

EXIDE'S RACE AGAIN

THE FINAL SURPRISE of the Diamond Cup Regatta July 11 in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho was that defending champion *Miss Exide* won it. The initial surprise was the reduction in the field.

The possible 21 dwindled to a respectable 12 as camps nursing Dixie Cup troubles had to forego the Idaho race in preparation for later events. Others found the back-trek from Idaho to a North Dakota race, then on to Seattle's Gold Cup a bit too demanding on crews and equipment.

But 12 boats arrived, 11 qualified and all 11 put on spectacular racing. Of five heats only one became the parade familiar to unlimited spectators.

Pre-race activity centered on boats not yet qualified for Gold Cup or entering Diamond Cup as a first seasonal event, therefore needing a minimum one-lap 100-mph speed to join the entry list.

Chief among them was *Miss Bardahl*, 1965 National High Point and Gold Cup champion, Diamond Cup defending champ *Miss Exide*, *\$ Bill* and *Miss San*

Diego (former Coral Reef). The remaining field — *Smirnoff*, *Notre Dame*, *Mariner Too*, *Madison*, *Budweiser*, *Savair's Mist*, *Gale's Roostertail* and *Tahoe Miss* — needed testing only after qualifying at Dixie Cup.

Across the start with perfect timing, rookie driver Rex Bixby brought *\$ Bill* to kick off Heat 1A. With surprising speed and handling he kept the craft out front into the first turn. There he lost the lead to *Mariner Too*, *Madison* and *Budweiser* as they turned in a shorter radius. Following were *Smirnoff* and *Savair's Mist*.

Up to the back stretch, however, it proved to be anybody's race as *Mariner*, *Budweiser* and *\$ Bill* fought for position. By lap three driver Warner Gardner had *Mariner* securely in first. Behind him dueling began among Chuck Hickling in *Budweiser*, Bill Cantrell in *Smirnoff* and Bixby in *\$ Bill*. Buddy Byers in *Madison* and Red Loomis in *Savair's Mist* suffered the slowing effects of rough water left by dueling boats.

The final lap saw two battles as *Smirnoff* squeaked past *Mariner Too* with 98.666-mph heat average speed. *Mariner* was second with 98.306; *\$ Bill* third, 95.406; *Madison* fought past *Budweiser*

with 94.557; *Budweiser* posted 94.372 and *Savair's Mist* came in with 88.962.

These duels keyed up spectators and camps alike for an equally hot Heat 1B. And hot it was, to start. First into the turn was Rex Manchester in *Notre Dame*, followed by Bill Brow in *Exide*, Ron Musson in *Bardahl*, Chuck Thompson in *Tahoe Miss* and Jerry Schoenith in *Roostertail*.

At a scorching pace *Notre Dame* slammed into the turn dipping and bouncing, slewed sideways, then straightened out to take water from other boats and load up on fuel. She died in the turn.

As Brow and *Exide* charged up the backstretch hotly chased by Musson in *Bardahl*, Manchester worked to restart his engine, over primed and produced a common, but spectacular, stack fire. "She's burning" was the shouted pit and spectator information. A patrol boat not used to sight of stack fire pulled a flare and the heat was stopped just after *Notre Dame* roared to life, was back on a plane and beginning to charge up the backstretch.

The re-run of Heat 1B found *Tahoe Miss* scratched by mechanical failure. *Exide*, *Notre Dame*, *Bardahl* and *Roostertail* executed another fast start. Again *Notre Dame* led into the turn followed by *Bardahl*, *Exide* and *Roostertail*. Through laps two and three *Exide* and *Notre Dame* dueled for first. By lap four

THIS YEAR'S DIAMOND CUP WAS FULL OF SURPRISES, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH WAS A REPEAT VICTORY BY THE DEFENDING CHAMPION — MISS EXIDE

STORY BY EILEEN CRIMMIN

• (At right): Diamond Cup victor *Miss Exide* with Bill Brow helming. Camp was unprepared, arrived late, qualified late, had only one engine, but still won the hardware. (Upper left): Pilot Rex Manchester took *Notre Dame* to second overall off one first and two seconds. Pointwise, the Dame lead all unlimiteds following the Dixie and Diamond Cups. (Lower right): Ron Musson and the 1964 national champion *Miss Bardahl* placed third overall in the Diamond regatta.

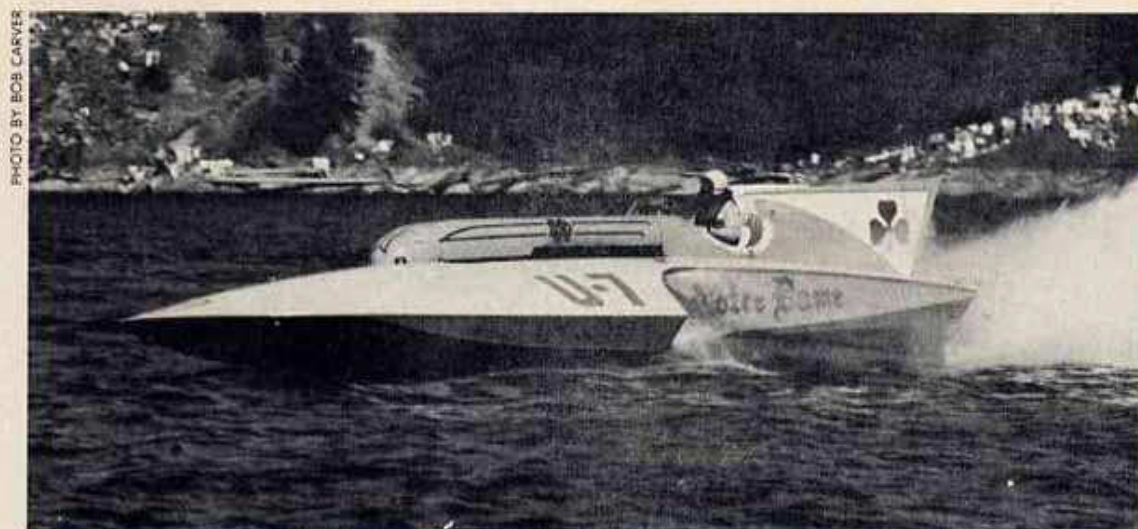


PHOTO BY BOB CARVER

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Exide established a sound first as *Notre Dame* fought repeated challenges by *Bardahl*. In lap four *Bardahl* moved into second but a lap five full course duel brought *Notre Dame* across the finish second with *Bardahl* third.

Exide posted 110.882-mph. With *Notre Dame* posting a 108.173 to *Bardahl's* 108.129 she showed she was a front-runner at last. But consistently? Nobody yet knew. *Roostertail*, meanwhile, ran one lap then did not finish.

Heat 2A brought *Mariner Too* into the first turn after a long airborne leap that threatened destruction. *Bardahl* pressed close behind followed by *Exide* and *Savair's Mist*. *\$ Bill* was unable to start.

Bardahl and *Exide* took over first and second in lap two with *Mariner* and *Savair's Mist* following. They maintained this order until lap five when *Exide* challenged and caught *Bardahl* to win the heat with a 108.564 mph speed. *Bardahl* posted 107.100; *Mariner Too*, 92.560 and *Savair's Mist*, 90.437. Neither *Roostertail* nor *\$ Bill* started.

Heat 2B put *Smirnoff* into the turn first with *Madison*, *Notre Dame* and *Budweiser* hot on her transom. On the exit pin *Notre Dame* passed *Madison* then pressured *Smirnoff* until the luckless craft blew power in a second lap straight-a-way duel.

From then on it was a cozy parade

with *Notre Dame* widening her lead to post 103.369; *Budweiser* and *Madison* following to finish with respective 101.809 and 100.896.

The Final was a thriller. *Exide* entered with 800 points; *Notre Dame*, 700; *Bardahl*, 525; *Mariner Too*, 525; *Budweiser*, 427; *Smirnoff*, 400 and *Madison* as alternate with 394.

Bardahl took the lead from the start and held it to the finish. *Exide*, *Madison* and *Budweiser* moved into second, third and fourth while *Mariner Too* went dead in the starting sprint.

From fifth place *Notre Dame* ran outside, passed *Budweiser* and *Madison* to settle into third by lap two. Pushing hard and threatened by near-collision with *Mariner Too* drifting in the straight-a-way, *Notre Dame* veered, continued to challenge *Exide* and finally took over second spot.

In lap four *Mariner Too* roared to life to continue the heat which finished with *Bardahl* first by commanding lead at 105.820, *Notre Dame* second with 103.033, *Exide* third with 101.964, *Madison* fourth, *Budweiser* fifth and *Mariner* sixth. (Speeds on the latter three were unavailable.) All three raced a penalty lap—*Madison* and *Mariner* for jumping the gun, *Budweiser* for hitting a buoy.

When all points were totaled *Miss Exide*, defending champion, was again a winner of the Diamond Cup. She won

two heats, placed third in the Final and posted 1025 points. *Notre Dame* was second overall with 1000; *Bardahl*, 925; *Mariner Too*, 620; *Madison*, 563; *Budweiser*, 554; *Smirnoff*, 400; *Savair's Mist*, 264; *\$ Bill*, 225. *Gale's Roostertail* ran in the money but garnered no points, and *Tahoe Miss* garnered neither.

Strangely enough, the exciting event may cause more consternation than congratulation. Sponsors of Diamond Cup staged the regatta against odds of community friction. Many believed the event to be Coeur d'Alene's last. But the fine competitive showing may cause another close look at the regatta. Certainly nobody is taking bets either way at this moment.

Miss Exide, an odds-off favorite not to repeat her 1964 win beat all odds. Newly reconstructed, lacking final paint, late into the pits, late to qualify, and entered with just one engine, the camp appeared only in the sporting tradition as defending champ. The win? "We're all a little surprised," said driver Bill Brow of the victory.

Notre Dame, previously an unknown quantity through wins against both fast and slow boats, seemed firmly locked into the hot boat class with one win and two seconds against top competition.

Bardahl, accidentally dropped then
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COURTESY HARRAH'S CLUB

Diamond Cup Regatta

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bounced on her trailer to sustain hull puncture and other damage, was patched hastily then raced to win the Final heat and hear other camps quip, "We're going to drop our boat for that kind of performance, too!"

Gale's Roostertail and *Miss Smirnoff* were a hard luck team. Representative owner Lee Schoenith said of repeated mechanical failure, "This is just not our time or place."

Miss San Diego disappointed herself and fans as new driver Robert Fendler, a green crew and first race added up to inability to qualify.

Buoy swatting proved rather commonplace in the event but was handled well by official rulings. Cited for outstanding driver performance in the American Power Boat Association sanctioned event were Bill Brow, Ron Musson, Rex Manchester and rookie Rex Bixby.

All re-hash of the event was short-lived. With a regatta at New Town, North Dakota just one week and 700 miles away, camps began packing and rolling immediately after the regatta.

Within a three-week period lay the Dakota Cup and Gold Cup.