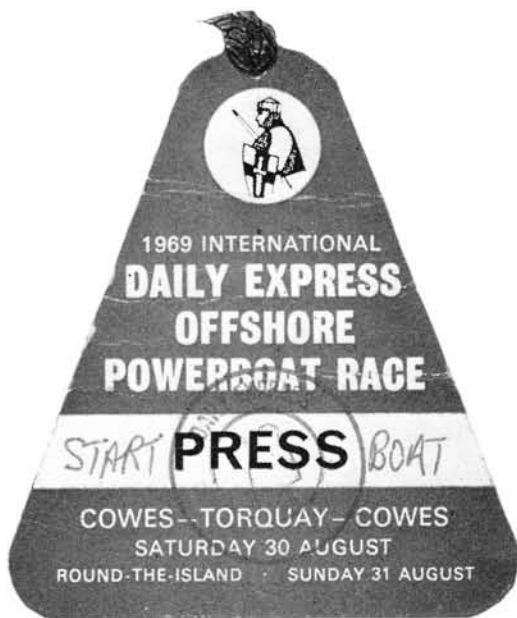


COWES - TORQUAY - COWES
SATURDAY 30th AUGUST



DAILY EXPRESS OFFSHORE POWERBOAT RACE

THE 1969 DAILY EXPRESS International Powerboat Race from Cowes to Torquay and back attracted a record number of 75 entrants. Undoubtedly this race gains in attraction every year, but one can't help wondering if the standard of race preparation is improving in similar proportions when 22 entrants fail to reach the starting line. One boat sank at its moorings, one sank when it was launched (sic!), one blew up its engine on trials, and then there were some that failed to get through scrutineering for one reason or another.

Hot favourite for a British win when the race started were *Miss Enfield*, the new Don Shead designed aluminium 33 footer powered by twin 475 Mercruisers, and driven by the designer himself—and Tommy Sopwith's *T.2*, of similar size and design but powered by twin Daytonas totalling 1,000 h.p. And then there was *Surfury*, veteran of many offshore races, but still very potent and quite capable of winning this race, as she won in 1967. These were the British favourites, but most people reluctantly admitted that the odds were that Britain would *not* win this year, for Don Aronow was in the race with his fantastic *The Cigarette*, and, if he should falter, the powerful Italian pair *Red Tornado* and *White Tornado* were there to take the winner's laurels. This event was, in fact, well supported by overseas visitors: in addition to the three boats already mentioned there was another Italian entry, two South African boats, and one lone Swedish entry.

When the guns were fired from the Royal Yacht Squadron 53 boats got away—from a mere 20 ft. 9 in. in length with 100 h.p. on the transom (*Psychedelic Surfer*) to the massive 42 ft. 0 in. of *Spirit of Ecstasy*, and the many boats with a grand total of 1,000 h.p. to propel them the 238 miles to Torquay and back. With that sort of differential between one end of the power scale and

the other, this race quickly split into three quite distinct events: the all-out sprinters travelling in the top end of the 60's; the ordinarily fast open racing boats (the boats that were *very* fast by earlier years' standards) ranging from 50 to 60 m.p.h.; and the cruisers—the nine Huntsmans, two Coronets, a Trident or two, a Tod, and various other cabin boats—travelling between the 30's and 50's.

Miss Enfield led the field past Cowes heading east for Southsea, but only by a boat's length from *Red Tornado* and *The Cigarette*. Behind them were *White*

Tornado, *T.2*, *Surfury* and *Meteor III*, the South African catamaran. Already one unfortunate boat had fallen by the wayside—Ralph Hilton's *H.T.S.* had suffered injector troubles right on the start line and was dejectedly heading back up the Medina River. The cruisers were off to a good start, with John Freeman's *Fordspeed* and Geoffrey Marsh's *Maid Fast* setting the speed at 40 m.p.h.

Hopes of Tommy Sopwith repeating his win of 1968 were short lived; between Cowes and Southsea *T.2* having made a good start, was forced to retire



Above: Vincenzo Balestrieri waves farewell to the race after his drive-shaft broke. Below: "Fordsport" (Peter Twiss) and "Seaspray" head for the Southsea turn buoy.



DAILY EXPRESS POWERBOAT RACE

(continued)

with rudder damage. Out on the same leg went Alan Burnard's *Sea Fox*, a strong contender for diesel honours; and out too went *Meteor III*, a boat that had interested many watchers, for catamarans are in vogue at the moment, and this one was reputed to travel very fast indeed. But propeller damage ended her hopes.

At Southsea the leaders were still *Miss Enfield*, *Red Tornado* and *The Cigarette*, and these boats were well in their stride at 66 m.p.h. Robin Bate-man's *Screwdriver*, the second smallest boat of all the 50-odd, and one that has not always been very lucky, was going beautifully in fifteenth place. Sir Max Aitken's *Gypsy Girl* leading the diesel boats, and the Hon. Edward Greenall's equally large *Gee* had little *Black Panther* sandwiched between them, making her look even smaller than her 21 ft. 7 in. But *Black Panther* overtook *Gypsy Girl* on the run back to Cowes, and there were other, more dramatic, changes at the head of the field, for *Red Tornado*, with the 1968 World Champion Vincenzo Balestrieri driving, retired with a broken drive shaft, and *The Cigarette* closed up just astern of *Miss Enfield*.

Conditions were about as ideal as they could be; not quite flat calm, but no sea to speak of, and of the 48 boats that passed Cowes heading west for Torquay more than a third were running at over 40 m.p.h. Between Cowes and Yarmouth the only other catamaran in the race, James and Mike Beard's highly successful *Volare II*, retired with a variety of problems besieging her. Her assorted GT outboards had taken her to seventh place at an average of 52 m.p.h. before disaster struck—not bad going at all.

At Anvil Point *The Cigarette* had taken the lead from *Miss Enfield*, but only by a minute or so. *Maltese Magnum Twin* led the smaller open boats, with the outboard powered *Melodrama* never very far behind. Ken Cassir in *Towmotor* headed the band of Class III boats, Trevor Howells in *Seahunter* was showing the Ford boats the way west.

Miss Enfield never reached Portland,



Miss Enfield gets airborne on the way past Cowes, heading for the Southsea turn buoy.

for on the way there the power steering packed up and ended her glorious bid for an outright win. With her went the boat that has won so many honours for Britain, Charles and Jimmy Gardner's *Surfury*, which was suffering from extreme overheating after damage sustained to the water pump. The halfway mark had yet to be reached, but England's very strong team of three boats that could have won this race outright had fallen. But what of Maurice Hardy in *Telstar*, the boat that won the race in 1968, and John Kennerley's *Maltese Magnum Twin*, and the Round Britain winning *Avenger Too* and *U.F.O.?* True they are all good, fast boats, and in an all-British race anyone of them would win with lots of time in hand. But they are around ten miles an hour slower than their foreign counterparts, and from Portland onwards this was a one-

horse race, with *The Cigarette* smoking off in front at an average speed of 66 m.p.h., all the way to Torquay, and all the way back to the finish at Cowes, which she reached twelve minutes ahead of the second boat in the record time of 3 hrs. 33 mins. That second boat was *White Tornado*, driver Francesco Cosentino, and he just sat in second place all the way there and back, never fast enough to come anywhere near catching *The Cigarette*, but so far ahead of the rest of the field that he couldn't be caught either.

Thus from Portland the British boats had their own private race for third place: at Portland *Maltese Magnum Twin* was in the lead, but at Torquay *Melodrama* had taken over and *U.F.O.* was pressing hard. *Melodrama* held

Don Aronow signs in at the winner's berth after his breathtaking win at an average speed of 66 m.p.h.



third place back to Portland again, but she had to complete the rest of the course on only two of her three outboards, and *Maltese Magnum Twin* charged past her to take third place. *U.F.O.* was catching up nicely when a broken drive shaft robbed her of a place in the first half dozen, and drivers Tim Powell and Norman Barclay had to crawl the last 50 miles back to the finishing line. Maurice Hardy in *Telstar* had no such misfortunes and finished fourth overall, *Melodrama* was fifth, the Swedish entry *Tam O'Shanter* was sixth, and *Avenger Too*, another boat with only two of her three outboards going right, was seventh.

Further down the field the smallest boats were chopping and changing around, with the large hulls of *Gypsy Girl* and *Gee* keeping a fatherly eye on them. *Towmotor* was leading the Class III contingent at Portland; *Snoopy*, the 25-footer with a single secondhand Ford car engine, was next in line, and then came Robin Bateman's *Screwdriver* and the Earl of Normanton's *Black Panther*. At Torquay *Screwdriver* had fallen back, her somewhat over-large windscreen now resembling nothing so much as a broken greenhouse. When Portland was passed for the second time she had rallied, but still *Towmotor* led the way. But Ken Cassir's luck and his petrol ran out at the Needles. A wicked disappointment after such a good run. *Snoopy* moved up to tenth place just behind the big diesel boats, and *Black Panther* became the first Class III boat to finish.

Seahunter, Trevor Howell's little cruiser, had an astonishingly good race. He took the lead in his class at Yarmouth, riding beautifully, and kept it all the way to Torquay and all the way back. His nearest rivals were the two Coronets which, after a few bothers at the start, quickly made up ground. Bernard Jelley's *Oh Oh Sex* is the faster boat and he was never very far behind *Seahunter*.

Class I was led throughout the race by John Freeman in *Fordspeed*, though he by no means had things all his own way. Geoffrey Marsh in *Maid Fast* sat on his transom in the early stages, and John Frost's *Fiducia* was right behind him as well. As the latter boat had undoubtedly sustained some damage to her props, by grounding the night before the race, she was moving surprisingly well. By Torquay *Fordspeed* had clear water between herself and these two rivals, and she continued to improve her position on the run back to Cowes, to finish thirteenth overall.



The Dutch Team who took part in the Irish Open Powerboat Championships at Broadmeadows, Malahide, Co. Dublin, organised by the Dublin/Balscadden Powerboat and Water Ski Club. L. to R. Front: Mrs. A. Peels, Mrs. Raymaker, Mrs. Ruberg. Rear: A. Peels (overall winner and OI Class Champion), J. Raymaker, H. Ruberg (Team Manager), F. A. Rosier (EV Class Champion).

Dutch Powerboat Team Win in Irish Open Championship



Above: A. Peels (Holland) overall winner Irish Open Powerboat Championships.

Below: N. Williams (Dublin/Balscadden) overall EV Mercury Champion.

