

# Italian Fury

The Champion Poole Bay International by Christopher Wright.

If the start of the offshore season at the Hamble in May could be described as rather unsatisfactory then the next race on the calendar to grace our shores was positively catastrophic.

But racing in the Champion Spark Plug Poole Bay International on May 31 was considerably more important, for apart from the usual events the club also hosted the European Class IID Championships, a contest of some stature and plenty of overseas entrants who had spent a vast amount of time and money in an attempt to lift the title.

The Italians, for instance, were out in force and confident they could take the honours. Fabio Buzzi has designed a new Class IID catamaran, as the Editor described in her columns in the previous issue, and he was out to prove that his boats were the shape of things to come.

They are not the prettiest hulls you have ever seen, with high sponsons and the drivers appropriately perched like parrots up front on either side. Appropriately because parrots are Buzzi's trade mark, although I doubt he would appreciate the comparison between parrots and his drivers.

Buzzi's ugly ducklings, however, are swans in motion and from the look of it they are equally at home in rough or calm seas.

## Gusting Force 9

And it was rough at Poole. As the day progressed the wind increased, gusting to Force 9 by the end of the afternoon. Intermittent squalls lashed the quay as our erstwhile champions prepared their outfits. The Italians shivered in a blue-nosed group while British lads naturally made the best of it. Goodness knows, we're used to it.

The principal home hopes rested on Robert Cook in the fast Aquaglide; Alistair Kendon in his Phantom 23 called Spectre, Peter Armstrong in Aphrodisiac, the Solent 70 winner Peter Bloomfield in Pobjoy Mint II, the Toleman twins trying again and Paul Sinclair in Gus It, the new Cougar.



*The calm before the storm!*

So, as the hands drew inexorably towards two o'clock your reluctant, bedraggled correspondent was driven off towards the start line, not exactly enthused with the joys of spring but able to take warm refuge in the cabin, out of which I popped at two pm prompt for the start.

There was, however, no rush because it was 2.13 before they got off, and when they did leave at least one bemused spectator bobbing in their wake: the fleet was comprised entirely of Class IID's with the mysterious exception of the Class II entrant, Cossack.

Why the delay and where were the rest of the Class I and II's? It obviously pays to make a courtesy call at the drivers' meeting in this sort of situation for it transpired they were running a split field over a shortened course and at 2.27 the big boys and the rest of the Class III's thundered past. Another conundrum: what on Earth was Cossack doing in the European Championship?

Class I was more of a duel than a fully fledged battle, with Ted Toleman out to show Derek Pobjoy the way home. They were the only two runners. Needless to say, Lady Arran was battling away in Class II in Skean Dhu. We were parked at the Alum Chine, the penultimate buoy before the finish of the scheduled 3-lap course and after only minutes a flare went up. This turned out to be the Armstrong's, Peter and his wife Jan, in Aphrodisiac who had nose-dived and took a fair old shaking as well as a ducking.

There were, of course, many other casualties. On the way to the start the monohulls' progress reminded me more of those maniacs in the circuit races at Bristol. When they weren't nose up, almost vertical, props clear of the water, they were ploughing deep into the long swells. They looked so flimsy against a rolling, sombre sea and with only a helmet and lifejacket for protection.

Back to the actual racing and first



*The Italian who was pipped at the post.*

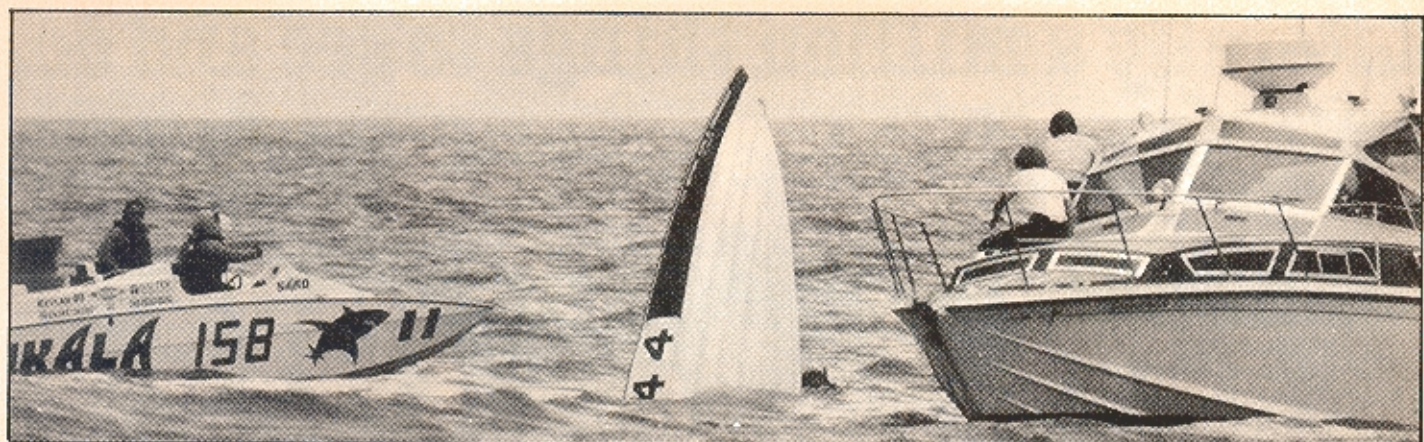


Photo: Jonathan Davis

*Salvatore Carruba and Fabio Buzzi on their way to aid the Armstrongs.*

time round the Alum Chine buoy Spectre headed the field. Britain's pride against the Italian challengers, Liti, Obelix and Cian de Cursa. Then came the Pobjoy Mint Two, the Toleman twins and Pancho.

Meanwhile, Toleman Senior and Derek Pobjoy were having a right old tussle and Toleman just had the edge first time round.

Another flare went up in the middle of all this and our worthy Lady Arran was in trouble.

When Tramontana arrived on the scene they were met by a drenched Lady A sitting in a life-raft yelling instructions to the dour Roger Trigg, co-driver extraordinaire, who was perched on the upturned Skean Dhu. Apparently Lady A seemed more concerned with the welfare of her boat than her co-driver and told him in no uncertain terms not to let it sink!

Tramontana pulled alongside, picked up Lady A, Trigg rigged a tow rope, clambered aboard the rescue vessel and all seemed safe and sound until the tow rope parted.

Back into those dank waters dived the bold Trigg, battling through swells which near Old Harry were about 8 feet, heaving his way to Skean Dhu to reconnect the line. He had then to clamber back up the rope to the refuge of Tramontana, closing another chapter of heroism at sea.

### Narrow Advantage

And on to the floating press boat at Alum Chine. As far as we and the drivers were concerned this was the penultimate lap and approaching our buoy the Italian Liti held a narrow advantage over Spectre.

That was until an amiable little sportsboat trolled merrily over Signor Walter's course and the Italian boat had to take evasive action. Spectre saw his chance, powered on the gas and squeezed in front at the buoy and held his advantage at this the second time over the finishing line.

Shortly after Ted Toleman performed a similar manoeuvre and pipped Pobjoy. Theoretically there was another lap to come, but unbeknown to us the shortened course had been shortened again because of the gale force imminent conditions, the chequered flags were dropped and the races were over.

There were not many finishers and a couple of casualties of note were Howard Wretham who described his Phantasize as having 'disintegrated' and the Toleman twins, who suffered engine

trouble and went missing before being towed in a long time after the rest of the boats were safely tied up.

Peter and Jan were shaken and I should think that they will have a few bruises to show for their unfortunate experience.

Now comes the apres-racing fun and games. The Italians were definitely not amused and made no secret of it, and now the blue-nosed huddle became vociferous and vitriolic, with much hand-waving and gnashing of Latin teeth. Buzzi was incensed about various matters concerning the race ranging from the English weather to the English loos, which he thought to be locked immediately after the race.

### Basic Complaints

His basic complaints, though, appeared to be threefold; the seas were not rough enough for the race to be stopped; there was no warning when the event was halted apart from a chequered flag for the winner; and the curtailment of the contest meant the distance covered for a European Championship was too short.

The protest was duly lodged loud and clear. Meanwhile, the presentations were due to be held at 6.30, with a barbeque to follow, but the best laid plans of mice and men 'oft gang agly' when there's a powerboat protest flying about and the poor organisers at Poole Harbour must have been running around in ever decreasing circles — the protest went on for three hours!

At the end of it, predictably, nothing was resolved and the whole matter was referred to the UIM in Belgium.

On Buzzi's principal protests: 1) The wind was increasing, the 9-foot swells were bad enough but the seas were running shorter and I was reliably

informed that it was dangerous for the Class III's to continue. As a mere voyeur in powerboating I could only heartily agree.

2) The curtailed finish does seem unsatisfactory when the first the drivers know about it is a chequered flag. Surely it would be possible for the committee boat to radio the official boat on the penultimate marker buoy and they in turn could wave a warning flag? Competitors would at least then know the state of play.

3) The matter of the length of the course is up to the UIM in Belgium.

Fabio Buzzi has written to the Editor, explaining his differences and hoping the Poole race will be re-run in Italy 'properly and organised as a championship should be.'

We are all entitled to our opinions, but Poole Bay cannot help the English weather and the organisation looked marvellous considering the conditions, and to my knowledge the gentlemen's toilets were never locked.

**EUROPEAN CLASS IIID CHAMPS:** 1, Spectre (A Kendon) Phantom; 2, Liti (W Raggazzi, Italy) FB Marine; 3, Obelix (S Riva, Italy) FB Marine; 4, Miss Avia Watches (I Birnie) Phantom; 5, Cain de Cursa (E Riganti, Italy) FB Marine; 6, Pobjoy Mint Two (P Bloomfield) Stapley; 7, Phantom (A Gioffredi) Phantom; 8, Mary Martin (Cavaliere, Italy) FB Marine; 9, Fayanagin (G. Toleman) Phantom; 10, Pancho (C Jones) Fletcher; 11, Canon (E Tondelli, Italy) FB Marine. **CLASS 1:** 1, Toleman Group (T Toleman) Bertram; 2, Pobjoy Mint (D Pobjoy) Sheed. **CLASS III:** 1, Spectre (A Kendon) Phantom; 2, Miss Avia Watches (I Birnie) Phantom; 3, Pobjoy Mint Two (P Bloomfield) Stapley; 4, Fayanagin (G Toleman) Phantom; 5, Pancho (C Jones) Fletcher; 6, N°007; 7, Panasonic (P Jones) Phantom; 8, N°3 (P Ash) Ring; 9, London & Manchester Assurance (B Nash) Phantom; 11, Hydraphobia (S Pile) Marshan; 12, Bosscat (A Younger) Stapley. **CRUISERS:** 1, Fast Buck (A Pobjoy) DS110; 2, Mardigras (C Stewart) Picton; 3, Splash Down (D Graham Smith) Gazelle.



*Alistair Kendon flying high in the choppy seas.*

Photo: Brian Champion