

BAD DAY AT FOUR BEARS

On Sunday, July 18 the Garrison Reservoir, spanned by Four Bears Bridge, played host to the Dakota Cup Regatta for unlimited hydroplanes.

In a massive case of unconquerable difficulty, the field of 11 boats sat it out on the beach, the race committee held numerous conferences then cancelled the race, the sponsor lost both shirt and enthusiasm and the spectators endured patient discouragement.

It was a bad day at Four Bears.

Like most bad days it began months ago when weather patterns set up the Spring with flooding conditions. Garrison Reservoir, created by damming the Missouri River, filled with run-off and debris as the volume of flood water continued unabated downriver.

By the time the Dakota Cup was scheduled the former pit and official-stand sites both were under water. A repre-

sentative of the sponsoring association insists he wrote the Unlimited Commission on June 18 cancelling the regatta and withdrawing sponsorship.

After due consideration the regatta remained scheduled and different sponsorship was offered. During pre-race week eleven unlimited camps arrived in Minot, N.D., some 80 miles away, then proceeded to the New Town race site.

There crews and drivers of *Miss Bardahl*, *Notre Dame*, *Mariner Too*, *Tahoe Miss*, *Madison*, *Budweiser*, *Smirnoff*, *\$ Bill*, *Roostertail*, *Savair's Mist* and *San Diego* took several disbelieving looks at the size, length, type and amount of debris and asked one another "What are we doing here?"

What they did — every expensively mounted camp of them — was hold faith that the hard-working sponsor and race committee could somehow cope with impossible conditions.

With staggering spurts of energy the sponsor moved 27,000 cubic yards of earth to create a new pit site — up which the water crept at the alarming rate of eight inches per day!

They moved and rebuilt the official stand upon higher ground, installed water, electricity and communication, secured a willing flotilla of patrol boats and busied a debris-control fleet.

On race day they and the camps were ready. The elements were not.

Wind starting at 15-mph with gusts to 20-25 rose to a steady 20-25 with gusts to 30 and finally remained steady at 30 mph. Driftwood formerly massed in undulating floats so thick a stone tossed on them never touched water, were broken apart to create hazard shore to shore. The ever-rising water refloated drift already high and dry on shore to add to the volume.

After a series of 30-minute postponements beginning at noon a decision was reached. If a heat could not be started by 5:10 pm the race would be cancelled. Drift floated past in increasing amounts. Waves pounded over the pit sea wall. Wind continued to rise in velocity. At 5 pm the race officially was cancelled.

There remains controversy, charge and counter-charge and the inevitable second-guessing by those who know nothing, those who know everything, and those who pretend neither.

Overall, no driver was injured, no equipment wrecked. The luckless sponsor kept faith with the unlimiteds and spectators. The disheartened camps returned the favor.

Perhaps it was not such a bad day at Four Bears after all.



**"WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?",
ASKED THE CREWS AND DRIVERS OF
ELEVEN UNLIMITED CAMPS AS
THEY GAZED UPON THE WIND-SWEPT,
DEBRIS-FILLED, FLOODED SITE
OF THE DAKOTA CUP. END OF STORY!**

by EILEEN CRIMMIN

• (Above): On race day, spectators were greeted by piles of debris such as this. A series of 30 minute postponements culminated in a final cancellation. (Below): Notre Dame crewman Jim Kerth and driver Rex Manchester, facing camera, show dismay over the severe conditions of the race course. (Photos by Bob Carver).

