



PHOTO CREDIT/MALC ATTRILL: Veteran Bertram 31 "Thunderstreak" in the overfalls off St.Catherine's Point on the Round-the-Island Race 2024

“THUNDERSTREAK” TAKES CLASS WINS AND SECOND OVERALL IN DRAMA-FILLED, ROUGH + WET COWES POWERBOAT FESTIVAL RACE.

The August Bank Holiday powerboat race weekend, the **Cowes Powerboat Festival**, witnessed speed, drama and neck-and-neck racing on its three courses over two days - namely, the 200-mile **Cowes-Torquay-Cowes** and the 80-mile **Cowes-Poole-Cowes** [Saturday] and Sunday's 60-mile **Round-the-Island** race.

Organisers the British Powerboat Racing Club ["BPRC"] attracted new sponsors, the Florida resort giant **Experience Kissimmee**. This long-established race meet began as the Daily Express Cowes Torquay race in 1961 but is now injected with international style and excitement as the Cowes Powerboat Festival with on-shore entertainments, music as well as competitive offshore racing.

Team:Royal Yacht Squadron aboard the veteran Mercruiser-powered Bertram 31 "Thunderstreak" saw Hugo Peel [owner-driver]; Richard Jessel [navigator/strategy]; and Adrian de Ferranti [throttles/trim] produce a signature performance over both days with Class two firsts in the 65mph Bracket] and one second overall in challenging weather and sea conditions.

SATURDAY: COWES-POOLE-COWES

Team:Royal Yacht Squadron took second place overall behind the iconic 1,200bhp 42ft Shead-designed "Uno Embassy" - incidentally, also raced by Tommy Sopwith in the 1980s. But Tommy's 1963 Bertram, "Thunderstreak, raced in the 65mph Bracket Class and secured her Class win in a rough, rain-squall laden 80-mile event from Cowes and out around Poole and Christchurch bays. Her winning - but lower-then-usual average - speed of 38.57mph reflected the conditions.

SUNDAY: ROUND-THE-ISLAND RACE

While the worst of the rain had gone, stronger winds prevailed, creating critically severe sea conditions at Hurst Castle, the Needles channel and around St. Catherines. "At times," reported navigator Richard Jessel, "we were down to 12mph and still being thrown around like a cork".

"Thunderstreak" came home first in class with an average speed of 42.99mph, as the eastern Solent was comparatively calm and speeds in excess of 60mph were possible. The main competition came from 80mph+ Scottish Sunseeker XS2000, "True Blue" powered by 400bhp Yanmar race diesels with potent surface drives. They elected to drop down from their 75mph bracket "... to give us a race" and push H400 into a second place. However, off Ryde Pier and within

sight of the finish-line, they ran out of fuel: and then flattened their battery in trying to suck it through from the other main tank.

ROUND-UP AND PRIZE-GIVING

To Team:RYS's surprise, "Thunderstreak" walked away with no less than 10 trophies and tombstone awards over the **Cowes Powerboat Festival** - demonstrating that preparation and boat preservation always pays in extreme conditions.

Significant among the award were the **Tim Powell Propellor** [first classic boat home, and won for the 4th time]; the **MEMA Salver** [Oldest Driver finishing - and still breathing, won for the third time]; **Lombard North Central Salver** for the best presented boat over both days' racing [won for the third time]; and the **John Mace** boat designer's Trophy. The other six were Class wins, overall placings and endurance awards.

Sadly, however, these might be **Team:Royal Yacht Squadron's** last races at the Cowes Powerboat Festival, as they retire the boat at the end of this season after the final race out of Lymington on 21st September. Team skipper **John Simmonds** said: "This 1963 Bertram has pulled-off consecutive UK national championships and nearly every possible trophy and prize over five years for which she is eligible. The crew now feel it's time for a new 'curator' to take this magic vessel onto its third life."

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