

Boat races heat up at Eastwood Lake

By Debbie Juniewicz

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The Impossible Dream remained just that for Joe Kreitzer Saturday.

Kreitzer's engine caught fire in the qualifying heat of the 1992 Budweiser "Thunder on the Lake" Hydroplane Boat Races at Eastwood Lake. Kreitzer's boat, the Impossible Dream, didn't complete one lap.

"I stayed in as long as I could, but when my eyes started watering and I felt my back burning, I bailed out," Kreitzer said. He was treated for first degree burns on his back.

"I'm beginning to think that I'm jinxed here, where I want to win the most," Kreitzer said. He was born and raised in Kettering and is still looking for a win in his hometown.

"This is the best course in the country, period, and this is a very big race," Kreitzer said. Nearly 100 boats from across the country are entered in this two-day event.

A few burns on his back and a small fire on his boat are relatively minor to Kreitzer, who has been racing for 20 years. Two years ago, Kreitzer blew his boat over backward at a race in Hillsboro. "They dragged me out of the water

dead," he said. "I had been knocked unconscious and drowned. Box 21 resuscitated me."

Why would Kreitzer want to get back in a boat after an experience like that?

"I guess I have no sense of fear," he said.

"I told my dad, if I continue to race the way I had been I would stay in it. If I couldn't perform, I would quit."

By the time Kreitzer completed his third race after the accident, he knew that he would stay.

Bad luck or not, Kreitzer is not a quitter. "This season hasn't been real good, but I've been ranked 10th or better in the country for the past five years, and that's not too bad," he said.

"The reason that I come out here is the people. Everybody's out to help everyone else," Kreitzer said.

This team spirit is what helped pull this race weekend off. The original promoter of the "Thunder on the Lake" race backed out on Thursday. The corporate sponsors and the drivers pooled their money to meet race expenses so the race could go on.

The race continues from noon to 5 p.m. today at Eastwood Lake.