

# Boulter's smoothest move leads to city sports shrine

By Paul Svoboda  
THE INTELLIGENCER

It's appropriate that Tom Boulter once raced a boat dubbed "Smooth Move."

Because, during a 32-year boat racing career, the Belleville native made mostly smooth moves on his way to more than 150 trophies, awards and championships.

On Sunday, Sept. 9, Boulter will make yet another smooth move as he will be inducted in the Belleville Sports Hall of Fame at a special ceremony at 1 p.m. on the Market Square.

"It's an honour," says Boulter who due to work commitments in the United States will be unable to attend the induction festivities.

"It feels pretty good," Boulter, 51, continues. "I spent a lot of years doing it. But, I think maybe my dad (Bill) is more excited than I am."

And why not?

The elder Boulter was as heavily involved in Tom's career as anyone in the family. In fact, Tom made it three generations of Boulters when he first became involved in speedboat racing.

"My grandfather used to race," says Boulter. "Living in Rossmore as a kid, my uncle bought a boat and my dad and grandfather started helping him. I just tagged along."

Soon, Boulter was doing more than that.

At the tender age of 12, Boulter climbed aboard a boat for his first official race. At 13, he was the youngest driver to ever start and finish the grueling 100-mile St. Lawrence River marathon.

What followed over the next several years were a string of major Canadian and North American boat racing championships and records:

— A five-mile record in the "B" Hydro division in 1976.

— A one-kilometre speed record in the same class in 1978.

— Three consecutive Canadian High Point titles between 1976 and 1978 and another in 1980.

— Two straight New York State High Point championships from 1977 to 1978.

In 1980 the Canadian Boating Federation formally recognized Boulter by presenting him with its prestigious Jack Abel Memorial Trophy for his outstanding contribution to the sport.

But, the best was yet to come.

In 1983 at Peterborough, Boulter scored an unprecedented speed boat hat trick by claiming three national division titles in a single day of competition.

"That was probably the

biggest thrill," says Boulter.

That and racing with his late brother, Todd, when the Boulter twosome teamed up in the mid-1980s to form an almost unbeatable tandem on the inboard racing circuit.

With the 1988 Canadian High Point championship already under their collective belt, Tom and Todd took turns driving their 6-litre craft "Smooth Move" at the 1989 Gold Cup in Picton. On Saturday, the Boulter boys won the John Porter Trophy and on Sunday they earned the Parkhurst Transportation Trophy.

"Especially now (following Todd's death from cancer), that was a thrill," says Boulter. "Also, they kind of killed our (6-litre) class after that and switched to 7-litres and that just became too expensive."

"There was really no money in it. People helped each other out. I actually went to a race in Florida once and took only a propeller. I borrowed everything else down there. One person would lend you a boat, one a motor, another a helmet."

Boulter attributes his — and

the family's — success to "practice, practice, practice" and countless hours spent in the garage tinkering and tuning engines.

"It was a year-round deal," he says.

As lucky as he was skilled, Boulter managed to avoid a serious spill or major injury during his three decades on the water.

"I crashed once," he says. "I got tangled up with three guys at a start and got cut up. But, you always trusted the guys around you. When I stood on shore and watched, I thought boat racers were crazy."

"But, when you're out there, it's okay."

While Boulter has no qualms about retiring when he did, he does miss the camaraderie.

"That's what was nice," he says. "I know people all across Canada and the U.S. I never had to stay in a hotel. Everyone helped each other out."

Boulter is one of four inductees to the Belleville Sports Hall of Fame for 2001. The other three will be introduced through the city's sports media on Thursday, Aug. 30; Tuesday, Sept. 4; and Thursday, Sept. 6.

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