

Half is Better

Than Nothing

by Bill Holder and John Teter

Imagine playing only one half of the super bowl game and having to determine the world champion of football based on that abbreviated segment of the competition. Well, mother nature decided to play havoc with the Outboard Pleasure Craft (OPC) Marathon Nationals and all the drivers who took home the glory obtained it based on only the first day of racing activity.

It couldn't happen two times in the same year but it almost did! This is the second race that has been partly halted by the unpredictable winds that whip across the flat corn land of Ohio and the St. Mary's course. As the drivers left the race site, they muttered under their helmets that the outboard god of wind must not be too pleased with their performances of late.

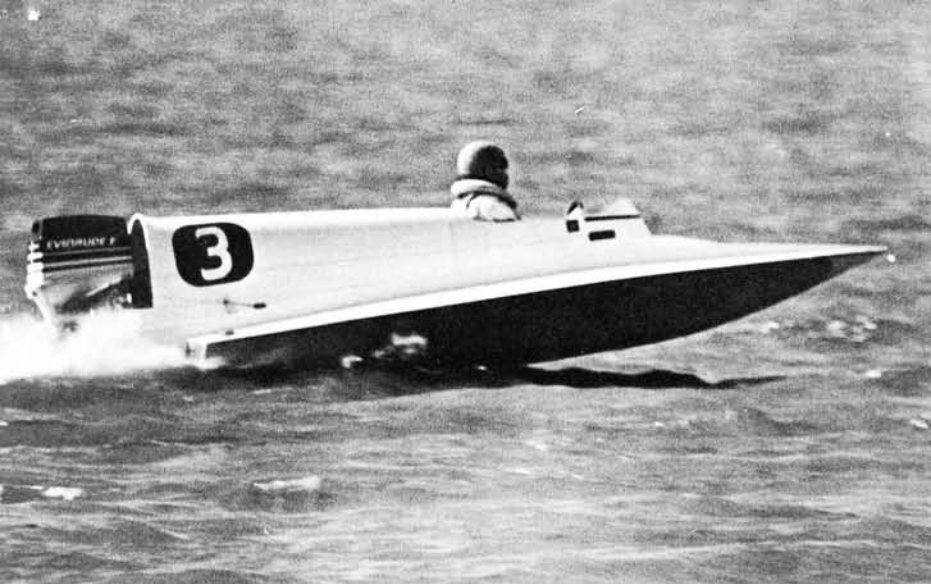
Despite the gusty blasts across the course, the town's people who organized the event deserve a lot of credit. The initial racing program at St. Mary's began five years ago and their professional operation had promoters across the country watching with envy.

Another problem facing the OPC Marathon Nationals was that the date had been changed so there were no

A big field of fifty SE, SJ, SG and S class competitors ready themselves for the Le Mans start.

(Photo by Burton Andrews)





Tim Briggs set a new SE record in his Evinrude 70 powered Miles tunnel.
(Photo by Bob Harmeyer)

factory teams from either the OMC or the Mercury camps, as they had shuffled off to run in Europe. But there were a lot of hot rigs in attendance, approximately 140 of the storming outboards.

The decision to cancel the second day's racing action was decided about noon and the heat winners from the previous day would take home the gold. That one day's worth of racing consisted of four one hour sprints and covered some thirteen different classes. The day was highlighted by the victory of Art Kennedy in UI class



Gusty winds made the St. Mary's course a rough one for all drivers.
(Photo by Burton Andrews)



Tunnel hulls had to be especially careful with unpredictable winds and choppy water.
(Photo by Joe Glick)

which gave him an unprecedented third straight national championship. Cool Art won by more than a lap over his closest pursuer in the five boat field.

Good looking Tim Briggs of Lake Forest, Illinois, had a great day driving in two of the day's four heats. Briggs finished third in the U class and then, without taking time to catch his breath, jumped into his SE boat and burned it to a new national record performance. Even though the lake was starting to kick up, the Briggs machine turned the triangular shaped course at a 56.250 clip.

By the time the final heat of the day came on Saturday, which included UJ, UI and X classes, the course was

really questionable but the drivers were determined to get on with the show. There were some seven or eight boats damaged by the rough running conditions on Saturday including one collision as a sinking boat came roaring into the pits. Not only was there boat damage on Saturday but also quite a bit of human damage. No less than seven drivers had to make a trip to the hospital. Fortunately none of them were hurt seriously. Gary Reynolds of Port Ewen, New York, was on the top of the casualty list with a shoulder injury and Mike Quayle of Huron, Ohio, sustained an ankle injury going into deep shock for about an hour.

The first heat three classes combined up for a run at the money. FE class was garnered by Bill Vogel from Orlando, Florida, while Bill Cameron showed the way in FJ. Dick Hunter was the defending national champion in the FJ class but mechanical gremlins prevented a

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repeat performance. The talented lad from Indialatic, Florida, threw a prop blade and finished a disappointing fourth just out of the money.

A total of 33 boats took off in the second heat representing FG, SD and U classes. Lynn Nichols of Lake Ronkonkoma, New York, was the winner in FG while Jeff Palmer led the fleet in the SD class. Len Sutter of Wausheka, Wisconsin, finished first in the competitive U class and had a few words about the course as he shed his goggles in the pits.

"It wasn't too bad when we first started running but then the course got real rough," commented a tired champion. "Because you are running in a triangle you never run with or against the wind. It is coming at you at a 45 degree angle and believe me that really creates problems."

Sutter continued to say that he was scheduled for a ride in the S class but that he felt the risk was too great and he watched the remainder of the action from the shore.

The third heat of the abbreviated nationals competition was a sight to behold as 50 boats took off from the Le Mans type start. It was simply bank-to-bank boats as SE, SJ, SG and S classes started for an hour on the continually worsening waters. As previously mentioned, Tim Briggs was in the cockpit of the winning boat in the SE class while Ray Parker copped the SJ class. Dan Pierce made it through the hour marathon with a victory in the SG class and Florida's own Jeff Titus took the S class glory.

UJ, UI and X classes were represented by eighteen boats in the fourth heat. Chick Gagen was the victor in UJ and Marty O'Neill took the X class event.

Technical inspection after the races showed that some guys were trying to slip in some goodies for the nationals as there were possibly three disqualifications discovered during teardowns. Bill Kelly who had finished second in the SE got the thumb as did Terry Heuberty who had garnered the FE class until they put the wrenches to his powerplant. As we go to press the FS class was still up for grabs as there was continuing deliberation on the legality of Howard Pipkorn's engine. Howard had initially been awarded the class running some 25 laps during the time limit.

A sad situation faces the St. Mary's Chamber of Commerce and it is unknown what the future holds for this fine facility. With the excellent

Dayton facility so close, the two hold a corner this year on powerboat championship and national events. Between the pair, which are a mere 50 miles apart, there were three national championships, one divisional championship, one unlimited race and one scheduled inland international race.

With the increase of powerboat racing in the midwest, all boat racing fans should hope that the St. Mary's crew doesn't give up and gives it another try. Power boat racing today needs guys with spirit and the team at St. Mary's has demonstrated that they possess that championship vitality so necessary for running a successful meet, even if mother nature tries to throw a damper on things!



Tim Briggs waits and watches as his record setting Evinrude powerplant is inspected.



Mike Quayle injured an ankle in a U class accident.

(Photo by Joe Glick)

OPC MARATHON NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

ST. MARYS, OHIO
September 14-15, 1974

RESULTS

CLASS SD		
1st Place	Jeff Palmer	Evinrude 50 Delta
CLASS FE		
1st Place	Bill Vogel	Evinrude 70 Delta
CLASS SE		
1st Place	Tim Briggs	Evinrude 70 Miles
(Set new 1-hour marathon record)		
CLASS FG		
1st Place	Lynn Nichols	Mercury 850 Allison
CLASS SG		
1st Place	Dan Pierce	Mercury 850 Kitson
CLASS UI		
1st Place	Art Kennedy	Johnson GT-10 Molinari
CLASS FJ		
1st Place	Bill Cameron	Mercury 1500 Allison
CLASS SJ		
1st Place	Ray Parker	Mercury 1500 Stinson
CLASS UJ		
1st Place	Chick Gagen	Mercury Twister I ZonkerCraft
CLASS FS		
1st Place	Howard Pipkorn	Mercury 1500 Hydrostream
CLASS U		
1st Place	Lee Sutter	Mercury Twister II X — Molinari
CLASS S		
1st Place	Jeff Titus	Johnson Scotti
CLASS X		
1st Place	Marty O'Neill	Mercury Twister II X — Molinari