

Boating is better at 80 miles per hour

Imagine speeding over the waters of a small lake at 80 miles per hour with the wind streaming passed your face and you'll know how a local man feels every time he races. "I don't know what I'd do without the sport," said Derek Hodgson who has been skimming over the waves since he was nine-years-old.

"It's addictive, competitive, exhilarating and I've been involved with the sport for most of my life," continued Hodgson.

The 19-year-old RR 4 Acton man admitted that the sport can be dangerous especially when winning means more than the risk of wiping out but despite two fatalities in the sport this year and numerous accidents he'll be back this summer competing against



Derek Hodgson in action when he was nine-years-old racing in the hydroplane class. Derek graduated to racing Sport "E" class boats when he was 14. The Sport "E" boats are capable of speeds up to 80 miles per hour and they can turn 180 degrees while travelling 65 miles per hour.

some of the fastest boats in the province. Constructed of one-eighth inch marine plywood on the decks, with a one-quarter inch thick hull the boats are extremely light, remarked Hodgson, weighing only 250 pounds. The craft is powered by a 65 horsepower Mercury outboard motor, he added, and the way they are designed they will out accelerate a Formula racing car coming out of a turn.

"When you're cornering in one of these boats you can go into a 180 degree turn at 80 miles per hour and come out of the turn doing 65 miles per hour," explained Hodgson, "and when you're making one of those turns you hang on as tight as you can." When racing, the boats are all required to cross the starting line within a matter of seconds and being early or too late to cross that line will disqualify the boat from the race, said Hodgson. Almost immediately after crossing the starting line the boats go into the first turn and it's at that turn where most of the accidents occur.

"The first few times that I raced in the S.E. class I was terrified to see my competitors only six inches on either side of me and one mistake would mean instant disaster," said Hodgson.

Several times Hodgson has collided with other boats and at speeds of 60 miles per hour or better the thin hull will disintegrate. Sometimes the damage is above the water line and the boats can continue to the finish line but more often the boats are put right out of the race.

"It's not a cheap sport to become involved with either," said Hodgson, "the boat costs around \$5,800 (American), the trailer will run around \$1,500, a gas tank and lifejacket are \$500 and on top of that the engine will cost around \$6,500.

On top of those costs the driver must include two different propellers. One propeller is a little smaller for increased RPM and quicker acceleration in short races and another larger propeller, is used for the long distance races. Propellers cost between \$500 and \$700 and quite often the props are modified for the races which also add on the cost, remarked Hodgson.

The way the boats are designed they are a cross between a boat and an aircraft. The

boats have a tunnel hull design which allows air to flow underneath the craft when high speeds are achieved. When the air flows under the boat it lifts it up off the water so that only the boat's propeller and the back of the boat touch the water said Hodgson.

Hodgson's father introduced him to the sport many years ago when he too found racing boats irresistible.

Derek's father was also the Commodore of the Canadian Boating Federation.

When Derek was nine-years-old he began racing in the seven foot hydroplane class with a six and one half horsepower Mercury engine that would power the boats to around 30 miles per hour. When he was 14 Hodgson had outgrown the smaller boats and began competing in the Sport "E" (S.E.) class.

In his first year of competition Derek placed third in the National High Points competition and second in the National Sprint Event.

The method in which winners are determined is rather complex explained Hodgson. There are usually 13 races per season and each competitor is awarded a number of points depending on how he finishes. At the end of the season the driver with the greatest number of points is the winner. Also at the end of the season are the National Sprint finals in which the competitors are awarded double the points they would receive for finishing in a regular season race. Normally the winner of a race receives 400 points, second place receives 300, third gets 225 points and so on Hodgson said.

"At one time there were boat races on Fairy Lake," noted Hodgson, "but with the large number of competitors and the higher speeds attained by the boats Fairy Lake became too small to be a safe place to race.

Currently most of the Canadian races are held on small lakes like Gull Lake near Gravenhurst or on the St. Lawrence River near Picton.

Hodgson said he hasn't been racing for the past couple of years though because he sold his boat but he's looking for a sponsor to set him up in the sport again. If he can't find a sponsor Hodgson said he'll likely buy his own boat next year and get right back into the sport he loves.



Rod Leech was the Legion men's darts play-off champ.

Barb Marsh was the only player on hand from the Legion ladies' darts play-offs and league champion team to pick up the award Saturday night. Other members of the team included Barb Leech, Mildred Cann, Debbie Perrira and Ann Sunderstrom.



Guy Chenette drew the winning hockey lottery ticket numbers Saturday at J and T Sports. The winner was Mary Davis of Georgetown, she gets \$1,000. Jo Brabant, who sold the ticket, receives \$50. The winning ticket number was 1004. Next Saturday's draw is at 4 p.m. at Halton Hills Furniture and Appliances



Reliable Taxi won top spot in regular season Legion crib action this past season. Left to right are Walt Henstridge, Jim Hughes, Bob Woodcock, Ivan Kilbey and Len Draper. Absent for the presentation Saturday was Don Grein.



A and M Construction took third place in Legion crib regular season play. Left to right are Earl Jordan, Reg Landrault, George Presniak, Mike Rippon, Mike Luty and Al Green.



Fourth place in Legion crib league play this year went to the 68ers. Team members are, left to right, Allan Ellerby, Al Hayes, Jim Waller, Ken Hilditch, Kevin Merritt, Jim McKnight. Absent for the Saturday night presentations was Peter Comstive.



Firemen B took fifth place in Legion crib play this year. Left to right are, Jim Thornhill, Art Ford, Larry Fritzell, Bill Lathrope, Doug Appleyard, Dobbie Fritzell and Doug Ford.

Condo readies for '84

So far three teams are signed and ready for the Condo League season opener May 25. The league had considered going to slow pitch this season said spokesman Dave McLean but a lack of interest prompted the league to remain playing fastball.

"We hope to have four teams by May 25," remarked McLean, "so if there is anyone interested in forming another team they should give Mr. McLean a call at 853-0963.

The games are scheduled for Friday nights at Prospect Park and Sunday morning at M.Z. Bennett.

There are usually 14 to 18 players per team and anyone between 18 and 50-years-old can join.

"The Condo League is for people who want to play baseball for fun, because we aren't as competitive as the Industrial Leagues," added McLean.

McLean said he is anticipating a good season and the Wedco team and the Acton Aces (formerly the Spirits) will be returning this year.

This is the seventh season the Condo League has been going, McLean also noted.

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ACTON HIGH MALE ATHLETE OF THE MONTH

JOHN KWIATKOWSKI
John Kwiatkowski, 19, just wrapped up a season with the Redmen basketball squad and now he's getting ready for the baseball.

The AHS grade 13 student said he is involved in most sports and enjoys coaching and refereeing as well. Acton is the athlete's hometown and he'll be returning to AHS next year to complete his grade 13 courses. Kwiatkowski said his hobbies include music and dancing.

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