

# Hydroplane driver dumps Executone boat

By Marly Budnor  
staff writer

Talk about being left high and dry. That's what owner Bill Wurster, driver Scott Pierce and the Miss Executone U-8 racing crew must have felt like this winter. They all were looking forward to 1988 after a tremendously inspiring 1985 campaign on the Unlimited Hydroplane Racing circuit.

However, because of new marketing strategies at the corporate level of parent company Continental Telecom Inc., Miss Executone will not be among the field of boats pounding across the Detroit River Sunday in the American Power Boat Association's unlimited Gold Cup race.

In fact, Wurster's boat is still sitting back home in Seattle collecting dust and awaiting new sponsorship. The turn of events was extremely disappointing to everyone involved with Executone racing, including Chief Executive Officer Paul Boudreau of the Troy-based Executone Business Systems.

"Although it's regrettable and disappointing, the story is simple," explained Boudreau, a Bloomfield Hills resident. "There was a complete change in management and the whole philosophy in terms of promotion and advertising completely changed."

"Each year it seemed like we had a big improvement in performance of both the boat and the crew. Each year we would learn more about promoting. I thought we were just starting to get rolling in terms of promotion."

"Our four-year racing program for the Executone came to a screeching halt," he said. "But I still haven't given up hope that we'll be able to do something in the future."

MISS EXECUTONE firmly established itself last year as a future threat to such unlimited VIP's as the Miller American (the former Atlas



Hydroplane driver Scott Pierce is eyeing his first-ever Gold Cup championship Sunday on the treacherous Detroit River course. RICK SMITH/staff photographer

Van Lines), Miss 7-11 and the Miss Budweiser. There was even talk of switching over to the turbine-powered engines that are fast becoming the *modus operandi* on the unlimited circuit.

Pierce piloted the Rolls-Royce-Merlin-powered Miss Executone to a surprising 1985 season-opening victory in Miami. The Executone crew managed to stay atop the American Power Boat Association's national point standings throughout most of the summer.

Even entering the season's last race in San Diego, Miss Executone

mathematically was in contention for the sport's coveted national championship.

Miss Executone ultimately finished second that September afternoon in California to the more financially endowed and turbine-powered Miller American racing team.

But the foundation was laid. After four years of Executone sponsorship, including two fine seasons of improvement and refinement with the Wurster racing camp, optimism was at a feverish pitch.

Then the news came crashing down like a Detroit River white cap.

Executone Telephones would not renew its sponsorship for the 1988 season.

The turn of events certainly stunned Pierce.

"I was very pleased with the (Executone) team," said Pierce, the 1981 co-rookie unlimited hydroplane driver of the year. "We were learning and growing together. We didn't have a clue there was going to be a problem."

"We were even preparing a turbine boat. Then, all of a sudden, bang. I didn't know about it personally until November. Then we had to

go scratching and there just wasn't any funds available.

"But, you know the old saying: 'No bucks, no Buck Rogers,'" he said. "And that was the end."

ALL OF A sudden Pierce was unemployed in a sporting field with very few opportunities. But he found new life some three months later.

The 30-year-old Seattle native received a call from unlimited exa-Bernie Little in February asking him to drive the Miss Budweiser Grifflon-powered boat this season.

Naturally, Pierce jumped at the opportunity to be part of the world's most famous unlimited racing team.

"For years being in the smaller camps and with the lower-budget boats, you always dream of being in a camp like (Budweiser)," said Pierce. "When Mr. Little called I was very pleased. It was one of the happier days of my life."

Little actually has two Miss Budweiser boats racing on this year's circuit — the new turbine-powered boat driven by former World Champion Jim Kropfeld and Pierce's Grifflon boat.

The turbine boat won the season's first race two weeks ago in Miami with an average speed of 102.495 miles per hour (fastest competition lap of 107.357). Its fastest qualifying lap was 122.795 mph.

Miss Madison, driven by Ron Snyder and formerly sponsored by Speedy Printing out of Birmingham, was second followed by Pierce in the Grifflon Budweiser.

Pierce admits the pressures of driving Miss Budweiser are undoubtedly higher than when he was with the "lower-budget boats."

"With the Executone you were the underdog fighting the big boys all the time," said Pierce. "You're the top dog with Budweiser."

"It's like a role reversal for me. It took me out of a challenger position to the favorite position. It does put extra pressure on you. It puts you in a different frame of mind than what I was last year with Executone."

"If I finished and did well every one was happy," he said. "Now, I can't find justification to lose a race. It's a completely different set of ideas."

Pierce says the Detroit River is the most challenging course in unlimited hydroplane racing. While Pierce realizes the hazardous conditions in Detroit, he is looking forward to Sunday's race.

"I have the best opportunity that I've ever had in my career so far to win a Gold Cup — it's the most prestigious race on the circuit," he said.

The Executone may not be there, but Pierce is ready to go.

## Metroparks commission selects new officers

The Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority has elected officers for 1988-89. They are:

Chairman: John C. Hertel, who represents Wayne County on the HMCA and is also chairman of the Wayne County Board of Commissioners and a professor of government, environment and technology at Lawrence Institute of Technology.

Vice chairman: James Clarkson, who represents Oakland County on the HMCA. He is chairman and chief executive officer of First Federal Savings Bank and Trust.

Treasurer: Harry E. Lester, an appointee of Gov. James Blanchard who represents the district at-large. He is the director of the United Steelworkers of America, District 20.

The Grayling, a native Michigan fish related to the trout, which disappeared from state waters during the 1930s, may be making a comeback. Some 150,000 eggs of the Montana Grayling species arrived at the Department of Natural Resources Wolf Lake Fish Hatchery at Malawan where they will be raised to yearlings for release in the spring of 1989.

The last known stronghold of the Michigan Grayling was the Otter River in the Upper Peninsula. Habitat destruction, primarily due to deforestation and compounded by the massive log drives of the late 1900s is considered the most likely factor leading to the extinction of the fish, according to the DNR.

### outdoors

A "Fit-Trail" fitness course, with 20 exercise stations over a 1.75-mile course is open at Stony Creek Metropark near Rochester.

The course begins at the top of the hill at Eastwood Beach, then proceeds along the bike-hike trail to a point between the Southdale and Oakgrove picnic areas and returns on a trail through woods and fields. The trail has three lengths: easy — .75 of a mile; average — one mile; full — 1.75 miles.

the weekend of June 28.

Stony Creek: "Nature for Tots," a program designed for 3-5-year-olds and their parents, will be at 10 a.m. Saturday at the nature center.

"Pedal'n' Nature," a bike-nature tour around the seven-mile route to learn about nature, will be at 9 a.m.

Sunday. Participants must bring a bike or rent one from the park. Meet at Eastwood Beach site.

Indian Springs: "Summer Wildflowers" will be viewed during an outing at the park near Clarkston at 10 a.m. Sunday. Meet at the nature center.

Kensington: "Crawlers, Jumpers and Flyers," a program about the identification and habits of common insects, will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday, at the nature center.

Most programs are free but require advance registration. Vehicle entry permits are required.

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Several nature programs will be held at Huron-Clinton Metroparks

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2 door unit

\$79<sup>88</sup>

24" x 64"

\$79<sup>88</sup>

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