

Full House

By Daniel Pouget

Brighton Marina 6.30am. I awake to noises of slashing rain and the wind whistling through the halyards of the yachts moored on either side of the Press Boat. Yesterday it was probably the hottest and calmest day of the summer (if you can call it that) but this morning does not look too good.

At 7.30 I get to the Press/Race Office to find Tina Bunting already at work preparing to register the 62 boats that have decided to compete. They are all lined up in the scutineering area which we overlook. It would have been a great sight for the public. But in the pouring rain with the figures of the various crews scurrying around, it all looks pretty miserable.

Great Expense

Scutineering starts at 8.30 and the various crews begin filling in to register. There is a lot of talk about the weather. The T-shirts, Sweat Shirts, plaques and decals handed out by Coral Casinos Ltd, the sponsors, to all the competitors seems to be cheering them up a bit. I must say they must have gone to great expense and trouble to really make this a memorable day. They have put up banners everywhere and a superb marquee.

In the Race Office Clive Curtis and Viv Williams go into a huddle — obviously the weather is going to be a problem. Finally they decide to go out and inspect the course in the start boat. They barely made it out of the Marina. The water was very choppy, a rising wind and strong rain.

After their experience at Poole earlier on in the season when UKOBA ran the race in similar bad conditions which turned into a nightmare with Lady Arran's Skean Dhu sinking, they are taking this weather very seriously. The Race office is by now full of competitors saying they are not going to go out in this. The coastguard forecasts worsening conditions. At 11.00 Clive Curtis, O.O.D., advises us the event is postponed till tomorrow. Relief all round. A few decide that they cannot stay due to prior engagements on Sunday. The drop outs are however very few.

By 2.00 in the afternoon there is sunshine, the wind drops and by mid afternoon recriminations amongs the drivers can be heard. Why didn't the race take place? Was the decision hasty? I must say that under the circumstances UKOBA had no option. People forget that putting on a race is quite a responsibility, and when there are really bad conditions a field of 62 boats demands the support of a good number of rescue boats — and the marker boats based in Shoreham were not even able to sail out to get on station.

So how could the race committee ever have taken a different decision. The disco-barbecue this evening, put on and subsidised by Coral Casinos, is a sell out and everyone works off their frustrations of the day on the dance floor and at midnight we all leave looking up at the clear sky and wondering what surprises tomorrow has in store.

'Hello this is BBC Radio. You are just coming on the air at the end of this record... (it is 7.30 Sunday and the first Race for Class

IV has been scheduled for 1.00 am)... what are the conditions? Could you tell our listeners at what time the first race will start?

'Conditions — Fog! So thick that you can hardly see 500 yards!'

Clive Curtis, the O.O.D., is sitting next to me looking really worn out. What is he going to decide now! The Racing is postponed again. We go out in the Start boat at 10.30 and the sea is choppy — the fog is lifting. The coastguard forecast is again very bleak. UKOBA decide to cancel Class IV and to run Class 1, 11 and 111 and Cruiser Class at 2.00 pm. What will our fickle English weather do now?

It clears and by midday it is beautifully sunny! We have a race.

The Start takes place in front of the harbour entrance, with the usual sailing boats trying to go past the marshalling boats and onto the course. Will they never learn. How would the sailing fraternity react if we ran powercraft through the start line of a major yacht race!

Here they come all in line bumping up and down. It might be sunny but it is blowing force 3 to 4 S.W. and the sea is still quite high. The first off is Ted Toleman and Nick Cripps powering away in their 1200hp Bertram. This, sadly, the only Class 1. The rest of the competitors bunched up, a long way behind. Adrian Pobjoy gets his Class 11 on the plain — he has got a lot to make up. 'Cossack' is way in front as is 'Samuri' and 'Sea Wolf'.

However, at the start of the second lap the order is Toleman Group, Pobjoy then Cossack, Gus It is fourth and leading Class 111, followed by Aquaglide, Pobjoy Mint 11, and No 17, Doris the Snob, a Class III catamaran driven beautifully by Steve North in his first race, then Samuri, Scantic 007, London Manchester Assurance No 500 and Fayanagan.

Armstrong Out

But the difficult conditions are already beginning to take their toll. Argos 100 driven by Peter Armstrong drops out in the second lap-taking water. Stationed by the start buoy we see 007 Scantic having a dual with Doris the Snob. Doris spots the mark and goes

straight for it. 007 is on the wrong heading. We are all waving frantically. They spot the buoy in the nick of time and turn just beside us with a great woosh of spray, passing the mark a couple of hundred yards behind Doris.

Field Spreads Out

Now the field is getting spread out and as we approach the last part of the race we can hear over the radio that there is an increasing number of boats dropping out of the race. 007 is being towed in. Cossack is being towed in. Then we hear that Doris the Snob has flipped on its back. The Newhaven lifeboat is being called out. The driver is injured. We hear later that Steve and his navigator, Michael Firth, are in the Royal Sussex Hospital suffering from shock but no major injuries. As we come back to the finishing line we can see Adrian Pobjoy's boat going like a song flat out, flying right out of the water several feet high. The photographers rush to the rail.

The race is over. The excitement subsides. We go into the tent and see all the cups and prizes and note in passing the huge Coral Grandprix Challenge Trophy which looks just about as big as the FA Cup.

The prize winners were as follows:

1st overall basic race 'Blackmail' driven by E.Purvis and Kevin Hook; 1st Day Cruiser 'Mardi Gras' driven by Colin Stuart and Neil Bennet; 2nd 'A' Cruiser 'Gin Fizz' Ray Fletcher and C.Mason; 1st 'A' Cruiser 'Splashdown' Graham Smith and Paul Rutherford — Brighton Marina Challenge Trophy.

Winner Class IIIB Hydrophobia — Steve Pile and Phillip Fox; Second in Class IIIC Bossecat — Adam Younger and Brian Champion; Winner Class IIIC London Manchester Assurance — Bruce and Avril Nash; 3rd in Class IIID Guss It — Paul Sinclair and Vernon Luker; 2nd Class IIID Pancho — Carl Jones and Robert Beckhurst; 1st Class IIID — Coral Greyhound Stadia Trophy — Pobjoy Mint Two — Peter Bloomfield and Tim Baker. 2nd Class II Samuri — A.Toll and Steve Bourne; 1st Class II — Coral Grand Prix Cup — Pobjoy Mint — Adrian Pobjoy and Alex Foster; 1st Class I — Coral Grand Prix Shield — Toleman Group — Ted Toleman and Nick Cripps; 1st overall — Coral Grand Prix Trophy — Ted Toleman and Nick Cripps.

In spite of being laden down with silver cups, mementos, a magnum of Bollinger and other goodies, we fully echo Nick Cripps and Ted Toleman's three cheers for Corals. They were an exemplary sponsor.



Scantic in Class IIIC made a noble effort before being forced to retire.