

Buddy Byers Memory

I have a lot of memories of the Marine Stadium. I raced there numerous times, and I was the Unlimited Hydroplane Racing Commissioner there for ten years.

I love this Stadium. There was just something about it that was unbelievable. It is like the Daytona Speedway or the Indianapolis 500-except better. The Miami Marine Stadium was my favorite venue. I don't think there is another place in the world like this. It is perfect.

There were so many memories. I remember Bernie Little, the owner of Miss Budweiser and the most successful owner in the history of Unlimited Hydroplane racing. Bernie was a larger than life character. One time, after a race we were all at The Jockey Club and he said "Wait a minute, I left my helicopter at the Marine Stadium". He had someone go get it. Bernie had a great relationship with August Busch, owner of Budweiser-and Busch loved boat racing. I remember, as Head of the Unlimiteds, I was short of cash. So I called up Busch's Secretary and said "I need \$10,000 for this race." The Secretary said "let me ask". I hung on the phone for a short time and a minute later, she came back on the line "yes, it's ok".

I really remember the racing. The course was pretty tight-you would not want to go into the first turn with eight guys on your shoulder. My favorite race was a Grand Prix race. I remember, going side by side with Skeeter Johnson for almost the whole race. We were separated by only a few feet, almost touching each other. The crowd was going crazy. At the far turn, I knew that if I wanted to win, I would have to keep my RPM at 6000, so I swung wide and missed the dock by one foot. There was a cameraman from ABC Wide World of Sports on the dock and he dropped the camera. I beat Skeeter by a couple of feet.

Then there was the elephant on water skis. In the 1960s, Dan McNamara was Head of the Orange Bowl Committee and he wanted to do something spectacular. So he came up with the idea of towing an elephant on water skis. They did this before one of our races, and they kept trying and trying to get the elephant up. Finally, they succeeded.

We started our race and we didn't know anything about this. As I came around the first turn, I looked up-and saw a boat heading right towards us towing an elephant on water skis.

The race was immediately stopped. That night, Dan McNamara came to our boat racers dinner and apologized. "The water skiing elephant was supposed to be off the water by 10:30 AM" he said.

When I walked into the Stadium after all of these years, I almost cried. I really hope to be able to come back and see a race here.