

# POWER REPORTING

## Wills International

THE W.D. and H.O. Wills International powerboat race is one of the two world championship races held in this country (the other being the Daily Express race) and usually it attracts some foreign competitors. This year's event was no exception: Vincenzo Balestrieri and Don Pruett came over with a new Tornado, powered by twin 425 Mercruisers, under the Italian flag. The other foreign contenders were a second Italian-entered Tornado, and a Swedish Boghammer boat, Daytona powered. There were 20 British entries, most of which were familiar, but one or two of them new. Of particular interest was Pascoe Watson's new OPII Avenger 27ft 11½in overall and powered by triple 125 BP Mercs, which it is Pascoe's intention to take on the Round Britain race. The other boat of note was James Beard's 'Volare II', the outboard powered catamaran out for its first Class I and II race, with Mike and James Beard aboard.

The Royal Southern Y.C. had plotted an interesting course for the race this year, a great improvement on the 'twice round the Island' of the past. From the starting line off Portsmouth (a dress rehearsal for the Round Britain race start) the boats were to go through the Solent to the Fairway buoy, up to Branksome, west to Weymouth, then down to the Shambles Light Vessel, back to Branksome, then round the south of the Island to the Nab Tower, through the Solent to Lymington Spit and to the finish at Hill Head—a total distance of 155 n.miles. Had there been heavy weather, this course had everything—open sea legs and in-shore legs. But there was no weather to speak of 'Force 2, gusting 1 all over the place'. In fact the sea was like glass and the only wind was that of the boats' passing. So it was full throttle and full speed all the way.

And what a speed—the Bertram 'Red Tornado', driven by Balestrieri and Pruett covered the course in 158 minutes, an average of 59 knots (68 mph) and was back at the Hamble in time for lunch. 'White Tornado' was less than two minutes behind at the finish, having covered the course at 58 knots. These two boats are no lightweight fliers, but 31 feet of good sea boat. But what of the British defender 'Surfury'? She was well to the fore at the start and looked to be going in her customary efficient style as they headed westwards down the Solent. But some 20 minutes after the start she was seen heading slowly back home, a gudgeon pin through the sump being the cause. 'Delta', the No.2 Gardner entry, had excited comment. She has been modified dramatically during the winter by the fitting of an additional bottom, rather like a float, protruding well forward of the existing hull, and supported beneath the true boat bow by a metal structure. She looked potent and caused the officials to shake their heads in concern. Driven by Ricky and Anthony Gardner, 'Delta' did, in fact, go very well. She reached Portland in seventh place and back to the Fairway Buoy, but then she ran out of oil for one

engine and was forced to retire. Apparently she was going very nicely into such wind as there was, but it has yet to be found out how she performs downwind.

The retirement of 'Surfury' and 'Delta' left the British section of the field wide open. 'Avenger Too', driven by Timo Makinen, was going beautifully at the western end of the course, and so was 'Volare II'. UFO was two minutes astern of 'Avenger Too', which was a little surprising for conditions were not in her favour. Next came David Stableford and Richard Eldridge in 'Hellfire', extremely well placed thanks to the installation of contra-rotating props the night before the race. After 'Hellfire' came 'Delta', then 'Melodrama', 'Telstar', 'Scavenger' and 'Red Alligator'—all in the OP category. 'Miss Smirnoff', the Coronet driven by Peter Hennessy, led the cabin boats at St. Albans, followed in line astern by 'Rebel IB', Norman Ramseyer's OP Avenger, and then the four Huntsmen 'Fordspeed', 'Maid Fast', 'Seaspray' and 'Fordpower'. The other Coronet entered, Bernard Jelley's new 'Oh Oh Sex', was well down the field at this stage, some fifteen minutes behind 'Miss Smirnoff', having made a large detour off the course in search of the Fairway Buoy. A five-minute span of time covered the four Huntsmen and Geoffrey Marsh in his Perkins powered boat was pressing hard on the heels of the leading member of the group, John Freeman's Ford powered 'Fordspeed'.

Alan Burnard's 'Sea Fox' was surprisingly tailing the fleet. The sole Swedish entry limped home at very slow speed. It is shattering to realise in retrospect that by the time some of the cabin craft were rounding the Fairway prior to circuiting the Island, the winning OP boats were across the finishing line. 'Red Tornado' and 'White Tornado' finished just after 12.30pm. 'Volare II's' twin Evinrudes kept going beautifully and she took third place, and the outboard prize, at an average

speed of 49 knots. 'Avenger Too' was fourth at slightly over 48 knots, and 'Hellfire' was fifth at 46 knots. 'UFO' did well to finish sixth, followed in by 'Melodrama', some 20 minutes ahead of 'Telstar'.

Meanwhile, back on the course near Lymington Spit buoy, the last turn before the finish, 'Red Alligator' was sighted, all on her own. Next came 'Miss Smirnoff', with 'Oh Oh Sex' now hot in pursuit, having closed up from fifteen minutes astern to eight. There were more changes further down the line, 'Fordspeed' still led the Huntsman crowd, but 'Seaspray' had been driven by Lady Aitken into the second slot, then same 'Sea-hunter', going well, then 'Maid Fast' and 'Fordpower'.

'Miss Smirnoff' was the first cruiser to cross the line (33.6 knots) with 'Oh Oh Sex' seven minutes astern. 'Fordspeed' was next and the first CI boat, followed by 'Seaspray', 'Maid Fast' and 'Fordpower'.



(above) The winner, 'Red Tornado' driven by Balestrieri — photo Lacey.



The Gardner brothers' 'Delta' has been modified and now has a false nose reminiscent of Sonny Levi's Ram Craft. She retired from this race — Press Photos International.