

MURRAY TAKES TOLL OF SKIERS

LOW water, a narrow river, and snags an ever-present danger, made the Southern 80 ski trial on the Murray from Torrumbarry to Echuca, somewhat perilous. The event has had a big question mark hanging over it for some years because of the high number of broken boats.

This year, it had a broken leg to add to the casualty list. Barry Lyons, skiing behind Checkmate in Class 4, hit a log, and suffered a compound fracture of the lower leg. The injury is so serious that he may not ski again — at least not competitively.

Broken boats there were too, as usual. The Dance brothers' imported Carioca actually broke in half, and only the bit with the engine on it was recovered.

Whether it hit anything is problematical. The prevailing theory is that the gearbox gave way, and the

jackshaft snapped back and hit the rudder. The shaft was bent at right angles to the motor.

Graeme Dance escaped with bruised ribs.

The day before the race, there was a very nasty accident on the river, when a boat not involved in the race towing two children, swerved to avoid an oncoming boat and hit a snag. The skiers and observer got out of it with a shaking, but the driver was seriously injured.

All this goes to suggest that the Murray when the cockies downriver are irrigating like mad, is bad medicine for water skiing.

If the event is to survive at all it should obviously be held earlier or later in the season. Winter seems the best bet, when the level of the river is likely to be reasonably high, and stable. Once the snows melt, you've always got the possibility of spring

flooding — which has been the case three years in a row, now.

The sixth of the eight Victorian ski trials which carry championship series points, it might have been expected that the Southern 80 would play an important role in the fight for the various class championships.

Not really. At least half of the 12 classes contested were won by boats recording their first win of the season. One of these was Tequila, which popped up for the first time in Class 3 (under 6-litre inboard).

But Tequila scored again in Class 12 (junior girls), where she has been slugging it out with Mercedes and Rattler all year.

This, her first win after two seconds and two thirds, may give Tequila a chance of taking the class title.

Another boat which may have gained some sort of a chance as a result of success in the Southern 80 was

Suicide, which with two races still to go, now has two wins and a third to stack against Locomotion's three wins and two seconds in Class 4.

Ray Craddock's unbeaten Stinga recorded her sixth successive win in Class 5, with that title long since beyond doubt.

The outboard Hydron salted Class 6 away with her third win of the season, which is supported by two seconds.

Kevin Hayes took Class 1, but with his Concorde Harada, which recorded its first win of the season.

His imported Harada, with two wins and two seconds, still has the job of catching up with Rambler's pre-Christmas run of success — a second, followed by a hat-trick of wins.

Class 1 still hangs on the last two events of the season, on Lake Boga and Green's Lake.

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Southern 80

Outright:

1, Concord Harada, 41.25, Leigh Knopp, Barry Card; 2, Rapid, 48.24, Leigh Casey, Geof Casey; 3, Stinga, 48.26, Tony Alsop, Graeme Hardie.

Class 1:

Hamilton; 2, Skack Alice, 1.48.48, Peter Webb, Wayne Webster.

Class 5:

1, Stinga, 48.26, Tony Alsop, Graeme Hardie; 2, Interceptor, 49.27, Rob Vigors,

Class 9:

1, Black Power, 54.58; 2, Gold Finger, 1.05.35.

Class 10:

1, Rolco, 54.48, Wendy Kerr, Leonie Sloot; 2, Aztec, 1.01.35, Beryl Jansen, Sharron Sills.

Class 11:

1, Hallet Sales, 1.07.15, Graham Schulz, Mark O'Mahony; 2, Riviera Craft, 1.15.04, Trevor Stott, Steven Stott; 3, Reactor