

POWERBOAT RACING



The start of the 1969 Wills Putney to Calais Rally at Tower Bridge. Unfortunately weather prevented the cross Channel section of the course from being attempted, and the race had to be turned round at Ramsgate. Photo: Jonathan Nettleton.



Winner of the Three Hour Grand Prix held at Chasewater on 14th/15th June. A Schultz Cat driven by Bob Spalding. Bob also came third in the O.I. Championship.

Photo: Brian Dewey.



James Beard and Clive Curtis in James' new Catamaran VOLARE II, pictured here during the Wills Putney to Calais Rally. Volare II was also entered in the Wills Speed Trophy event and showed her heels to the entire British contingent. But she was quite unable to live with the two Italians, Balestrieri and Consentino, and could only manage a rather poor third overall. Photo: Jonathan Nettleton.



It's here!! The first Molinari Cat (Number 4) to race in England. It is owned by Jackie Wilson who only collected the boat a few days before the Three Hour Grand Prix. On his first outing Jackie collected the Concours d'Elegance award.

Photo: Brian Dewey.

Vincenzo Balestrieri and Don Pruett in their Mercruiser Powered Bertram RED TORNADO in which they won the Wills Trophy Race at a record speed of almost 70 m.p.h. Perhaps the most amazing aspect of this feat is that the Bertram is a rough weather boat and it was a mirror calm day!

Photo: Press Photos International.



REVIEW OF OFFSHORE POWERBOAT RACING

By Hilary Chitty

AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS eight Class III races have come and gone, leaving behind them a wake of damaged boats and engines of unusually high proportions, especially as none of the races have been run under particularly rough conditions. Avengers, old — as represented by SCAVENGER and RED ALLIGATOR — and new (WICKED ALF, SLIPSTREAM and BLACK PANTHER) have dominated the scene both in weight of numbers and for sheer speed, and have crossed the line first in all the major races except the Swanage 80. VOLARE II, the catamaran everyone is talking about, was the first to finish at Swanage, with an average speed of 44.5 knots. The cat's speed is the highest average recorded so far this season, and it

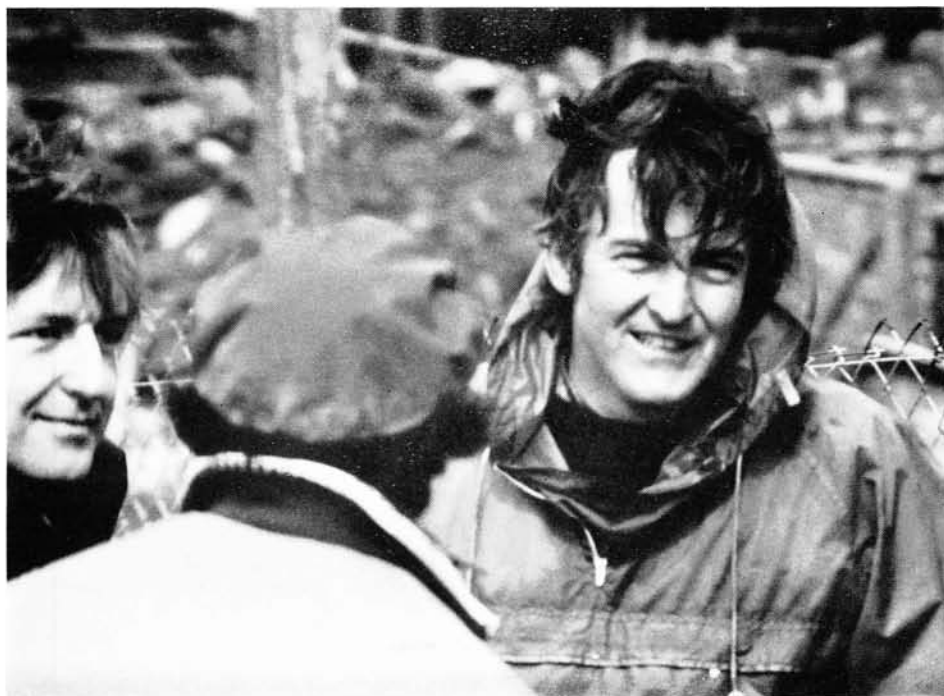
is interesting to note that this is far short of the highest speeds regularly attained in 1968.

By sheer weight of numbers the Mercury engines are always dominant, but they have by no means had things all their own way: the Earl of Normanton's BLACK PANTHER, which has scored one first and one second place so far, is powered by twin Johnson G.T.'s and that cat. has a pair of Evinrudes providing the motive power. On the other hand nobody can ignore the new BP Mercs. — for a start they'd have to be deaf to do so, and when they are going they go very fast. The only trouble is that, so far, they haven't been going for very long at a spell. This has resulted in a situation where the owners of "old

fashioned standard 100 Mercs. are winning by reliability — viz. SCAVENGER and RED ALLIGATOR — whilst the all-new outfits, potentially faster without a doubt, are seldom able to last the course.

Avengers represent about 35% of the racing field at the moment, but the Tremletts are not far behind. One or two of them are not far behind in speed, either. Nicky Cole's SPORTING CHANCE, for example, was right on the heels of Martin Jensen's SCAVENGER on the run back from Ramsgate in the Putney/Calais, and Phil Hook's PHILANDERER is another boat to watch in Class D. Both these boats were in existence last year, though they didn't do much. BLU BLUD, driven by Robin Guinness and Tony Denton, is also a 1968 boat. In last year's Putney/Calais it came back with a gaping hole in its side; this year it was third overall, and by all accounts was going like a bomb. The week before BLU BLUD chalked up a second in the Burnham Classic as well.

James Beard, a happy man after his win at Swanage in VOLARE II's first outing



Class C, once upon a time, was the class for hot competition. Unfortunately it is dwindling in numbers — losing to Class D mostly — and nothing like as competitive as it was. At most events it is dominated by Alf Bullen's WICKED ALF, with occasional challenges from MISTRAL, now known as SHALL WE GO. The lack of competition in this class has made WICKED ALF seem to be going very fast; undoubtedly she is fast, but she is only as fast as MISTRAL was last year, and slightly faster than Alf's previous boat BERTZERK. What makes her look extra swift is the fact that the fastest of the C class boats from earlier days — VOLARE, PA RUG, MISTRAL and BERTZERK are not racing this year, and C Class consists now of

Berkeleys, Fletchers and glass Sorcerers which, good though they are, are no match for the racing Avenger. MISTRAL, or rather SHALL WE GO, did race in the Burnham Classic and her speed was only a little slower than WICKED ALF'S normal speed.

Class B, small though it is, is having a field day at the moment, because of the Class III Championship. The method of allocating points in the Championship this year is based upon the boats aiming to achieve, or better still beat a target speed. Those targets are, as they must be, based upon earlier performances. B Class was not very brilliant last year, so their target is attainable, and has indeed been attained by FLYING FLEA, powered by an 80 Merc. The success of this boat in winning maximum points in two Championship races has stimulated interest in Class B, and the competition should be very fierce indeed. SCAVENGER in Class E is currently leading the Championship table with three sets of points counted, because FLYING FLEA failed to collect any points in the



SCAVENGER and VOLARE II heading down river at the start of the Putney/Calais Rally
Photo. C. N. O'Brien

Putney/Calais, and only has two results to count. BLU BLUD is a close third, on three results.

BRONCO, the Fletcher driven by Peter Woodroffe, is the pacesetter in Class A so far — the boat to beat. This is another Class where Championship points can be picked up and the competition should get hotter as the season progresses — there are one or two boats not going quite right yet, and promising to be good eventually.

Two Class IV races have been run so far this season — the first run in co-operation with East Kent Marine at Sandwich attracted nine entries, some of whom put their Class III counterparts to shame. War was declared between Albert Boozer in a Johnson-powered

Shakespeare, and Nigel Broadhead driving KRAKATOA, who also races in Class III, and a real battle it was. KRAKATOA led by 15 seconds at the end of the first lap, and increased her lead to 30 seconds on the second; but during the third and final lap Albert Boozer got just a little more speed from somewhere, rearranged his crew to get the boat going its fastest, and crossed the line a mere three seconds ahead of KRAKATOA. A further bit of one upmanship was practised in Class B, with the Fletcher driven by Mike Dalton recording a time 46 seconds faster than his Class III rival Derek Love, also in a Fletcher, but with a more powerful engine.

One or two general observations: several competitors have learnt

FLYING FLEA, minus some spray rail driven by Pat O'Brien and Bob Boorman in the Burnham Classic
Photo. Maurice Crettenden



the hard way that it is unwise to retire from a race too early. A spot of bother in the early stages of the race, quickly put right, doesn't necessarily put you out of the running for prizes. The Burnham race was a very good example of this. The finishing order of the first eight boats seemed predictable long before the finish, but there was an unexpected crop of incidents, and the eighth boat suddenly was second, and those further down the field found they too had moved up the finishing list, although they didn't realise it, and in the Putney/Calais a boat that wasted an hour in Ramsgate still finished seventh on aggregate. If you can keep going it's less disappointing to do so, however late, than find at the finish that there were only two boats in front of you, not twelve as you thought. In relation to this it should be noted that, at Championship races points are allocated down to the 20th boat on the list — no matter how bad the 20th boat's performance.



Phil Hook's PHILANDERER going well in The Solent 70

THE BOATS OF THE MOMENT OFFSHORE

541 SCAVENGER 2nd overall SWANAGE 80 44 knots
1st overall BURNHAM CLASSIC 42 knots
1st overall PUTNEY/CALAIS 41.5 knots

SCAVENGER was the original AVENGER, the prototype of the current Avenger range, built in glassfibre for the 1967 Daily Express Race. In that race she was driven by her designer, Don Shead, and Mike Beard and finished fifth overall. She was subsequently acquired by Martin Jensen, who added a couple of letters to her name, and has raced her consistently and successfully since. Martin always gives full credit to the navigation done by his co-driver Tim Christie, his regular partner, and certainly they always appear to take the shortest possible route between two points. SCAVENGER is 21 ft. long and powered by two standard 100 h.p. Mercs., as she has always been, and she is still all yellow, distinguishable from her yellow stablemates by being slightly lighter in colour.

012 FLYING FLEA 1st CLASS B SWANAGE 80 32.2 knots
1st CLASS B BURNHAM CLASSIC 32.6 knots

FLYING FLEA is the only boat of her kind — to date. She is the brainchild of marine dealer Bert Williams and her builder George Brunt, who laboured over her creation during the winter of 1968-69. She is 16 ft. long, white, and vaguely reminiscent of a fore-shortened Delta, with a long sharp nose. She carries a lot of spray rail and rides very high in the water. She was originally powered by a 100 h.p. Mercury, but is now using an 80 h.p. FLYING FLEA is driven by Pat O'Brien, who has had many years experience offshore, and Bob Boorman, who drove VOLARE during 1968, and now tells Pat the shortest way round the course. FLYING FLEA was damaged during the Putney/Calais, but we understand this will not deter Pat and Bob from chasing Championship points.

07 VOLARE II 1st overall SWANAGE 80 44.5 knots
4th overall PUTNEY/CALAIS 37 knots

There is nothing offshore like VOLARE II, the catamaran driven by James Beard and Clive Curtis. She is large, 23 ft. long, and wide with two 115 h.p. Evinrudes to propel her and stepped hulls to give her a lift. James and Clive studied the Switzer Wing cats. on the circuits in the States last year, and set to work to produce something as good or better. On her first outing, at Swanage, she acquitted herself handsomely and was first across the line. James Beard previously raced offshore in the Levi VOLARE which was very successful, and Clive Curtis is one of the original few who started Class III racing in this country some eight years ago. Both were excellent and experienced drivers, their only weakness being a slight vagueness in the navigation department perhaps.

The All Hallows Yacht Club's Class IV race had eleven entries and here Mike Dalton triumphed again by achieving 99.23% of his Class target speed to win on Index of Performance. G. W. Norton won Class A, and Albert Boozer in Class C.

From the little that has been seen of Class IV so far it would seem that competition could be very fierce indeed. The boats are fairly well matched, indeed there are usually identical outfits racing against each other, and who wins is truly a question of driving skills.



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