

# RACETALK

## NEWS REVIEW

EDITED BY JOHN WALKER



### Guernsey gets British Grand Prix

At a short yet eventful ceremony during the London Boat Show, in the presence of Union Internationale Motonautique President Rolph Frohling, Guernsey's Richard Ozanne and Richard Ridout consummated their contract with series promoter Mauro Ravenna, to become the first organisers of Britain's Class I offshore Grand Prix.

The manner and speed (less than four months) with which the Grand Prix concept has emerged, and the political and egotistical fall-out which has accompanied its progress, has caused at least as much doubt as support from those whose opinions matter. Few question the ultimate desirability of having the top offshore class promoted in this way, but concern has been voiced over the less than subtle swing of control away from the UIM and towards the promoter.

If examples of this were needed, there was none better than what happened at Guernsey's bash.

Dick Ridout wears many hats. One of his tasks is to co-ordinate the UIM calendar and, as if he did not have enough to do already, the governing body nominated him to oversee the proposed GP series and ensure it meets their sporting ideals. He cannot win, but he continues to try.

He was therefore mildly

surprised to discover that the man with whom he had been negotiating the new series had introduced not just a totally new venue, in a country new to the sport, but had given the newcomer the same race date as the Royal Motor Yacht Club's European heat for the same class. Something wrong there, surely?

He ultimately triumphed in persuading the Belgians to reschedule their event to mid-September, but he should never have been placed in the invidious position of having to. The whole thing comes to a head in Monaco in March, when the UIM must decide whether to ratify the proposed Grand Prix series for 1992 or delay it until 1993.

Let us hope that the glamour of the proposed concept does not outweigh the practicality of its operation in the eyes of the UIM, and blind them to the views of people who have made the sport of offshore work for many years.

### Drambuie chaser

You may have wondered just what happened to the proposed round-Britain record-breaking attempt underwritten by Scottish liqueur bottlers Drambuie.

The original Caterpillar-powered Wellcraft Scarab was shipped back to the USA and successfully pursued a number of long-distance records, but the original target went

unresolved because of persistent bad weather. Later this year, a new *Drambuie Challenger* will arrive in this country and, it is hoped, will take up again where the old boat left off.

Wellcraft's Gus Anastasi has built a new 50ft Scarab monohull, using a lightweight laminating schedule including Kevlar. To be powered by four of Caterpillar's newest 600hp all-electronic turbo-diesels, on Mercruiser Mk6 sterndrives, the boat has a theoretical 800-mile range, but navigator Dag Pike suggests that it is more likely the crew will opt for light displacement and run in 250-mile legs. Weather permitting, the record attempt should take place in July.

### Seatek's record week

There are those who regard record-breaking as an esoteric and expensive pastime unrelated to the real world of competition. Not so Fabio Buzzi. In one week on Lake Lecco in northern Italy in December, the designer of boats, safety capsules, engines and drives saw nine world records fall to his technology.

Records were broken in Classes II and III, using the Buzzi-designed trimaran which has been Andrea Bonomi's regular mount all season. For Class II, the boat was rigged with a 9.1-litre Seatek giving 930hp, and for Class III an 8.2-





litre motor of 840hp was used.

In Class II, Bonomi broke Neil Holmes' record by 12kph, with a new record of 197.261kph (122.572mph) for the flying kilometre. Using the same boat/engine configuration, Antonio Gioffredi took records for 24 miles and for one hour of continuous running, at 160.373kph (99.651mph) and 158.675kph (98.596mph) respectively.

In Class III, Giancarlo Rampezzotti set a flying-kilometre record of 190.080kph (118.110mph), and his wife Monica the 24-mile and one-hour distance records of 156.159kph (97.032mph) and 150.707kph (93.644mph) respectively — not a bad day's work for one boat!

To attack records in the unlimited inboard sportsboat class, Buzzi nominated his three-pointer with the 9.1-litre motor, which Adriano Panatta used to clock-up a flying kilometre of 238.897kph (148.443mph). Having retro-fitted the smaller 8.2-litre engine, Buzzi himself ran 233.545kph (145.118mph) in the inboard R Class.

More practically, Buzzi confirms that Gioffredi, Andreas Ugland and Daniel Scioli will be campaigning Seateks again in 1993, with the real possibility that the old maestro himself will be out in a new 43ft trimaran with triple motors, possibly as a trial before the boat becomes part of Ugland's stable. But none of

Marco Capoferri's boats will be Seatek-powered this year, after a disappointing 1991.

## Mercruiser target Europe once more

When we were all young, the only racing engines worth a damn were big and black, and called Mercruiser. The reason they dominated was quite simple: the genius that was Carl Kiekhaefer had cornered the market for trimmable sterndrives, which made the 500hp more efficiently available, and they could only be had as part of the black power package. Cute!

The rise of surface drives and of diesel power came as a direct result of this restrictive supply policy, and in the fullness of time Mercruiser became yesterday's technology. Of course, there were still teams who bolted black machinery into their boats, but not many in Europe. The men from Oshkosh sucked their thumbs but, for reasons of supply, concentrated on their

own US market.

Mercruiser decided to keep a watching brief, and keep their powder dry, until the time was right again in Europe. It seems that time has come in 1992.

Mercury are contracted to Marco Capoferri to support his two boats throughout the forthcoming season, out of their Belgian base. Capoferri has now bought Allan Shapiro's Skater 40, the old *Iguana Bay*, and ran his first trials at Lake X in early February.

His Cunningham-built *Sireg* will have black power as well, and both boats will run the full season ahead.

The new engine, designated 800 Offshore, follows traditional Mercruiser practice with a 495in<sup>3</sup> block in cast iron. More interestingly, it has an aluminium head, electronic ignition and a dry sump, and delivers its 900hp-plus via a Daytona gearbox and Mk6 SSM drives.

Only time will tell whether it is going to be super-competitive, but it is good to see the name back in the frame.

## IN BRIEF

*The Royal Southern Yacht Club is celebrating 30 years of involvement in offshore sport when it stages its Southern Speed Trophy National Championship race on the weekend of June 20-21.*

*Racing competitors are encouraged to check with the RYA, as there have been changes in the insurance cover offered to competitors racing at home and abroad. Tel: 0703 629962.*

*UKOBA's Annual General Meeting will take place at 7.30pm on Monday 30 March at the Holiday Inn, North Harbour, Cosham, Portsmouth. Details are available from Iain Stewart-Ross. Tel: 0705 219949.*

*Experienced offshore competitor Walter Ragazzi has purchased a new 40ft Skater, and proposes to power it with Lightning V8 petrol motors for use in Europe and America.*

*Richard Carr is already committed to running the Grand Prix circuit this year. Rumour has it that Dick Strutton is to do likewise.*

**Top:** Fabio Buzzi's Seatek operation broke nine speed records on Lake Lecco. **Left:** Allan Shapiro's old *Iguana Bay*, meanwhile, has been tested on Lake X by its new owner Marco Capoferri.

