

# Hydroplane vet in his element at Eastwood

By Dave Long  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

There's no body of water in the United States that Wheeler Baker loves to race on more than Eastwood Lake.

It matters not if he's the chauffeur in a hydroplane powered by a 7-litre Chrysler engine. The water can be choppy or it can be raining.

Both conditions occurred Saturday on the first day of the 25th annual Dayton Mayors Cup Challenge hydroplane races. But Baker didn't care.

"This is my favorite place in this country to race," he said. "The conditions are almost always the same and it's a great course for hydroplanes. It reminds me a lot of river racing only you always know which way the wind is going to come from and you

won't be running into any logs or anything."

Baker, an entrepreneur/politician from Chester on Maryland's eastern shore, would have been the most active driver in Saturday's 15-race program.

But a series of weather-related and organizational delays allowed only nine races to be completed.

The program was finally cut short when a thunderstorm with lightning hit the lake at 5:30 p.m. One bolt of lightning knocked out power to the Eastwood Park complex.

Today's race program begins at 11 a.m. The schedule is to complete the unfinished races from Saturday then proceed with today's planned 15-race card. Drivers are racing for prize money and national championship points in various American Power

Boast Association classes

"I've been coming to race here since 1977," Baker said. "This lake has been good to me. I've won a lot of class championships here and a couple of national points titles. I like the people here. But today's (Saturday's) races were the most disorganized I've ever seen. Nothing seemed to be planned.

"You can ask any driver up and down the pits. Everyone is complaining. I know it's a new group of people putting it on. I just hope they're a little more together (today) 'cause a lot of us love to come here and run."

Baker is among the best drivers in the history of the hydroplane races in Dayton. Over the years he has claimed at least 14 titles in various classes plus the aforementioned national titles in the 7-litre class in 1978

and '80.

This weekend he is scheduled to drive in the 2.5-, 6- and 7-litre categories. "There isn't much difference between the way and 6- and 7-litre boat handles because the power is about the same," Baker said. "When you get into a smaller boat like a 2.5 it's different because the boat is much lighter and rides higher on the water. It takes a lot adjustment."

Baker makes his living as owner of several businesses, including a liquor store and delicatessen. He also is a county commissioner. But he is good enough at handling a hydroplane to bring in a few dollars more.

Last season he was the driver for the Strohs Light entry in the Unlimited Hydroplane class against the likes of Miss Bud. This season is he driving the Strohs craft in the 7-litre national

championship points chase.

"It was nice driving the big boat but we had so many equipment problems that we weren't even competitive. So I left them," he said. "I really prefer racing in the places like Dayton where the competition and equipment are good and all the drivers are friendly. I've tried to quit boat racing two or three times but it's in my blood.

"I just hope everything is organized and we have good weather and water conditions so we can have some good races Sunday."

## Sports results

Dial 225-2255

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### BOAT RACING

#### HYDROPLANES DAYTON MAYOR'S CUP RACES At Eastwood Lake

**1 litre** — 1. South Paw driven by Dick Delsener, East Detroit, Mich.; 2. Ted Toy, Ted Ritchey, Indianapolis, Ind.; 3. Wind Dancer, Glenn Dewees, Norristown, Pa.; 4. Summer Fling, Bob Belf, Bloomfield Hills, Mich.; 5. K.T. Special, Terry Collins, Westland, Mich.

**2.5 litre stock** — 1. R.C. Cola Rewinder, Greg Baker, Grand Island, Mich.; 2. Lucy Baby, Dick Harris, Okeana, Mich.; 3. Fire & Ice, Mark Burkhardt, Allen Park, Mich.; 4. Wonderful Sensation, Jeff Corrigan, Vandalia; 5. Why Cry, Mark Weber, Detroit, Mich.

**2.5 litre modified** — 1. Little Boss, Wheeler Baker, Chester, Pa.; 2. Competition, Bill Morrison, Valrico, Fla.; 3. Every Penny, Chris Oliver, Annapolis, Md.; 4. Bandit, Joe Longo, Mt. Ephraim, N.J.; 5. Coors Light Silver Bullet, Mike Cashin, Southgate, Mich.

**5 litre** — 1. Southern Comfort, Roy Wilson, New Orleans, La.; 2. Stiletto, Joe Hartdegen, Chalmette, La.; 3. My Way, Mark Weber, Detroit, Mich.; 4. Dennis The Menace, Dennis Macy, Garden City, Mich.; 5. The Bandit, Carl Wilson, Harper Woods, Mich.

**6 litre** — 1. Yesterday's Dream, Paul McIntyre, Java Center, N.Y.; 2. Miss Cumberland, Wheeler Baker, Chester, Md.; 3. Ms Toledo, Randy Haas, Toledo; 4. Hyper Active, Kurt Studing, Sterling Heights, Mich.

**7 litre** — 1. Litre of the Pack, Mike Mammano, Webster, N.Y.; 2. Deel Me In, Wheeler Baker, Chester, Md.; 3. Big Spender, Greg Grenier, Sterling Heights, Mich.

**Mayor's Cup Winner for Outstanding Driver** — Roy Wilson, New Orleans, La. **Hank Lauterbach Winner for top driver in 2.5 litre modified class** — Bill Morrison, Valrico, Fla.

SATURDAY