

TAVARES, FLORIDA – MARCH 2009



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We recently took part in the Tavares vintage boat race for CRA (Classic Racing Association) of Florida, so ably led by racing legend Tom De 'Ath.

This was the second time we'd attended this event and it had an even bigger entry than last year.

Arriving early on Saturday morning, Su and I attended the driver's meeting and then, as we were the first group out, I quickly togged up in old car racing overalls and buoyancy jacket and F37 "L'eau Reves" was swung into the water, Roger showed up and helped Su keep me by the jetty's side until the green flag flew and I was off.



That good old 265 Chevy fired up immediately and I headed out onto the course. One of our boat's little idiosyncrasies is that it has "wet" sponsons, where each sponson has a hole in the back that allows it to flood when at rest. Quite why some hydroplanes have them and some don't is something I have yet to discover!

Anyway, the wet sponsons mean that you can't immediately gun the engine and take off, as that results in the nose going down as the tail lifts out of the water, the water in the sponsons rushes to the bows and the boat loses steerage and starts zig-zagging from side to side until you learn to let off, stern sinks back in, water rushes out of rear of sponsons, bows come up, spot more acceleration, more water rushes out, sponsons empty, now we have steerage and we're off! All this took about half a lap and by this time, most boats were well ahead.



Then I found that I couldn't get more than 4,500 rpm from the engine and so I chugged around at about 75 mph maximum speed, whilst the rest of the field lapped me! Ah well, gave me some seat time as well and there was the afternoon to look forward to.

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But there wasn't. The wind came up, white caps started to appear and I decided that discretion was the better part of valor as we still had Sunday to look forward to, so after a meal in the restaurant next door to our hotel, it was off to bed and up early next morning to a gray sky which spelt rain coming. Oh dear!



Happily, the rain held off long enough that we did at least get out on the course on Sunday but as soon as we started, so did the rain! Interesting experience, driving a hydroplane and wiping your goggles to see where you're going... I managed about three laps before coming across another hydro stationery in the water, on the course and pulled into the pits next time around. Then it was a mad dash to get the boat out, swift clean up, attach trailer to Dodge Ram and drive home in a downpour, which luckily subsided as we neared home.



Hurray! The season has started. Need to take the boat to a mechanic to get the accelerator pedal dropped down. It's too uncomfortable to use at the moment, I've decided so let's see if that helps matters.





















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