

This season has been a particularly soggy one for the boating fraternity, which, although not a total deterrent, has somewhat dampened everyone's enjoyment. Offshore racing is not the most thrilling sport in the world for spectators, families and helpers, but if the sun shines the atmosphere alone can compensate for the inability to watch all parts of the course, and certainly allows the public to enjoy what is always a fascinating spectacle.

The field was a healthy 35 boats, although the retirement of six, and the disqualification of six more, led to considerably fewer finishers. Navigational error was the cause of all the disqualifications, and a mistake that cost Robert Cook, in the Cougar Aquaglide, the National Class III Championship. He, like Realite Charger, The Experiment, and Phantasy, failed to round No Mans Fort correctly owing to confusion over a last minute course change. Howard Wretham and Ed Steindler also found themselves on the disqualified list after failing to round East Winner.

Ted Toleman took an early lead in Class I, and, despite Frank Wyatt giving him a good run for his money, was left the undisputed winner after Wyatt fell foul to the same fate as Aquaglide. Ted now faces the most important race of the year for his team as he heads for the World Championships in Melbourne. David Hagan, who defends the Class II title will also be present in a New Zealand owned Cougar catamaran, as well as Ray McEnhill who is racing with the Australian Kevin Wilde, who took Miss Pearlorder to second place in Venice last year.

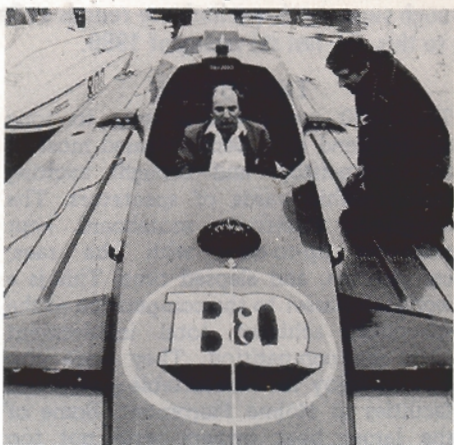
John Craxford took the Class II honours with ease at Spithead, and confirmed his worth as National Champion. Romans Sabre may not be as fast as some of the newer rigs, but she pounds round the course with the monotonous consistency that good preparation and skilled driving brings to the fortunate. Colin Gervaise-Brazier has both these qualities, but Coldrush is a startlingly new design which cannot fail to be beset by teething problems. During this event she was forced to retire due to an engine fault. Adrian Pobjoy and Alex Foster brought Pobjoy Mint into a stately second place, which gave them the U.K.O.B.A. Class II championship, and ended a very successful first season for the team.



The Nurse brothers won IIIC.

Class III gave us an exciting race with the leading three contenders being catamarans. Despite his eventual disqualification Robert Cook matched Gus It and Pobjoy Mint Two for the full distance. James Beard took the wheel of Gus It, giving Paul Sinclair his first ride in the back of his own boat. He later commented that he would rather stick to the driving seat in future, but was well pleased with the first place that James acquired.

Peter Bloomfield was content to take second place this time, and with it the highest number of points scored in this



Gerv Brazier in Goldrush. year's U.K.O.B.A. Championship. Barry Drinkwater, driving the Phantom monohull Bentleys Oyster Bar, has sorted out a lot of the engine gremlins that have troubled the rig this season, and in Cooks absence took third place.

Ian and Bob Nurse brought the Specialist back into racing right where they left off, and cruised to an easy victory in IIIC. Bruce and Avril Nash found themselves the bemused winners of the Lancing Marine National Championship, for despite coming second



Barry Drinkwater, third in Class IIID.

Cougar Spithead

The Spithead Trophy was sponsored this year by Cougar Marine, now part of the Toleman Group, and for the first time in quite a few years the weather was kind and the course unshortened.



Phanta C missed a mark.

in their Class on this occasion, they had pipped Robert Cook to the post on overall points during the season. Adam Younger and Brian Champion took a well deserved third in Bosscat, only proving still further that the catamaran can often take the rough as happily as the smooth. Hedges, the U.K.O.B.A. championship for their class, while a consistent seasons racing from Steve Pile and Phil Fox gave them the National crown despite coming second in this instance.

Cruiser owners once more showed us that you don't need a custom designed hull to enjoy, and succeed, in racing. The unbeatable David Graham-Smith once more romped home to a clear victory in his Hunton designed Gazelle Splashdown, followed by Tony Fletcher in the Delta Gin Fizz.

John Moore took a break from his new venture with Cirrus Powerboat to prove that his Fjord, Knipa of Hamble, goes quite well with a full quota on board, and Colin Stewart took the honours, and the Championship, in Day Cruiser Class in his Picton designed Mardi Gras. It is still a mystery to me that more manufacturers



Mardi Gras.

do not use this exciting class of Offshore racing to prove the worth of their product. Those who have dared to publicly display their faith in their hull designs have benefitted enormously.

All in all a good days racing, but for me a little spoiled by the inconsiderate behaviour of many competitors at prize-giving. When the P.A. system broke down Ray Bulman valiantly shouted as best he could. He was not helped one iota by the selfish members of the audience who could not be bothered to stop talking throughout. Offshore racing is fortunate to have sponsors like Cougar Marine.