

ITALIANS LEAD THE WAY



Elastic reflection from *Red Tornado* as she skates across calm water to victory.

Report on the Wills Speed Trophy for Classes I and II by Ray Bulman.

ALTHOUGH the Bahama 500 was held on the same weekend, Vincenzo Balestrieri chose to attend the W. D. and H. O. Wills Speed Trophy offshore race in the Solent on June 14 organised by the Royal Southern Y.C. With the South African powerboat race two months before, the first event counting towards the World Championship, the Bahama and Wills give the top drivers a difficult choice. But Balestrieri certainly made the correct decision for *his* venue: not only did he win, he also found flat seas that gave him the chance to better Don Aronow's offshore speed record.

Accompanied as always by Don Pruett, the current World Champion drove his Bertram 31 *Red Tornado*, powered by a pair of the huge 496 cu.in. MerCruiser sterndrives, to roar home at an average of 60.6 knots (just over 70 mph) two minutes ahead of compatriot Francisco Cosentino driving an identical outfit. Cosentino's *White Tornado* finished 30 minutes ahead of perhaps the biggest surprise of all—*Volare II*, driven by James and Mike Beard, that could only muster 230 hp from her Evinrude X115 power pack—almost 1000hp less than *White Tornado*! Although the sea conditions were very much in her favour. *Volare II* showed a clean pair of heels to many other more highly powered craft. And it is now obvious with this, and her performance in Class III so far, that James, her designer, has really achieved a breakthrough with this catamaran.

But almost as outstanding was Alan 'Pascoe' Watson's Souter/Shead *Avenger Too*, fourth three minutes later and first of the competitors entered in the *Daily Telegraph* and BP Round Britain on July 26. Considering that her three 125 hp Mercury outboards had only been attached to her stern that morning with no time for proper trials, this boat will be worth watching.

With this being the last major event prior to the Round Britain and an ideal test bed in which to try out the competition, it was surprising that so few entered. Twenty-three started, only three being overseas entries, but 19 finished, which at least proved mechanical reliability if not the hulls in the flat seas prevailing.

Perfect start

A disappointed non-starter was Tommy Sopwith whose new Souter/Shead Daytona powered *T2* failed to achieve full engine power in practice. Another—and this one a Round Britain contender—that failed to make the line-up was Ralph Hilton's Leyland diesel powered *H.T.S.*—also a Souter/Shead. This left the main British defence in the hands of the Gardner Bros in *Surfury* and Maurice Hardy's *Telstar*—last year's Cowes/Torquay/Cowes winner—or so everyone thought.

If ever a race start can be to the text book, then this must have been as close as is possible. All the signals were fired dead on time—the field creamed across the mirror surface towards Southsea Pier, the flag dropped as the start boat peeled off, and they were away down the Solent heading for the Shambles via Bournemouth. The Red and White Tornados were way out on their own followed like a dart by David Stapleford's BP powered *Avenger Hellfire*. And the leaders were setting such a pace, that by the time they reached the Needles the next leading bunch behind, consisting of the Swedish *Senorita Mercedes*, *Volare II* and *Avenger Too*, were still way back beyond Hurst Point. *Hellfire*, unfortunately, had fallen back off Cowes with low revs on one engine, and *Surfury* had retired with a blown engine while lying seventh—all happening within a few miles.

The much modified *Delta*, now boasting a swordfish type snout that caused the scrutineers much concern the previous day, slowly moved through the field up to tenth place, and Tim Powell and Norman Barclay in *U.F.O.* were also challenging the leading group around fifth overall, but it was just not her weather. Meanwhile, *Powerboat Magazine*, a Round Britain Cleopatra with Lady Arran, Heather Twiss and Alf Bullen aboard, was running in fits and starts at the rear—trouble later found to be caused by glass-fibre strands in her fuel.

Even in ideal conditions navigational errors can be made, and



Francisco Cosentino drove *White Tornado*, twin brother to *Red Tornado*, into second place.

What the eye-witness didn't see. Reverse negative print gives oil slick appearance to aerial start photo.



Third boat home, the comparatively tiny *Volare II*, driven by James Beard and Clive Curtis. Note the aerofoil centre section and the step halfway along the bottom of the hull.

several lost their advantage—Alan Burnard in *Sea Fox* going astray near the Fairway Buoy to be followed by Bernard Jelley in his new *Coronet Oh Oh Sex*, and many more were convinced Southbourne mark had been purposely moved off station!

Lobster pot pick-up

Off Swanage, the Swedish entry *Senorita Mercedes* came to a standstill, at about the same time the two leading Bertrams reached the Shambles L.V. Don Pruett complained after of having picked up a lobster pot in this area, but it obviously made no difference to his speed. As if to endorse their fantastic lead, one of the sponsor's patrolling aircraft reported the two *Tornadoes* stationary alongside each other with crews having a chat, and from an altitude of 300 ft, the pilot could see no sign of the third boat as far as the horizon.

Maurice Hardy's *Telstar* was having spasmodic electrical trouble and stopped twice—once off Bournemouth and again off Weymouth—to be passed by *Delta* and *Melodrama*, but both of these craft were destined not to finish: *Delta* suffered low oil pressure on the way back to the Wight; *Melodrama* was disqualified when one of her crew members removed his crash helmet.

But the pattern had now been set—the two leaders way out on their own with *Volare II* 20 miles astern, followed by *Avenger Too* with rally driver Timo Makinen aboard, and an unlucky *Hellfire* that but for a duff engine could have been lying further up the field.

Martin Jensen's *Scavenger*, lying eleventh, was one of the last to retire when his port gearbox broke down near St. Catherine's Point. Nevertheless, he and his co-driver Tim Christie had the good fortune of watching the remainder of the race from the deck of their luxurious rescuer—Tommy Sopwith's *Philante*.

While the strong Round Britain group of Ford diesel-powered Faireys could finish no higher than eleventh overall, they won several prizes in their class, and their all-round reliability should prove hot competition in July.

WILLS SPEED TROPHY

Prize categories

Overall position	Name	Driver	Boat/Engine	Class
1st	<i>Red Tornado</i>	V. Balestrieri	Bertram/Mercruiser	OPI
Prizes: 1st Overall, 1st Class OPI, Wills Speed Trophy				
2nd	<i>White Tornado</i>	F. Cosentino	Bertram/Mercruiser	OPI
Prizes: 2nd Overall				
3rd	<i>Volare II</i>	J. Beard	Osborne/Beard/Evinrude	OPII
Prizes: 3rd Overall, 1st Class OPII, 1st Outboard				
11th	<i>Fordspeed</i>	J. Freeman	Fairey/Ford	CI
Prizes: 1st Class CI, 1st Restricted Diesel, 1st Production A				
9th	<i>Miss Smirnoff</i>	B. Peters	Coronet/Volvo	CII
Prizes: 1st Class CII, 1st Production B				
15th	<i>Sea Fox</i>	A. Burnard	Burnard/Perkins	CII
Prizes: 1st Unlimited Diesel				
10th	<i>Oh Oh Sex</i>	B. Jelley	Coronet/Volvo	CII
Prizes: Concours d'Elegance				
7th	<i>Telstar</i>	M. Hardy	Souter/Daytona	OPII
Prizes: 1st Royal Southern Y.C. Member				