

"This was as rough as anything I've ever seen. At one time I stood it - I mean literally - I stood it on its end just trying to look over the top of a wave!"

Jerry Jacoby, 1981 World Offshore Champion.



# Main Event

Jacoby's view of the 1981 World Championships race in Key West says it all. Whilst the sun shone on spectators the sea conditions rapidly depleted a 16 strong field to only four finishers. All of these were monohulls, and, most sad of all, not one of them was British.

## The 1981 World Offshore Championships at Key West

This year saw another new format for the World Championship event. From 1964-1976 the Sam Griffiths Trophy was awarded to the world's best ocean racing driver and judged on the highest number of points scored in international races around the globe. These were the legendary days of Jim Wynn, Dick Bertram, Don Aronow, Vincenzo Balestrieri, Bill Wishnick and Carlo Bonomi - all names that still command respect in the powerboating world. However, in 1977 it was decided for the good of everyone's bank balances to introduce a system whereby drivers fought to qualify in one continent and then crossed their fingers for success in an all or nothing one race final. Winners during this era were Francesco Cosentino, Betty Cook (twice) and Michel Meynard.

By 1981 it was obvious that this severely limited the number of qualifying drivers. Some continents such as Australia and South America were unlikely to even send their eligible top three boats, whilst the U.S.A. ended up excluding many high calibre drivers. Also it was easy to campaign in a continent that held little Class I opposition and gain simple entry to the all important final. Again it was the American drivers who suffered most with their large Open Class contingent. They faced the option of an expensive season away from home or the risk that they would fail to reach one of the top three positions in the competitive element of their own national circuit. The role of host country in 1981 gave the

### SUE DRINKWATER

APBA their long awaited chance to change the rules.

Now this may all sound like good sense, but in reality there followed one of the most confusing years the sport has ever known. Led by Vice President Steve Baum the APBA chopped and changed its mind throughout the first half of the season about structure and location, leaving the U.I.M. drivers (and most of the American ones too), completely in the dark as to what would eventually happen in November, and indeed just how they should campaign professionally and economically to ensure a crack at the World Crown.

*"We just wanted to get in front and stay there - somehow it didn't work out that way."*  
Paul Clauser, Satisfaction.

To cut a long story short the end result meant that practically anyone in the world with a Class I boat could try for a place in the final by entering two qualifying races in the previous week, and indeed most drivers outside of the U.S.A. could, on one pretext or the other, go straight through to the big one. It was this procedure that allowed Ted Theodoli (Magnum Force) to race in the final courtesy of one win in Corsica, and Cesare Fiorio (Dry Martini) to do the same after one win in Sweden. Still, the

end objective was obtained - the sponsor, Imperial Industries, lured all but about three of the existing Class I boats in the World to Key West during the week of November 8-14!

In the APBA's defence, the qualifying races on Tuesday and Thursday were great spectator value. Thirty four boats (including Sports, Modified and Pro-Stock classes unique to the States) battled for positions in their respective finals, whilst the U.I.M. Class III boys did an additional Friday race in their 'best of three' format.

Peter Bloomfield in Class IID was the only British competitor racing. Despite strong competition from Italy and Argentina his 21' Stapely catamaran Pobjoy Mint took some beating. In the first race Peter romped home to a convincing win, with Oscar Rodriguez from Argentina second and Renato Mucci from Italy third. In the next race his position was reversed with Mucci's, whilst the Argentinian stayed a stable second.

Everything now hung on the final Friday race and at first Peter looked to be doing well. As they came round on the second lap you could actually hear the groan of disappointment from the British supporters - Peter was missing and Mucci was in a comfortable lead position. Whilst trying to avoid a lobster pot (yes, they have them out there too!) Peter and navigator Jim Baker hit a nasty wave and lost power on one of their 175 hp Mariner engines. It took them seventeen minutes to restart, and although they



Sixteen Class 1 boats open the throttles wide at the start of the 1981 World Championship.

fought back well to achieve second place Cyclon, driven by Renato Mucci was the overall winner.

Come the day of the Class I final the American fleet already comprising Betty Cook (Michelob Light), Paul Clauser (Satisfaction), Jerry Kilpatrick (Apache) and Michel Meynard (Fayva Shoes), was further swelled by the presence of Eddie Trotta (Rampage), Howard Quam (Flapjack), Jo Rodrigues (The Collection) and Jerry Jacoby (Ajac Hawk). All had qualified during the week, and knew the course inside out!

Ted Toleman was racing as the current Australian champion, alongside Tom Gentry (Arneson-Borg Warner Special) and Peter Dean (Slingshot). From Europe came Alberto Smania (Marlboro), Renato Della Valle (Rothmans), Antonio Piras (Gray Energy) and Cesare Fiorio (Martini). These, plus Ted Theodoli from Miami, made up the sixteen strong fleet that set out to do war for the most valued powerboating title in the World.

At 7.00 a.m. on race morning the course was reported to be 'three-quarters cat water and one quarter mono'. Betty Cook's was the only two boat team that used their mono in preference to the cat, and that was only because the much talked about Formula was not yet considered race-worthy. It is doubly ironic that Betty's trusty Scarab which had won her so many valuable races was the first to retire with a blown engine before completing the first lap.



Michel Meynard the defending World Champion - still smiling after a high speed crash at the Dania event.



Ted Toleman flew the flag for Britain, but Harmsworth winner Paul Clauser was right there with him.

By 10.22 a.m., when the race started, the weather conditions had worsened considerably - suddenly the course was three quarters mono water and only one quarter cat. The wind had got stronger, and unpredictable swells formed outside the coral reef. Many drivers had planned to take a short cut on the long leg out to Smith Shoals, through the shallow waters of the reef. This now became a dangerous bearing, and navigators checked anxiously every minute remembering the words of Dr Matt Houghton at the race briefing.

"Remember that coral has a tendency to shread human skin - and one more thing - this morning there were two sharks on the course".

It was a sad day for Cougar Marine as one by one their boats were forced to limp back to the safety of the dock. Ted Toleman, so desperately hoping to bring the honours home to England for the first time ever, lost oil pressure on one engine at the end of the first lap. His team mate and throttleman "Smitty" was just one of many that day who saw months of work and preparation go to waste and kissed goodbye to the £15,000 prize money that was at stake.

Howard and Lester Quam fell prey to the pounding seas and deadly coral, creating a sizeable hole in the starboard sponson of Flap Jack, whilst Paul Clauser and Errol Lanier retired with an electrical problem. Satisfaction, like Toleman



Night time in Key West - a town that got stuck in the sixties.

Group, had been an early leader, but there were just too few opportunities for the cats to use their superior speed in such large seas.

Tom Gentry, driving Howard Arneson's boat for him on an Australian qualification, stopped once to repair a shift cable that had come loose and then found himself sitting in pools of water just a few miles later. Thinking they had sustained hull damage the team retired, only to discover that a gasket had blown out of the sea strainer.

Eddie Trotta must have been the most disappointed driver of the day, for after qualifying brilliantly with his co-driver Keith Sparks they failed to get the 38' Cougar on the plane and never got further than the start line.

Last cat to retire was defending champion Michel Meynard, who only weeks before had completely destroyed a brand new Cougar in a high speed crash at the Dania event. As a result of the accident his usual team mate Bob Itoni was hobbling around Key West on

crutches with a damaged knee, and Angelo Meli had stepped in to drive the 38' Cougar that took Michel to victory in the 1980 Australian event. Afterwards Michel said:

"These were the hardest conditions I have seen for a catamaran - we would have broken another boat"

This was certainly an expensive day for the powerboating fraternity. By the third lap the course was positively littered with casualties. Paula Atkin in Smokin' (Class III) proved her accident earlier this year wasn't a one-off by sinking yet again - only this time she was lucky to survive after being trapped in the pod by the sheer weight of the wave she hit. Many other monos were floundering after similar "stuffing" incidents, and it is a credit to all finishers that they managed to complete the race at all.

So, whilst all around was chaos and gloom Jerry Jacoby in Ajax Hawk and Jerry Kilpatrick in Apache stormed around the course in a close fought battle that had the crowds of spectators right on

the edge of their seats, but two previous days of racing had given Jacoby a highly advantageous knowledge of the course. Throttleman Keith Hazell never once succumbed to the temptation of running faster than was necessary, and delicately controlled their lead over Apache. As the finish line loomed up Jacoby saw him reach for the throttles and said:

"Not now. This is the World Championship. Let's not take a chance".

So it was that Jerry Jacoby, Keith Hazell and Bart Quartin won the 1981 World Championship event by only 28 seconds from Jerry Kilpatrick, Bob Saccenti and Wes King. Alberto Smania in the Marlboro boat came in a well deserved third, whilst Cesare Florio and Jack Stuteville were fourth. These were the only four Class I boats to survive the 208 mile race - all were monohulls, and all were three man teams. There is no moral in this story however, because the sea will continue to make offshore racing



Sunsets are a speciality celebrated every night in the Keys, accompanied by drums and fire jugglers.



Outrageous by name and outrageous by nature. Just one of the fabulous tow wagons present at Key West.

a totally unpredictable sport. Designers will never be able to produce the ultimate boat whilst they have to run on an ever changing track. This is the challenge, and in many ways the delight of the offshore sport. Long may it continue, for on this basis the driver and throttleman's skill will remain the final determining factor.

If the racing at Key West was good, it has to be said that the organisation was distinctly lacking. Not only were the pits a 10-minute drive from the starting and administrative area in Mallory Square - they were also prone to violent flooding leaving trailers and boats surrounded by a sea of mud. There appeared to be no accepted base office for information, which did not make it easy to follow a schedule containing several unspecified venues! Major political rows developed when the APBA banned helicopters from flying below 500 feet causing pilots to complain immediately to the FAA in



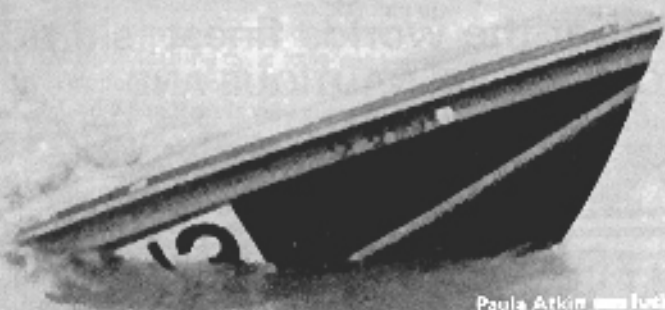
The King is dead . . . Long live the king (Booby left, Weyward right).



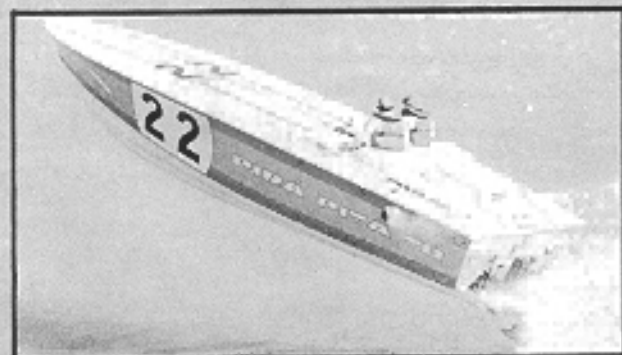
Lady Luck deserted Betty Cook this time.



Paula of the Year, and almost World Champion Jerry Campbell.



Paula Atkin was lucky to escape this accident.



The boats fly high that day.



A well deserved third place for Alberto Gomez.

Continued from page 42.

Washington. The ruling was revoked, but many people's valuable time had been wasted. Mr Baum's idea of a race briefing would have brought many a raised eyebrow from British competitors, especially as the course had to be explained at least 10 times before it was made clear enough for the assembled audience to understand!

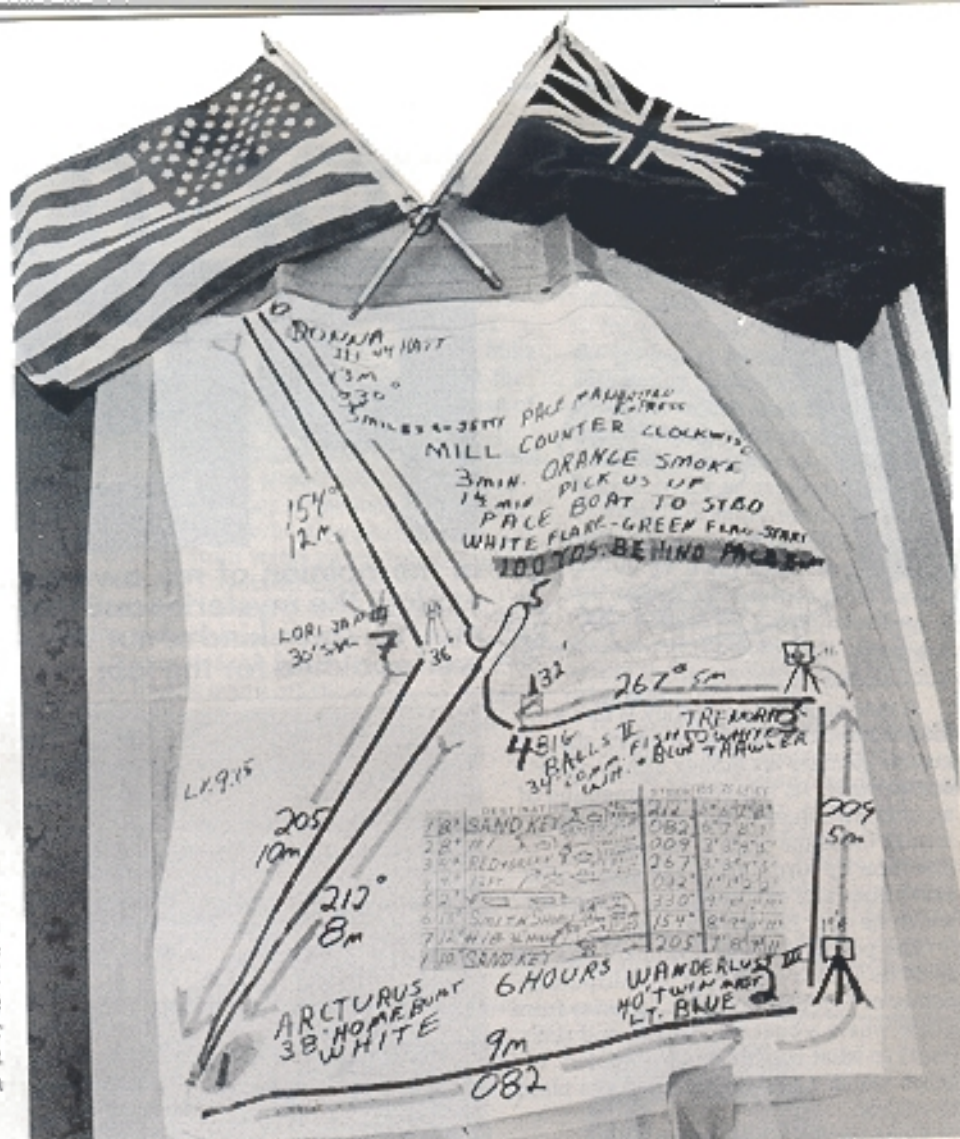
As the briefing drew to an end one competitor quite reasonably enquired about the procedure for late starters. This appeared to upset Steve Baum somewhat. He changed his mind three times within two minutes and finally decreed that if you weren't at the start line on time you couldn't race! The combined disagreement of the assembled company rose in an audible gasp, as Baum sat down and refused to discuss the matter. It was left to another official to assure competitors that provisions would be made for late starters as is only correct under international law, and on that note we were dismissed.

All in all though it was a good week for the Offshore sport. Key West must be one of the most fascinating locations possible for such an event, and certainly the scenery was breathtaking. If the World Championships are to be held there again next year, as has been suggested, I would only make one plea to the organisers. Please try to avoid a two hour wait in a parking lot for prize giving - it was hardly a fitting end to such a privileged occasion. ■

Peter Bloomfield - a credit to British racing.



POWER BOATING



Navigation notes in Toleman Group.

Photo: Colin Taylor

## Results

<b>Class I</b>			
1. Ajac Hawk (U.S.A.)	Jerry Jacoby Keith Hazell	Cigarette/Hawk	70.9 mph
2. Apache (U.S.A.)	Jerry Kilpatrick Bob Saccenti	Squadron/Hawk	70.5 mph
3. Marlboro (I)	Alberto Smanis Alberto Diridoni	C.U.V./Mercruiser	66.6 mph
<b>Class II (U.I.M.)</b>			
1. Continental Airlines (N.Z.)	Graham Sutherland K. J. Green	Scarab/Mercruiser	
2. Spanish Fly (U.S.A.)	George Morales Howard Blanchly	Excalibur/Mercury	
<b>Class II (APBA)</b>			
1. El Boss (U.S.A.)	Wily Diaz/Mike Corleone	Cigarette/Hawk	
2. Power Play (U.S.A.)	Danny Weinstein Dominic Santarelli	Coyote/Chevrolet	
3. New Horizon (U.S.A.)	Dick Weisse/James Matteo	New Horizon/Evinrude	
<b>Class III</b>			
1. Man O' War (U.S.A.)	Randy Sosa/Ralph Linero	Cobra/Mercruiser	
2. Busch (U.S.A.)	Tim Sheehan/John Sheehan	Sutphen/Mercruiser	
3. Renegade (U.S.A.)	Rick Smith/Ed Martinez	Cobra/Mercruiser	
<b>Class IV</b>			
1. Manta (U.S.A.)	Lance Ruble/Tom Greco	Manta/Mercury	
2. Extractor (U.S.A.)	James Laznovsky Joe Imprescia	Superboat/Mercury	
3. Putt Putt (U.S.A.)	Gil Lieber/Ray Wedel	Velocity/Mercruiser	
<b>Class IIID (U.I.M.)</b>			
1. Cyclon (I)	Renato Mucci	Cigala/Mercury	
2. Pobjoy Mint II (G.B.)	Peter Bloomfield	Stapely/Mariner	
3. Miss 43/70 (A)	Oscar Rodrigues	Posedon/Johnson	

# Jerry Jacoby World Offshore Champion 8'

