



Staff photo by Bill Waugh

Hydroglobe champ Wheeler Baker waves after winning J-Class, 7-litre Challenge

Baker enjoys a Stroh light day

By Dave Long
Staff Sports Writer

Wheeler Baker probably is going to be running a special on Stroh's beer in his Chester, Md., liquor store for the rest of the year after the way the folks from the Detroit brewery treated him on Sunday.

Baker picked up a check of around \$3,000 for taking first place in Stroh's Cup Challenge series for 7 litre boats in the final day of inboard hydroplane racing at the 18th annual Dayton Hydroglobe.

A crowd estimated at 15,000 lined the shores of the Hydrobowl to watch the boats in the seven various classes perform. The 7 litre crafts are the show boats. They run 427-cubic inch Chevrolet engines and can hit 175 mph.

Baker won both heats in the class on Sunday and was not seriously challenged, just as he had done on Saturday. He was named the outstanding driver of the weekend for his effort. His wins on Saturday and Sunday helped him capture the overall point lead in the Stroh's Challenge Cup, which is a six-race series with large purses as boat races go.

"This is the most I've ever won," said Baker, who has been racing for 16 years. "It's just like any other kind of racing. It works in a circle. The more money you make from purses, the better equipment you can buy for racing. The better the racing, the bigger the crowds. The bigger the crowds, the more interested the sponsors become and the more they put into the purses.

"We're getting closer to stock car racing all the time. Hopefully, we can get a couple of more big companies interested to really start making it worthwhile.

"We really came here untested. We just bought this boat last year and have run it only two or three times. We broke in a race a couple of weeks ago in New Martinsville, W.Va., and put in an entirely new engine for this race. We didn't know what it would do. But I'm satisfied. We seemed to have more horsepower than everyone else, which was the difference."

Baker, driving the boat he calls Baker's Dozen, averaged 102.389 mph. Mike Mannano of Webster, N.Y., in the Blue Water Special, was second at 99.064 mph and Stover Hire of Syracuse, Ind., was third in Hot Stuff at 95.037 mph. Earlier in the day, Hire had won the 280 cubic inch class for the third straight year. It was the eighth time he has won in Dayton.

Jerry Scheidt, an electrician at Delco Products, became only

win in Dayton," Scheidt said. "The local guys don't do it too often." The only other local driver to finish in the money was Joe Krietzer of Beavercreek. He took third in the 280 class driving "J B & Water."

Other class winners included Rick Albrecht of Loveland, Ohio, in the 850cc class, Ed Reim of New Baltimore, Mich., in the 145 cubic inch, Chris Oliver of Annapolis, Md., in the 2.5 litre and James Deel of Worthington, Ohio, in the 225-cubic inch class.

The day was accident free, unlike Saturday when a 5 litre boat driven by Alan Schide of Centerville disintegrated around him. Schide was taken to Miami Valley Hospital, where he underwent surgery for a broken arm. He is listed in fair condition and will be hospitalized for an undetermined amount of time.