

CLASS of '83

Amidst an atmosphere resembling boys returning to school after the winter holidays the 1983 Offshore term resumed at Poole with the Peter Stuyvesant Poole Bay Trophy. Drivers rallied round exchanging stories, comparing notes as new boys found their bearings. Rumours that had hatched during the idle winter months were confirmed or terminated and eyes popped, taking in the new boats, colours, sponsors, and faces. Old boys, new uniform, some new boys in old uniform, but hardly any changes in the administration staff.

Alex Foster chaired drivers' briefing in the usual efficient manner and it was not long before the first revelation of the day occurred, as boat 19, Endless Energy, was declared as a non-starter. The boat that had generated most interest during the morning with its 2 Ford Cosworth engines was banned from participating. Last year Malcolm Cole had spent most of his time trying to get homologation for these engines to no avail, and as was demonstrated at Poole his efforts so far this year have proved equally as fruitless. The absence of the necessary documentation saw Malcolm sitting this one out.

This left just Wilman Marine (the old Aquaglide) with Robert Cook and Mike Mantle participating in Class II with Robert's father in Taurus B the sole competitor in Class I. Class III looked in better health with 10 IID's and 15 IIC's making their debuts, for the season.

Main changes on the offshore menu were in Cruiser class with several new names, and boats. Praise must be given to this class for they seem to have ironed out most of the creases that were evident in their rules last season, and were ready to sparkle and provide good examples to the rest of the classes. Cruiser Class Association secretary, Peter Hewitt, was set to test

his new black Wellcraft Scarab in Cruiser class B.

Soon the waiting was over and the boats were trying to get on the plane and fighting for positions. First off was Ian Birnie in Miss Avia Watches, obviously intent on providing vigorous competition for those attempting to steal his World Championship crown. Faberge Turbo were hot in pursuit with the Wilman Marine catamaran taking advantage of the relatively calm conditions.

The first two cruisers to catch the eye were Colin Stewart with his new Revenger 25' Dispirin the Fast One - a much sleeker craft than his previous Picton, and Riamar Lady with Chris Wingate. Unfortunately David Orr was to navigate this craft but a practice run accident put him in hospital with pelvic and rib injuries.

As the press boat stationed itself by the last turnbuoy of the first lap a white boat kicking up an enormous rooster tail came into view. It was Wilman Marine closely followed by Miss Avia Watches. Clarke Group and Priory Glass which had made up tremendous ground giving Faberge Turbo a good race round the buoy. The Toleman twins in Fayanagin were next round followed by Chris Meyler in Ladysave and the first of the IIC's Grant Group. Two boats later Peter Bloomfield appeared in his Stapley cat upgraded to Class IID and seemed to be having a bit more than he'd bargained for.

As they sped off into the distance the first crop of cruisers approached, led by Riamar Lady with Splashdown and Philip Warner and Peter Hewitt (Hewitts) close on the trail.

Lap II saw not much change in the leaders with the exception that Howard Wretham and Barry Drinkwater in Phanta IIC had moved up into fourth place in IID. It was lap three that began to show the retirements as those taking lap charts expectantly looked for numbers which should have been there. No Clarke Group, no Taurus B, no Dispirin The Fast One to name but a few, yet more drama was in store - in lap four.

Expecting Wilman Marine to come tearing through, (most had almost pencilled in the number 01) only to find that Ian Birnie was first through followed by Priory Glass, Faberge Turbo and Phanta IIC. No Wilman Marine. Suddenly a thick black cloud of smoke was seen blazing in the distance ahead. Could it be Wilman Marine, for it would not be the first time this boat had caught fire... radio control confirmed that it was a race boat... that there was a rescue craft

with it... but not the identity. As boats passed the turnbuoy speculation grew. The Toleman twins were late through... but suddenly they appeared with one of them sitting out on the side desperately holding onto something inside.

Then came the identification over the radio, boat No.45 with John Moore had caught fire but both crew were alright. Panic over.

Meanwhile Ian Birnie was off on his final lap knowing that with no Wilman Marine and Taurus B the prizes were his for the taking - and they were!

The tussle in IIC was beginning to get exciting for newcomers, Albany Wines (A. Knight and P. Miller) were engaged in battle with Robin Hood Racing (B. Champion and B. Hood). The former had the advantage round the final turnbuoy and they raced home to take the chequered flag.

Fibre Tiger with Mike Kitcher and Debbie Jones were the only survivors out of IIIB and so swiped the honours for their class, with some surprise results amongst the cruisers. Splashdown a boat better known for handling the rougher waters, won Cruiser Class B, with Shiral taking Cruiser Class A. Arrowbolt another newcomer, was the only finisher out of two in Day Cruiser B as Dispirin the Fast One was forced into retirement, a penalty for still having to run in engines during the race.

Despite the surprises, it was an enjoyable start to the season, and most of the drivers seemed pleased to be back 'on the offshore playing fields'!

Right, top row l-r: the cruisers get off to a good start; Wilman Marine the sole Class II competitor begins to forge ahead.

Middle row, l-r: Ian Birnie rounds the final turn buoy on his way to victory. All smiles and where's the beer?

Bottom row: Lady Arran makes her seasonal debut in the new Revenger Planecraft cruiser boat.

Left: Gary Toleman had some hairy moments whilst balancing on the side of the boat. These acrobatics were necessary when one of the gearboxes went and Gary had to get the boat back onto the plane - SOMEHOW!

By Julia Klonarides





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