





THE THUNDERING UNLIMITEDS

PHOTO BY BOE CARVER

The Gold Cuppers are off and running! Embarked on an eight race schedule that will see them criss-cross the nation from Guntersville, Alabama to San Diego, California, a small army of unlimited hydroplane camps launched the 1965 season in grand style, June 27, with the annual Dixie Cup Regatta. This year, the thunderboat teams are competing for an estimated \$250,000 in prize money climaxed by the world's richest boat race, Sept. 25, at Lake Tahoe.

For a synopsis of the first three races of the season and a pre-race report on the Lake Tahoe World Championships, turn the page.

WHISTLIN' IN DIXIE

THE SEASON'S FIRST race is an enigma. Who will come? How will each boat run? What new drivers will helm? Will facilities be better? And the final question—is it better to attend to scout competition and test, or skip it, test alone then come out with surprise speed the second or third event?

The unlimited contingent asked itself all these questions then fielded 12 boats for the June 27 Dixie Cup Regatta staged in Guntersville, Alabama and sanctioned by the American Power Boat Association.

Leading the trek to pits was 1964 defending champion *Notre Dame*. By Saturday, June 26, nine were on scene and qualified on a course extended from a short 2½ mile to the full 3-mile measurement.

Miss U.S. V., with Roy Duby helming, set a new speed record of 115.385-mph to top all qualifiers. *Notre Dame*, helmed by Rex Manchester, held a secure second spot with 108.001-mph.

From there down it was *Miss Madison* and Buddy Byers, 107.7; *Gale's Roostertail* and Jerry Schoenith, 107.6; *Tahoe*

Miss and Chuck Thompson, 106.615; *Miss Smirnoff* and Bill Cantrell, 105.264; *Miss Budweiser* and Chuck Hickling, 102.858; *Savair's Mist* and Ed O'Halloran, 101.4 and *Mariner Too* and Warner Gardner with 100.7-mph.

Such Crust IV and *Blue Chip* skinned under the wire by qualifying by last minute announcement of participation before Sunday's race.

A rainstorm that wrecked the new Martini & Rossi \$10,000 starting clock cleared completely to allow race day to dawn clear, hot and windless until afternoon when a 10-15 knot breeze sprang up.

Heat 1A brought a whistling start and unfortunate disappointment into initial competition. *Mariner Too* won the heat with a sizzling 110.787 (later corrected to 108) mph with *U.S. V* second at 106.930 and *Tahoe Miss* showing obvious engine trouble with 84.827-mph.

Disappointment came to *Miss Smirnoff* which got into the water but did not start, *Savair's Probe* which started but did not finish and *Such Crust* which didn't even get off the trailer to earn her "did not start"!

Heat 1B saw *Notre Dame* hold off repeated challenges by *Madison* to finish with a 104.046-mph average speed to

Madison's posted 103.646-mph. Drivers Manchester and Byers staged a five-lap duel for first that left the rest of the field well behind.

Gale's Roostertail was third with 99.103; *Savair's Mist* came in fourth at 88.771; *Miss Budweiser* finished fifth with 77.209 and *Blue Chip* did not finish at all due to engine trouble.

Another highlight of the heat came when *Savair's Mist* and *Budweiser* tangled in the first turn. Their collision produced sponson damage on *Budweiser* which was repaired quickly between heats.

The first section ended with defending champ *Notre Dame* and *Mariner Too* each a heat win up on the field as the draw for Heat 2A pitted them against one another as well as *Blue Chip*, *Savair's Mist*, *Gale's Roostertail* and *Miss Madison*.

From the start it was a resumption of the *Notre Dame-Mariner Too* duel with each boat trying to keep the other "on the hip" with some reasonable permanence. Suddenly, in lap two *Notre Dame* lost way and coasted to a stop — fuel system difficulty. The engine would not re-fire. Manchester and craft sat out the remainder of the heat knowing only incredibly bad luck for all other boats could put Shirley Mendelson McDonald's white beauty back in contention to retain the title.



ROGER SQUIRE PHOTO

As *Madison* roared home in second place and *Roostertail* in third, *Savair's Mist* and *Blue Chip* again posted a DNF to close the heat. Winner *Mariner Too* posted a heat average speed of 106.590-mph.

Heat 2B was expected to be hard fought, and would have been except for bad luck. The either-fast-or-dead *Miss U.S. V* and Roy Duby ran smartly at 109.756. *Tahoe Miss* turned in 100.111 while *Smirnoff* turned into trouble.

Miss Smirnoff got caught in a wake, the boat heeled, spun up high on one side, wavered in favor of disaster then somehow righted itself. But Cantrell had missed a buoy. Roaring in a tight infield circle, Cantrell picked up the neglected buoy and turned in a heat average of 94.037-mph. The strain had blown a supercharger.

So *Budweiser* was third with 99.009-mph. *Savair's Probe* did not finish – again.

Into the Final heat it was *Mariner Too* with two heat wins and 800 points; *U.S. V* with 700 points; *Madison*, 600; *Tahoe Miss*, 525; *Gale's Roostertail*, 450; *Notre Dame*, 400; and *Budweiser* as alternate with 352.

A roaring start turned into a roaring groan when spectators learned *U.S. V*, *Notre Dame* and *Tahoe Miss* jumped the gun. Late afternoon sun plus a pumping station in line of sight with the clock

reduced driver vision and judgement to cause the difficulty.

Miss Madison, judged by driver Buddy Byers to be too early on the line, eased off, resisted the impulse to follow when the rest boomed past, held steadfast in position and earned first place in the heat.

A penalty sixth lap altered the official place of finish, so *Gale's Roostertail* was second with 95.717-mph; *U.S. V* was third with 89.064; *Notre Dame* fourth with 85.119.

The favored boat that should have taken it all was *Mariner Too*. But she came in fifth with a sick engine accounting for her 82.430-mph speed. *Tahoe Miss*, even sicker, did not finish.

It was *Madison* with a 100.111-mph that garnered another 400 points for an overall point total of 1,000 and the Dixie Cup Trophy. *Mariner Too* rated second overall with 927; *U.S. V*, 925; *Gale's Roostertail*, 750; *Notre Dame*, 569; *Tahoe Miss*, 525; *Miss Budweiser*, 352; *Miss Smirnoff* and *Savair's Mist*, 169 each.

Drivers, owners and officials noted that boats seemed divided into two categories—they ran well or didn't run at all.

"This makes me think this season will see no particular boat dominate the field," mused Rex Manchester.

Buddy Byers, admitting he felt he'd

"backed into the win somewhat" noted there were six or seven top dogs. Yet *Miss Bardahl*, Gold Cup winner and national champion wasn't competing, nor was *Miss Exide* – both fast, reliable boats.

Drivers expect at least nine boats will be top caliber by mid-season.

It was a first race win for *Madison* after two seasons among top boats. Like the proverbial bridesmaid but never the bride, Byers and *Madison* had often been in the money but never in top spot.

For *Notre Dame* there was only mild disappointment. Driver and Team Manager Rex Manchester said, "We feel the regatta was a good 'shakedown race,' and other camps feel that way, too. We know better what the competition looks like and how we perform under racing conditions. We're certainly pleased with the way the boat handles and hope to do better next time."

"Next time" was Coeur d'Alene, Idaho for the Diamond Cup Regatta. Two weeks before race day 19 boats were entered and a few days later the total raised to 21 – the largest pre-race field in Diamond Cup history.

With the race compressed for the first time into a one-day event, the regatta promised more than the usual excitement. What it would deliver after each starting gun was anybody's guess.

MISS MADISON, WINLESS FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS, FINALLY COPS A CUP BY OUTLASTING A FAST BUT TROUBLED FIELD IN THE SEASON OPENER DOWN SOUTH.

STORY BY EILEEN CRIMMIN

• (At left): *Miss Madison* placed second twice and won the Final to wrap up the first unlimited contest of the year under driving of Buddy Byers. (Upper right): *Notre Dame* and *Miss U.S. V* roar down the straightaway. *U.S. V* set a new course qualifying record of 115.385-mph, placed third overall. (Lower right): Two-heat winner *Mariner Too* had to settle for second overall when engine soured in the Final.

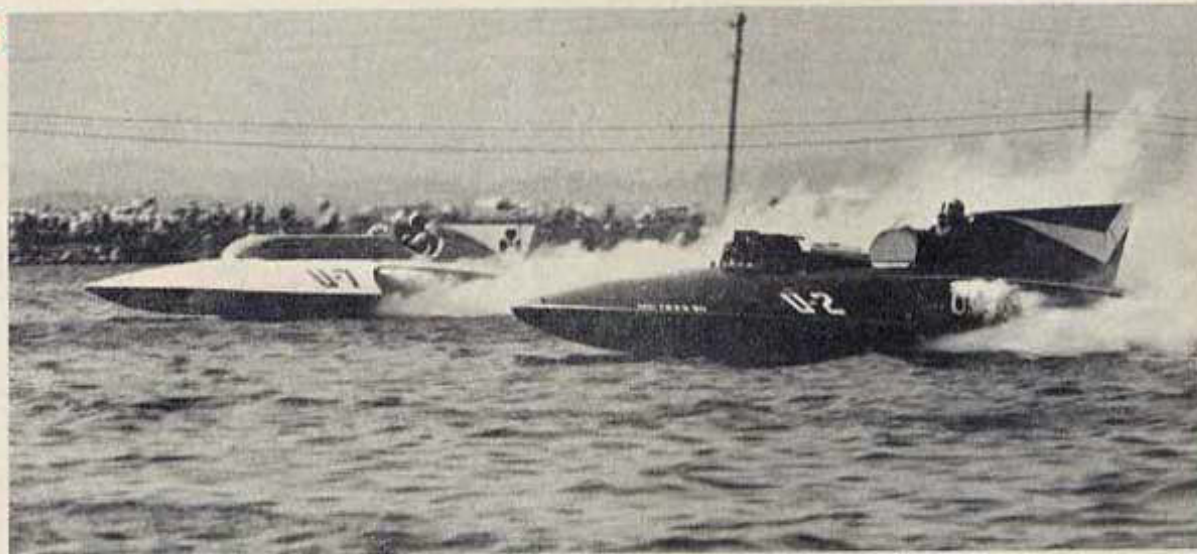


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