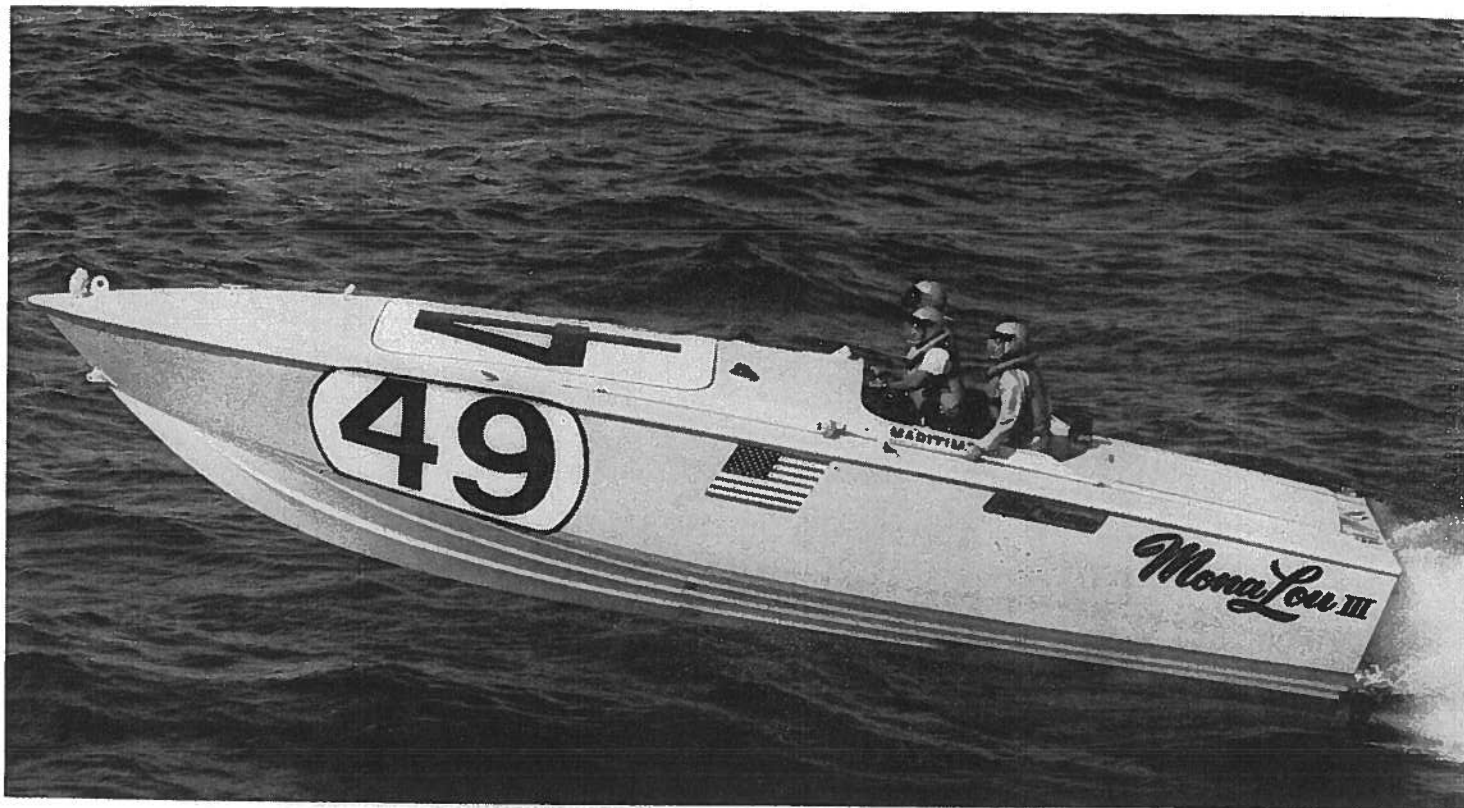


THE FIRST "500" IS THE



"Mona Lou III," driven by Odell Lewis, was first overall and first in 30'-40' and 500-1000 cu. in. classes

Bahamas Ministry of Tourism photos by Roland Rose



(Above) "Maltese Magnum II," driven by Dan Aronow, was second overall and first in 24'-30', 0-300-cu. in. and outboard classes. (Below) "Lightning," driven by Chet Strickland, was third overall

Kiekhaefer Corp. photo



► When Odell Lewis steered *Mona Lou III* across the finish line at Lucaya, Grand Bahama, in the early darkness of May 7 it was a triumph for fine equipment, experience and preparation. The 15 others who completed the 575-statute mile course can trace their success to the same three basic ingredients. Each of the 45 starters who didn't make it should have learned of some vital deficiency that forced him out of the race.

A glance at the summaries of this first Bahamas "500" will confirm the validity of this three-ingredient theory. Eight of the 16 finishers were equipped with those long-time favorites of racers, Kiekhaefer power plants. Two of them had 427-cu. in. MerCruiser inboard engines with stern drives; the other six used combinations of two or three 110-hp. Mercury outboards. Three enginerooms were populated by inboard engines from Holman & Moody, veteran suppliers of high-performance power for both cars and boats. Two entrants relied on machinery by Chrysler—another company that is popular for competitive engines on land and afloat. The three other finishers were driven, respectively, by Cummins diesels and Evinrude and Johnson outboards.

Five of the finishing hulls were products of Don Aronow who, after many years of building successful offshore craft, is now turning out Aronow and Magnum brands. Four came from the several organizations of top-flight offshore racer Merrick Lewis and carried the trade names Maritime, Formula and Drift-R-Cruz. Carl Moesly, another familiar name in this phase of the sport, was represented

HARDEST

Bahamas event, the most rugged in offshore powerboat racing history

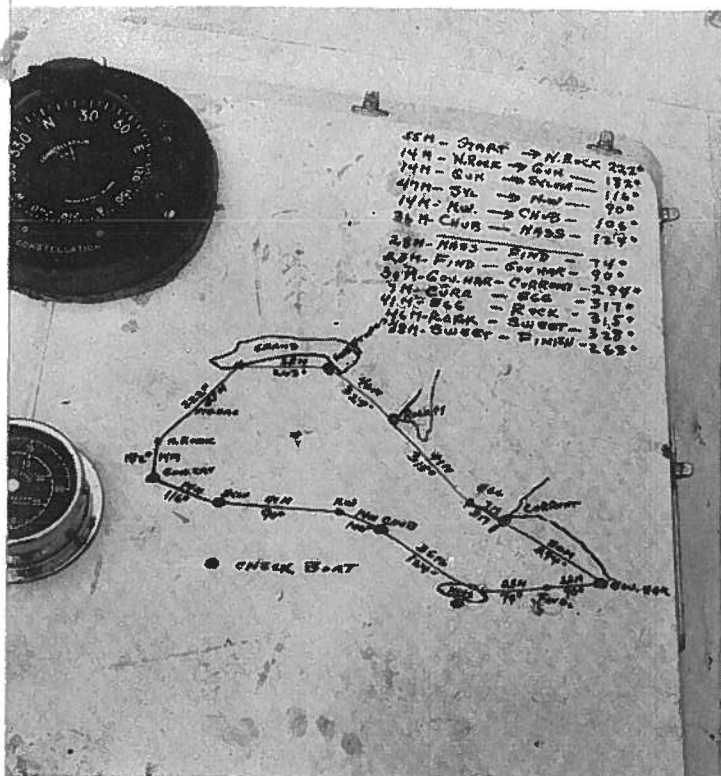


Photo by the author



Sea Talk Marine

(Left) "Chart" of the race course, with vital statistics, as painted on the deck of "Maltese Magnum."

(Above) "Good Guys," driven by Rene and Gale Jacoby, was 16th overall and first in the 40'-45' class

by three of his Seacraft outboard hulls. Two of the finishers boasted the name Bertram—long a by-word in deep water competition. Botved and OMC rounded out the list of hulls that completed the course.

The summaries list 16 drivers whose names are known to those who follow this form of boat racing. Victorious Odell Lewis appeared as a finisher of the Miami-Nassau race as early as 1962. The following year he won that event at a record speed of 55.4 m.p.h. In 1964 he walked away with the race around Long Island. Second place pilot Don Aronow also appears in the results of the 1962 dash from Miami to Nassau and counts among his victories first place in that Bahamian event in 1965. The other drivers to finish, in varying degrees, had faced their share of tip-tilted ocean in offshore racing.

Preparation took many forms. Peter Bethell and Harry Oakes, being residents of Nassau, can be assumed to be familiar with the course of the "500" from cruising their home waters. Several of the drivers from the U.S. toured the torturous path in "dry-runs." Possibly the most scientific approach—and one that surely paid off—was that provided the users of Kiekhaefer Corp. products. The boats were given a thorough testing at the Mercury proving base at Lake X, Florida. Meanwhile, one of the Kiekhaefer planes toured the race course with a camera shooting movies of all the critical spots, accompanied by a sound narration supplied by top Bahamian navigational talent. The drivers and navigators of Kiekhaefer-propelled contenders were thoroughly indoctrinated with this training film. After they

had become familiar with the critical danger areas and essential land falls, they were first flown over the course, then taken around in a cruiser to cement the key spots in their memories.

The running of this first Bahamas "500," over a course whipped by 14- to 20-knot southerly winds, provided participants and spectators with almost 36 hours of continuous excitement. Early shudders resulted from a general foul-up of the pre-race speed qualifications that were intended to qualify each starter for a spot in the lines-of-twelve, paced starting pattern. The first day of scheduled qualifications was blown-out. With only one session of qualifications possible, the shortage of time and apathy on the part of many contenders resulted in only 12 boats posting speeds. This filled only a single line for the start. Promotor "Red" Crise announced that the 50 or so non-qualified boats would have to fight it out in a mass start, at least 300 yards astern of the line of qualified craft.

As a result of this melee, the greater part of the fleet had to contend with a conglomeration of wakes added to the choppy seas whipped up by the spanking southerly. It turned out to be a sort of accelerated destruction test that quickly eliminated a sizable proportion of the fleet. One early casualty—Dick Genth's *Thunderbird III*—dropped out when a ruptured gas tank filled her bilge with a load of highly flammable liquid. Less fortunate was Bill Petty's *Pussy Cat* that caught fire, apparently from a ruptured fuel line, and burned within sight of the Grand Bahama shore. Her crew went over the side and was quickly rescued. Bud



Bahamas Ministry of Tourism photo by Roland Rose
 "Big Broad Jumper," driven by Bill Wishnick, led for much of the race but failed to finish after a control cable failure compelled the crew to steer the boat with engine power alone for more than half the course

Dawson's *Miss Chrysler* Crew dropped out of contention when her engines starved for fuel each time she leaped from a wave crest. Only 12 miles from the start Bill Lewis' 40-footer sank into the turbulent sea.

Other victims of this early "survival-of-the-fittest" period were: King Fulton's *Gay 90s*—radio trouble; Charles Dore's *Hustler*—power failure; Nile LeStrange's *Thunderhead*—power failure; George Couzen's *Donzi Blue Devil*—fuel tank failure; Ernie Box's *The Charger*—power failure; Howard Weiler's *Wildcat*—fractured deck; Robert Rautboard's *Patty Lou*—ruptured fuel tank and Robert Donahue's *Sea Ducer II*—sank.

As the casualty list mounted, the survivors were being led at a 44.5-m.p.h. pace into the wind by *My Moppie*, driven by perennial power and sail champion Dick Bertram. At Gun Cay, the first check point, *My Moppie* held a five-minute lead over her sister ship *Master Moppie*, with Bill Wishnick's *Big Broad Jumper* and Odell Lewis' *Mona Lou III* following at one-minute intervals. In that same order they rounded Sylvia Light with *My Moppie* still in front but now with a lead of only three minutes. Forty minutes later the command radio came to life with Bertram's voice, "We're leaving the race and returning to Bimini." A connecting rod had gone through the side of one of *My Moppie's* screaming engines.

This left Pete Rittmaster in *Master Moppie* with a lead
 (Continued on page 108)

SUMMARIES OF THE BAHAMAS "500" POWERBOAT RACE

Order of finish	Racing number	Name of boat Name and address of entrant	Length and make of boat	Total piston displacement	Number and make of engines	Elapsed time	Speed in statute m.p.h.
1	49	<i>Mona Lou III</i> Odell Lewis, Fond du Lac, Wis.	32' Maritime	854 cu. in.	2—MerCruiser stern drives	12:36	45.6
2	4	<i>Maltese Magnum II</i> Don Aronow, Miami, Fla.	27' Aronow	281 cu. in.	3—Mercury outboards	14:15	40.3
3	46	<i>Lightning</i> Chester Strickland, Sarasota, Fla.	27' Magnum	281 cu. in.	3—Mercury outboards	15:01	38.3
4	333	<i>U.F.O.</i> Peter Bethell, Nassau, Bahamas	28' Formula	854 cu. in.	2—Holman & Moody inboards	15:07	38.0
5	15	<i>Master Moppie</i> Peter Rittmaster, Miami, Fla.	30' Bertram	852 cu. in.	2—Chrysler inboards	15:11	37.9
6	911	<i>Dreadnaught</i> Barry Cohen, Lido Beach, N.Y.	35' Magnum	854 cu. in.	2—Holman & Moody inboards	15:14	37.7
7	48	<i>Stern Driver III</i> John Bakos, Fond du Lac, Wis.	27' Magnum	854 cu. in.	2—MerCruiser stern drives	15:34	36.9
8	41	<i>Joan I</i> Gene Wagner, Sarasota, Fla.	21' Seacraft	187 cu. in.	2—Mercury outboards	16:45	34.3
9	31	<i>My Flying Machine</i> Carl Moesly, Miami, Fla.	21' Seacraft	187 cu. in.	2—Mercury outboards	18:07	31.7
10	36	<i>Yellowbird</i> Bud Tuppen, Lake Worth, Fla.	23' Formula	179 cu. in.	2—Evinrude outboards	25:39	22.4
11	444	<i>Andrea</i> Robert Magoon, Miami Beach, Fla.	23' Magnum	187 cu. in.	2—Mercury outboards	26:48	21.4
12	9	(No name) Edward Joyce, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.	21' OMC	179 cu. in.	2—Johnson outboards	29:33	19.5
13	11	<i>Crystal Isle</i> Harry Oakes, Nassau, Bahamas	37' Bertram	1,570 cu. in.	2—Cummins diesels	29:36	19.4
14	43	<i>Hurricane</i> Steve Sirois, Miami, Fla.	21' Seacraft	187 cu. in.	2—Mercury outboards	31:51	18.0
15	006	<i>Coronet</i> Ole Botved, Slagelse, Denmark	24' Botved	218 cu. in.	2—Volvo stern drives	35:00	16.4
16	52	<i>Good Guys</i> Rene & Gale Jacoby, Miami, Fla.	40' Drift-R-Cruz	852 cu. in.	2—Chrysler inboards	35:24	16.2

(For class winners, see page 108)

Mona Lou III, the first boat to finish, was propelled by a pair of 427-cu. in. stern drives. Pilot Odell Lewis reported that the power tilt on the stern drives was even more helpful than his ballast tank in maintaining the proper riding trim. Yet the only other stern drive to finish was the seventh-place *Stern Driver III* that was beaten by two outboard powered craft and three with conventional inboard power transmission.

The trend to narrower hulls in this form of competition continues—in some cases to the point where the boat at rest is almost as tippy as a canoe. Meanwhile lengths are growing. The winner was a 32-footer. More impressively, the second and third-place *outboards* were each 27' overall.

► A telling insight on offshore racing was provided by Carl Kiekhaefer, impresario of the race boats with Mercury and MerCruiser power. "What did the race cost," he replied to a question. "*Mona Lou's* hull cost \$9,000. Add to that the engine work and the expense of tender loving care. Actually we prepare for a race in research and on our proving ground. For every dollar we spend in racing, we spend \$200 in research and development. The race turns out to be a test only of our navigation."

THE FIRST "500" IS THE HARDEST

(Continued from page 24)

he was to hold almost to Chub Cay. Just before reaching that Berry Island check-point Bill Wishnick gunned his *Big Broad Jumper* into first place by less than a minute, with *Mona Lou* coming on 11 minutes behind the leaders. In that position the leaders continued into Nassau and covered most of the required circuit of New Providence. As they passed through Nassau Harbor the second time, Rittmaster had worked into a one-boat length lead over Wishnick with Odell Lewis clinging to a distant third spot. (Since this was the area where most boats refueled, relative positions were not too significant. The situation was also complicated by the fact that *Big Broad Jumper's* aging steering cable had broken just before the first passing of the Nassau check point and Wishnick continued, steering a somewhat erratic course with his throttles.)

After the circuit of New Providence, Odell made his victory charge with *Mona Lou*. Between Nassau and Governor's Harbor, Eleuthera, Lewis overtook *Master Moppie* and closed to within three minutes of the leading *Big Broad Jumper*. On that stretch from Nassau to Governor's Harbour and on to Current Cut, *Mona Lou* established her best average speed of the race—49 m.p.h. Thus it was that Wishnick, negotiating the treacherous waters near Current with-



Kiekhaefer Corp. photos
"Stern Driver III" was seventh to finish



"Joan I" was eighth overall, first in the 20'-24' class

out assistance of a rudder, was passed by the eventual winner. Throughout this part of the course Rittmaster clung to third spot and Don Aronow in *Maltese Magnum* was holding a close fourth.

Between Current Cut and Rocky Point *Big Broad Jumper* stayed close astern of *Mona Lou*, passing the latter check-point with a deficit of less than one minute. Aronow was now in third position after Rittmaster slowed to a distant eighth. In that same order they rounded the final check station at Sweeting's Cay with Odell Lewis then enjoying a ten-minute lead.

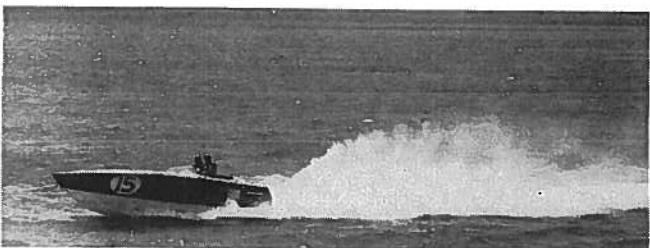
Running down the homestretch from Sweeting's to Lucaya the boats encountered steep quartering seas and falling darkness. Under the circumstances, steering *Big Broad Jumper* with engine power alone became impossible and Wishnick accepted a tow.

Thus *Mona Lou* was followed over the finish line by *Maltese Magnum* and the other 14 boats that leaped through the swells to complete the course throughout that night and the next day.

Bahamas Ministry of Tourism photos by Roland Rose



"U.F.O." (left) was fourth overall and first in the Sportsman division. "Dreadnaught" (right), sixth overall



"Master Moppie" led at times; finished fifth overall

CLASS WINNERS

SPORTSMAN DIVISION WINNER
U.F.O.

BOAT CLASS WINNERS

Class I (20-24') *Joan I*
Class II (24-30') *Maltese Magnum II*
Class III (30-40') *Mona Lou III*
Class IV (40-45') *Good Guys*

ENGINE CLASS WINNERS

Class I (0-300 cu. in.) *Maltese Magnum II*
Class II (300-400 cu. in.) No finishers
Class III (400-500 cu. in.) No finishers
Class IV (500-1,000 cu. in.) *Mona Lou III*

OUTBOARDS OVERALL WINNER

Maltese Magnum II

DIESEL OVERALL WINNER

Crystal Isle