

"EXIDE" WINS ANOTHER DIAMOND CUP

► *Miss Exile*, driven by Bill Brow, posted her second consecutive Diamond Cup victory for Unlimited hydroplanes on Lake Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, July 11. Using injections of nitrous oxide ("laughing gas") in the fuel mixture to obtain additional power at critical points in the race, the Seattle craft defeated a field of 12 boats and set a new average speed record of 106.874 m.p.h. for the event. Torrid duels with defending national champion *Miss Bardahl* and Shirley Mendelson's *Notre Dame* gave the reported crowd of 60,000 a great afternoon of competitive racing.

A 20-year-old rookie driver surprised everyone in heat 1-A. Less than a week after stepping into an Unlimited for the first time Rex Bixby led the field of six boats to a perfect start in the initial heat. The former 280-cu. in. hydroplane national champion left no doubt as to his ability to handle his new assignment. Charging into the first turn, Rex steered the *\$ Bill* to the inside and a brief lead up the backstretch.

Eyes then turned to the veteran of more than 30 years in speedboat racing, "Wild" Bill Cantrell. Trapped into a fifth spot position at the start, Cantrell began to work his way through the pack. He passed *Miss Madison*, nosed by *Miss Budweiser*, out-ran *\$ Bill* to hold second at the end of lap three. A fierce duel developed as "Wild" Bill challenged Warner Gardner's lead position. On water conditions Cantrell later termed "horrible" the veteran overtook *Mariner Too* on the last lap to come home winner in the Detroit-based *Miss Smirnoff*. *\$ Bill* finished 3rd.

Pre-race talk billed heat 1-B as the feature event. It lived up to all expectations. Diamond Cup defender *Miss Exide*, national champion *Miss Bardahl*, Governor's Cup winner *Tahoe Miss* and a much improved *Notre Dame* were matched in the draw for positions. The *Tahoe* entry was the only disappointment when supercharger trouble developed at the start.

Ron Musson had *Bardahl* in the lead at the starting line in a closely bunched field. Rex Manchester in *Notre Dame* out-maneuvered the group to come out ahead at the first turn and roar away up the backstretch. Injections of nitrous oxide brought third-place *Miss Exide* alongside *Bardahl* midway through the first lap. By the next turn and frontstretch all three leaders were virtually dead even. *Exide* nosed ahead to complete lap two in the lead and maintain the advantage to the finish. Behind Brow, one of the best driving duels in Unlimited history raged. The lead between *Notre Dame* and *Bardahl* changed constantly. Just when it appeared Musson had the advantage due

to his inside position on the final turn, Manchester steered a wider course, kept his boat speed up and barely nipped the *Bardahl* entry by a boat length at the finish. To stay ahead of the second place boats, *Miss Exide* was pushed to a near record lap speed of 114.165 m.p.h. over the three-mile course.

A re-draw for positions in the second heat again matched *Exide* and *Bardahl*. This time the story was reversed. Heat 2-A found Musson taking an early lead and pulling away from the field to what appeared to be an almost insurmountable advantage. Just when *Bardahl*'s seven-second lead at the end of lap three appeared firm, *Exide* started to move. Brow posted a fourth lap speed of 111.340 m.p.h. to narrow the gap to within three seconds of the leader. Charging harder than ever, Brow gradually pulled alongside *Bardahl* on the backstretch of the final lap. Brushing the entrance buoy of the final turn Musson hugged the turn while Brow took a slightly longer course. Racing for the finish line both boats were nearly airborne as their drivers induced nitrous oxide to the Rolls power plants in addition to the 115/145 octane aviation fuel normally used. Once again it was *Exide* in first followed by *Bardahl*, *Mariner Too* and *Savair's Mist*. *Gale's Roostertail* and *\$ Bill* failed to start.

In heat 2-B Bill Cantrell led the field until his supercharger "blew" yielding the spot to *Notre Dame* who out-distanced all competition in the five lap event. *Miss Budweiser* and *Miss Madison* completed the field.

Going into the final heat with a commanding lead in total elapsed time plus 100 points, *Miss Exide* was in a good position to win her second Diamond Cup. Rather than risk everything, Brow drove to a conservative third position behind first place *Miss Bardahl* and *Notre Dame*. *Miss Madison* took 4th followed by *Miss Budweiser* and *Mariner Too*.

For her over-all victory *Miss Exide* earned \$5,000 of the \$15,000 prize money and the rank of top contender for the Gold Cup scheduled for Aug. 8 in Seattle. Crews were using this race as an aid in evaluating innovations, and, this was the first competitive event in which *Miss Bardahl* had used nitrous oxide as a power booster and the first for *Exide's* new all-metal sponsons.

Final standings: (1) *Miss Exide*, 1,025 points, \$5,000; (2) *Notre Dame*, 1,000 points, \$3,700; (3) *Miss Bardahl*, 925 points, \$2,700; (4) *Mariner Too*, 620 points, \$2,100; (5) *Miss Madison* 563 points, \$1,600; (6) *Miss Budweiser*, 554 points, \$1,250; (7) *Miss Smirnoff*, 400 points, \$1,050; (8) *Savair's Mist*, 264 points, \$850; (9) *\$ Bill*, 225 points, \$750; (10) *Gale's Roostertail*, 0 points, \$700; (11) *Miss San Diego*; (12) *Tahoe Miss*.

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