

WORLD DEBUT OF V8



The quiet Mosel Valley soon came alive with the noise of racing

The Editor Reports on the 2nd leg of the World OZ Championships in Brodenbach

The tiny picturesque town of Brodenbach nestles quietly in the Mosel valley, flanked by vineyards and the odd dramatic Schloss intrudes into the otherwise undulating countryside.

The Mosel river normally sees only slow-moving freight barges and it was ironic that on this river, in a town that is mentioned on few maps, the largest racing outboard motor in the world made its debut.

The event in mid-June was the second round of the John Player OZ circuit powerboat championships and for the occasion drivers, spectators, Press and hangers-on swamped this unsuspecting village.

The pits were overflowing, with the OZ's jammed in with the OC hydroplanes who were equally squashed between the crane, a herd of trailers and a host of motorhomes. The OE's were not among this busy, colourful entourage but were placed a short distance away over 'a turnip patch', as Sue Hill poetically put it.

General scenario

Just to add to the general scenario the spectators, if they had enough deutschmarks, could buy their way into this somewhat congested area and the relevance of a pit pass was soon forgotten.

But the new motors from the Outboard Marine Corporation were as noticeable as a thoroughbred in a donkey derby. By virtue of the extra two cylinders on this V8, the motors looked enormous. Add to their enormity 16 carburettors (2 per cylinder) and 32 jets and you have a complex, and very potent two-stroke motor. It did not

require a connoisseur to see the acceleration potential of the power unit, but reliability and ease of handling were, to the uninitiated, a topic for conversation.

Six of these motors had been imported and proudly sat on the boats of Renato Molinari, Cees van der Velden, Carlo Colombo and the three British drivers, Roger Jenkins, Tom Percival and the world champion Bob Spalding.

A team of OMC mechanics, headed by Mouse, had been flown in to ensure that by running a rich mixture of oil and fuel and utilising their engineering expertise that the six monsters would stand the three heats totalling one and a half hours running time.

Francois Salabert, the ever-smiling and debonair Frenchman, indicated through international sign language that he was going to win with his V6 and possibly the remaining drivers with similar horsepower, Andy Bullen, Hans Pelster, Arthur Mostert and sundry Italians had high hopes. All 12 OZ drivers were keen to win on the short course.

While all this jollity was going on there were three Britons on the other side of the turnip patch who were not quite as happy. There was a vast array of OE outfits, somewhere around 30, and John Hill, Dave Jerwood and Phil Wassall had a lot on their minds.

You may wonder where the ON's were — and the simple answer from the organisers was that only three had entered and at the 11th hour the class was cancelled.

After the first round of the John Players OZ and Aspen OE series at Lake Como had been cut short due to the windy weather conditions, one wonders who comes under

'the sun only shines on the righteous' adage.

At the start of the first heat on Saturday afternoon it was raining, but the roar of the OZ motors drew spectators like moths to the flame and rain or no rain even the hearty drinkers left the cover of the beer stand to view the action over the 1500 metre circuit.

Cees van der Velden the flying Dutchman, lived up to his name by making a superb start and at the gun it was Velden with Jenkins, Spalding and Percival.

Van der Velden had enough speed to indicate victory was within his grasp, but while the Britons faded, Molinari worked through the field and suddenly Velden had fuel problems. Eventually he was forced to stop and Molinari stepped in and never looked back.

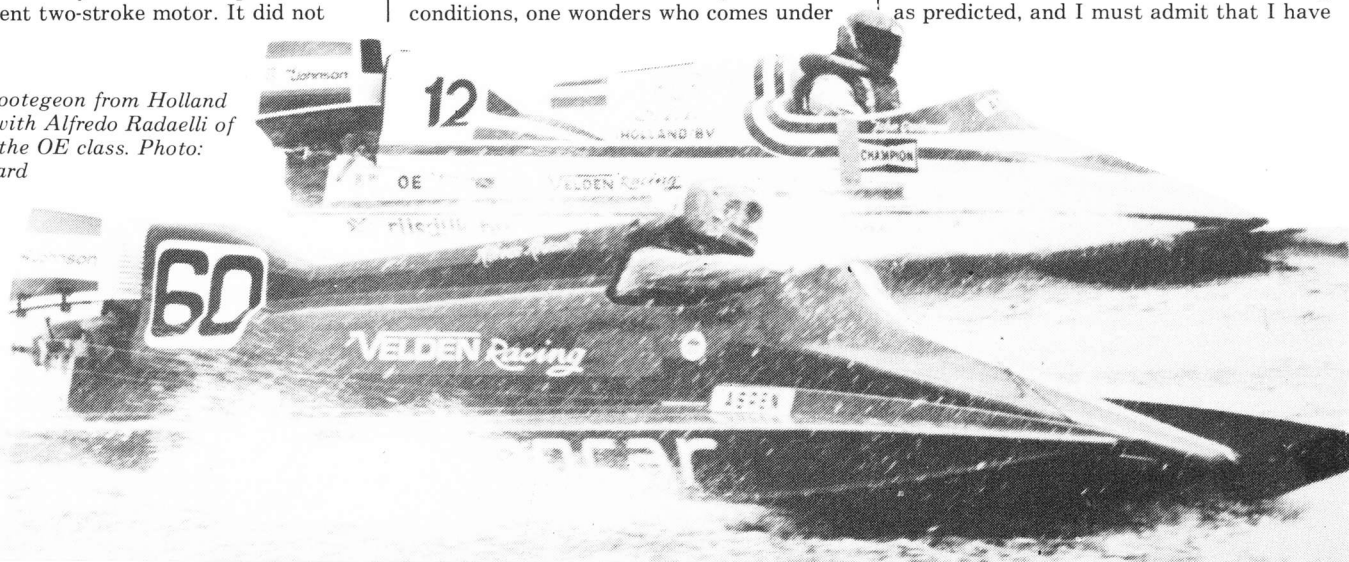
Salabert's performance was somewhere near his pre-race prediction taking second place, with Carlo Colombo, whose boat looked abominable to handle as the engine was too high, third.

For the British drivers it was a battle all the way. Tom Percival had begun to lose his front cowling and tried to hold onto it for the duration of the race. This resulted in a cut arm, and a new front cowling for the boat. For Roger Jenkins the lack of a torque converter made his task nigh-on impossible, and there was no doubt that any hope of a challenge for Wales was off. With a V8 motor and full torque, Roger could not keep the boat in a straight line.

The reliability of the V8 motor, however, certainly looked impressive after 30 minutes on the sprint course.

The OE race turned out to be as exciting as predicted, and I must admit that I have

John Grootegeon from Holland battled with Alfredo Radaelli of Italy in the OE class. Photo: Mike Ward





Renato Molinari takes the chequered flag with maximum points and the aerofoil between the sponson obviously gave him the stability he required

never seen such exciting racing in this class. John Hill had a great start but by the seventh lap Michael Werner, Hill's oldest rival, was right with him, and a lap later Werner took the lead. The Norwegian Ove Thorkildsen, who bought the boat John had built for the Worlds but never raced, proceeded to move ahead of Hill for second placing but while pushing his craft to maximum he nose-dived, which put paid to his chances of glory. Despite Hill's efforts Lasse Strom from Sweden managed to pass him for second slot. Philip Wassall came in fourth.

Not as smooth

The second heat of the OZ's was not quite as smooth as the first. Molinari showed a clean pair of heels to the rest of the field after overtaking his Evinrude team mate, Carlo Colombo, on the third lap, and Renato never relinquished his lead, lapping the entire field bar Spalding and Colombo.

Van der Velden seemed to be experiencing fuel pump problems again and this cost him fourth place as Tom Percival got his JPS outfit to the finish line first. Bob Spalding seemed to get his black and gold cat streaking across the water and on the seventh lap he snatched second place from Colombo.

Britain's other two hopefuls had problems of their own. Jenkins seemed to be fighting with his power trim on his Gordon's Gin Cat until it broke in the outwards position and he retired. And after a superb battle with Hans Pelster, Andy Bullen barrel-rolled, so a rather depleted

field took the chequered flag.

The second heat of the OE's was not without incident as all bar about 8 outfits jumped the clock and the race had to be restarted. John Hill performed like a world champion, and on the way a little bit of luck crept in. As John Hill went into the lead, Michael Werner made a short pit stop which took away his challenge and five minutes from the finish Lasse Strom stopped on the course. So with a great piece of driving and a 15th placing for Werner the battle for the OE honours was going to rest on the last race of the day.

For the OZ's this was far from the case. From the start it appeared that at last Velden's fuel problems had been sorted out and he led Molinari for 16 laps before he stopped on the course. From there on it was obvious that it was Molinari's weekend and he was assured of maximum points as he took the chequered flag.

But the real action of the day came in the 23rd lap when Tom Percival who was lying 2nd hooked on the straightaway and he was thrown well clear of his boat.

The boat ended up in the centre of the course, but Tom stayed in the middle of the straightaway. It took no time at all for the remaining drivers to spot that Tom was not in or near his boat and Spalding slowed down for further investigation. Roger Jenkins eventually saw him and stopped on the course, but Tom waved him on — even Hans Pelster cut across the course in case he needed assistance.

Eventually the inadequate rescue boats got to Tom who promptly ordered them to take him back to his boat, where he stepped back in and in an incredible display of

courage carried on racing.

While all this was happening the V6 brigade were making their mark. Francois Salabert had a tremendous drive and took over Tom's second slot while Arthur Mostert finished third. Bob Spalding was robbed of a place as he stopped before reaching the chequered flag.

In the final heat of the OE's Werner had it all to prove and both he and Hill had a flying start. Hill managed to lead for the first couple of laps until Werner got through to first place.

This was how they took the chequered flag, but 300 points were enough to give Hill first place overall and some more valuable points towards the Aspen OE Championship.

The fastest laps of the weekend were recorded by Molinari at 132.7 km/h and Michael Werner in his OE hurtled round at 108.4 km/h.

The weekend could only be described as a success, with the OE's providing the most exciting racing I have seen in this class. John Hill won the day, but only just, and Philip Wassall came in seventh overall after a non-placement in the third heat.

For the OZ class the exercise was also a success. The V8 motors ran for the duration of the weekend and the host of 12 boats lived up to the promises of OMC to provide a full field of OZ outfits.

Overall results:

OZ: 1. R.Molinari 1200, 2. F.Salabert 600, 3. B. Spalding 469, 4. C.Colombo, 450, 5. T.Percival, 329.
OE: 1. J.Hill, 925, 2. M.Werner 807, 3. L.Strom 525, 4. O.Thorkildsen 486, 5. A.Radaelli 391.

Sharing the pitting facilities with the V8's at Brodenbach, were the diminutive OC Class (500cc) outboard racers. Twenty three outfits representing nine different nations of which West Germany and Austria entered full teams of five. Britain were represented by Applebee, Stacey, Smith and Terry — who was making his international debut. From the training session it was obvious that Hans Krage from Berlin and defending champion Kent Rohm from Sweden were the men to beat.

There was chaos at the start of the opening heat, Loth was stranded on the line having been shunted and Swede Bejner was forced up the bank at the first buoy. The leaders sorted themselves out with Komoll (Ger.), Dessertenne (France) and Cervancy (Austria) the pacesetters. Rohm charged through the field to take the lead, but on the third lap his underwater gears seized. Komoll regained the lead once again. Gstottemayr (Aust.) was forced to swim rapidly for the bank when his Kirchgatterer pitched him out on the straight in the path of oncoming craft. Knappe in the 'Warsteiner' catamaran progressed rapidly

gaining precious ground on the buoy turns. During the passing manoeuvre for the lead a collision occurred resulting in Knappe driving the final two laps with a gaping hole in his sponson. Luckily the damage was above the waterline at full speed and he was able to take the 400 points win. Komoll, Cerveny and Bulgarians Vassil and Karston took the next placings.

Overnight repairs

Hans Krage stamped his authority on the second heat, Ekkhard Knappe had completed overnight hull repairs and chased into second place after Vassil had relinquished it on lap three. Londoner Mike Smith drove a fine race in McKinlay's Dickfors/Konig, holding off Karsten for fourth position. The unfortunate Rohm was again left at the start with a dead motor.

Krage again led the third heat, Applebee and Stacey were well up at the start only for Stacey's underwater unit to blow, a similar fate occurring to Sweden's Anderson. In fact underwater problems dogged several drivers on this banana shaped

circuit. Krage only feet from the finish line lost a propeller blade and had to struggle over to finish second, robbed of victory by Knappe who had streaked through at the last moment to take the flag. Komoll beat Vassil to third spot.

In the compulsory two hour period between heats the Mosel River became considerably rough, and the racers were really flying over the waves. Krage stormed into the lead, but on the third lap the circuit became littered with wreckage when Bulgarian Karston's cabover disintegrated, its occupant receiving serious leg injuries. Red flags were flown, and eventually the racers returned to the faherlager... Krage was not too happy. Knappe's transom had come adrift and the Konig was hanging off. With water conditions not improving the organisers abandoned the final heat, so Ekehard Knappe was declared 'Europameister', his first championship victory. Hans Krage had to be content with the runner-up position but will be hoping to reverse that result at Nottingham.

Mike Ward