior to the race," said Lasch's brother, Peter, who brought him back to the course. "It was a little hectic getting him ready to race, but we did."

The accident put no fear in Lasch as he drove hard, outdistancing the other competitors from nine countries and taking first place. Combined with the 495 points he already had, it appeared he had easily become the world champion.

BUT OFFICIALS disqualified him for driving off the marked course and bumped him back to fourth. The German delegation immediately protested, but the ruling was upheld by an international racing panel.

"What can I say but that I am bitterly disappointed," said Lasch. "I thought I was the best driver today,

but the best man did not win. I am thankful, though, that I was able to race. The accident shook me up more than anything else."

Harden, a ship builder, had a few anxious moments. "I didn't know what to think when the Germans protested," he said. "I knew I was close to him in points and I knew he went off course. It was just a matter of what decision they made. For him to come back after that accident and drive is really something."

Harden's victory made it a sweep for Americans in the world championship races. Dan Kirts, who was chosen the Outstanding Driver for the 1982 Hydroglobe, won the Class OB World Championship Saturday.

OTHER WINNERS Sunday included Dave Sutton of Spring Arbor, Mich., in the Grand Prix International big boat class; popular Jim Kropfeld of Cincin-

nati in the 7 litre class; Alan Schide of Centerville in the GPA Class, Stover Hire of Syracuse, Ind., in the 280 cubic inch class, Joe Schulte of Daytona Beach, Fla., in the 145 cubic inch class, and Jerry Kirts of Bristol, Ind., in the Grand Prix outboard class.

Sutton had the fastest speed of the day, averaging over 99 miles per hour in Yankee Doodle. The Grand Prix International boats are a step below the unlimited hydroplanes and powered by modified car engines.

Kropfeld averaged 95 miles per hour in his "Country Boy." The owner of a muffler shop, Kropfeld confirmed rumors that he is a candidate to become the next driver of Miss Budweiser, the world's most famous unlimited hydroplane. Dean Chenoweth, the former Xenian, was killed while