

Southern 80



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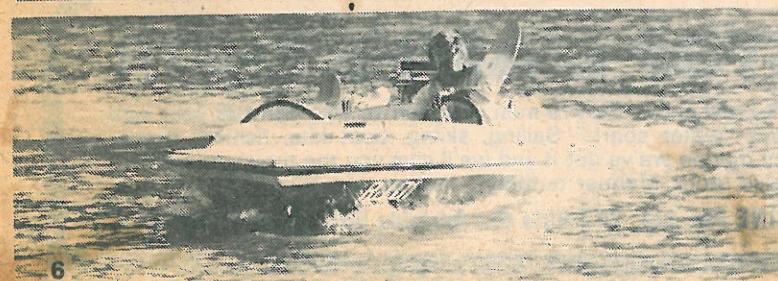
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This year, for the first time, the Southern 80 was run on a relatively clean river. Conditions were good for the 80 kilometre race up the Murray River, from Turrumburry Weir to Echuca and consequently some good times were expected.

(Continued on Page 52)

1, Harada and skiers Leigh Knopp and Barry Carne, winners of the 1976 Southern 80; 2, Stinga, 3rd outright and winner of class 5; 3, Luan Lee, the Australia men's speed title holder, a 90 mph plus boat; 4, Hallett Boat Sales towing Graham Schulz and Mark O'Mahoney, 1st. sub-juniors; 5, Tony Jackson's Hydron. Note the unorthodox, 'ride-em-cowboy' style of observer Graham Kurzman; 6, Carioca, now a total wreck after disintegrating during the race. Carioca was valued at approximately \$12 000.

(Continued from Page 14)

Not surprisingly, the extra calm conditions took a toll on motors.

Of 21 boats starting in the inboard classes only 12 finished the race.

The calm conditions were ideal for ski racing from a skier's point of view but 80 kilometres of flat out racing did not agree with much of the machinery competing.

Most notable of the non-finishers was the flying red, white and blue Carioca.

Carioca had to be red hot favorite to take out the race in the absence of Rambler, the current series leader.

Graham Dance, driver of Carioca, had the boat thundering down the river at 80 plus mph when the nose suddenly dipped,

throwing him and crew member Pat Reynolds onto the front of the boat and into the water.

Two very surprised skiers, Bob Dance and Rob Hanke, narrowly avoided crashing into the back of the boat as it disintegrated and sank.

Fortunately, Graham and Pat were both wearing crash helmets and full race life jackets which saved them from serious injury, although Graham broke several ribs when he hit the boat.

Less fortunate was Barry Lyons who, while skiing behind Checkmate, found a floating log the hard way.

Barry suffered multiple compound fractures of one leg and is still in a bad way.