



THE SOUTHERN 50, VICTORIA.

Relatively new to Victoria, water ski racing has grown in two years, to the stage where there are now five well-sponsored events during the season. Despite its spectacular growth, however, and the rapid improvement in times which has gone with it, ski racing in Victoria is still behind New South Wales, but we are working on it.

The Southern 50, a 52 mile race between Torrumbarry Weir and Echuca, like the Loch Sport Classic in January was another reminder of this fact, with a Sydney boat winning.

With a field of 60, racing up river this time, so as to provide a crowd-pleasing finish at Echuca, it was expected that the winner would break the 50 minute barrier for the 52 mile journey, shattering the record by at least 6 minutes. The record, 56.015 was set by Siesta Marine last year. This boat, now racing in Class 2, as Persuader, was in the race again this year, but the favourites were Bob Dance's famous inboard Carioca, and the Jackson Bros. equally famous outboard, Avenger Too, winner of this season's Eppalock Classic endurance speedboat race, as well as a swag of ski races and other events.

Other boats expected to record fast times were Terrorfire, a new boat powered by a 351 Ford, a twin rig Mercury outboard from South Australia called Tobin and Bullet II, a V8 powered Seacraft.

But down from Sydney came Wally Hackett, with an SK. boat called Thunderbolt and there went the water ski race.

Avenger's Evinrude Strangler motor hauled champion skiers Glen Thurlow and Ian Faulkner over the Torrumbarry-Echuca track in 53 min. 8 sec., a fantastic time for a motor a quarter the size of other motors in the unlimited class. But it was not fast enough. Thunderbolt flew over the course in 49 min. 38 sec. and that included a fall at the start. With the many sharp turns in the river, skiers Peter Ward and B. Robberds were still managing speeds of 75 m.p.h. in the short straights.

The Dance boys collided early in the race when Robert was whipped out of the wake on a turn and skied into Graham. Hitting very hard Graham suffered a broken leg and Robert's foot was cut so deeply that the bone was chipped. Because of the cold water they did not realize the extent of their injuries and they put their skis back on and skied another 30 miles before the big 454 chev gave up with water in the cylinders. It was when the boys swam to shore that they found they could not walk.

Tough as the Dance luck was, they didn't stand a chance for the Special trophy which the V.W.S.A. had decided to award for the best hard luck story. The Terrorfire boys won it in a canter. To start the day, a car rolled in front of them on their way to Torrumbarry, putting a king-sized jinx on everything that followed. Soon after the start of the race, the water pump of the boat began to play up, and they had to stop five times in the first 20 miles. Then smoke and flames began pouring from under the dash and the boat stopped with a broken drive shaft.

They sat on the bank for about an hour and a half, hopefully thumbing a lift as the field raced past, but getting nothing beyond a cheery wave in return. Somebody, obviously, would have to do something. Maurice Skipper walked to the highway about a mile away and thumbed a lift back, and picked up the car and trailer. After 5 or 6 attempts it became clear that no car was going to pull that particular boat up that particular river bank.

A kindly farmer was pressed into service with his tractor. But not even the tractor was equal to the task. So, the boys reported, "we had to organize another tractor, which had no brakes". To cut a long story short they finally got the boat out, using the two tractors. But it wasn't the end of the trouble. While passing a caravan on the way back to Echuca, the racing skis whirled out of the boat and shattered to pieces on the highway.

Meanwhile, back at Echuca, on ideal water under ideal weather conditions, most of the field were coming in, more or less without incident. Some good times were recorded, notably Bullet's 53 min. 17 sec. in class 2, and a 58 min. 41 sec. by Rod Meredith's Impetuous to put an entirely new team with skiers Lynn Pollard and Liz Chapple, on top in the Womens Class.

In the 6 cylinder class, a fantastic time was recorded for Destiny with 56 min. 13 sec. This win also gave Destiny the highest points score for the year with 5 first places in the 5 major races. Each of the 10 classes in each of the season's scoring races (The Iceberg, The Great Race, The Vel Aqua - BP 40, The Loch Sport Classic and the Southern 50) carries 100 aggregate points for the winner.

The race completed Victoria's ski racing calendar for the year and there was plenty of discussing of fantastic dream boats for next season and even better times than we witnessed this year.

Ian Faulkner

SOUTHERN 50 RESULTS:

Class 1: THUNDERBOLT (N.S.W.), driver, Wally Hackett; observer, Bruce Sharp; skiers, Peter Ward, B. Robberds, 49 min. 38 sec., 1; **AVENGER TOO (Vic.),** driver, Des Jackson; observer, Bob Jackson; skiers, Ian Faulkner, Glenn Thurlow, 53-08, 2; **TOBIN II (SA),** driver, Alf Brown; observer, Robert Schuster; skiers, G. Bennett, K. Poole, 55-00; 3;

Class 2: Bullet II, 53-17, 1; Harada, 57-20, 2; Belvedere, 57-49, 3.

Class 3: Mustang, 57-08, 1; Venom, 59-36, 2; A. Kerr, 60-51, 3.

Class 4: Destiny, 56-13, 1; Bernadine, 64-41, 2; Super Natural, 61-49, 3.

Class 5: Stinger, 55-32, 1; Tasman, 60-57, 2; Volero Dart, 62-07, 3.

Class 6: Ski Vel Aqua, 66-59, 1; Catriona, 69-57, 2.

Class 7: Hot Shot, 66-22, 1; Go Siesta, 71-08, 2.

Class 8: Mighty Mouse (NSW), 70-07, 1; Vamp, 81-49, 2.

Class 9: (women): Impetuous, 58-41, 1; Rolco, 63-52, 2; Chemaron, 66-35, 3.

Class 10: (juniors): Gambler, 61-24, 1; The Jet, 70-47, 2.

Fastest Inboard: Thunderbolt.

Fastest Outboard: Avenger Too.

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