

545  
John Jacobs Wins

# Airboat Races Benefit Driver That Lost Arm

By JOHNNY WILSON  
(News Outdoors Editor)

ANDYTOWN—The first annual Florida Championships at Ron Bergeron's new Airboat Park yesterday turned out to be a benefit performance for a fellow competitor injured in a pre-race practice session.

It wasn't planned that way—especially by the guy injured—it just worked out that way.

The event, first of its kind on the unique facility Bergeron has built on U.S. 27 a few miles south of this minute community, went through a full program of class races, a cross-country chase (run twice due to a sloppy original start, quarter-mile drags and a half-track race.

Several engines were blown among the 40-boat field, two rigs threw propellers (one all the way into the parking lot behind the bleachers) and track owner, Ron Bergeron, was headed to the hospital himself at the end of the day to have stitches put in a severe hand cut suffered in a flip during the cross-country race.

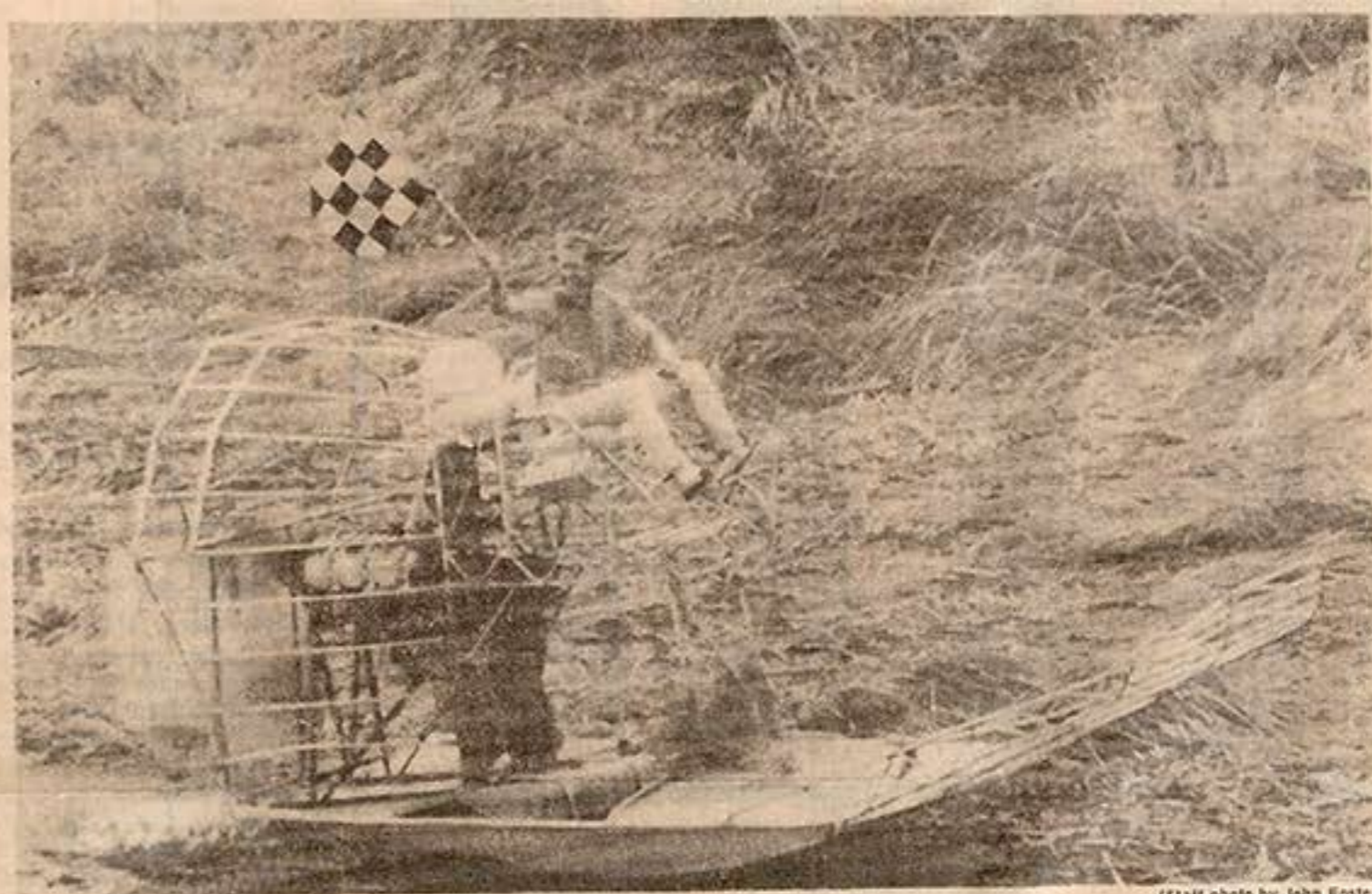
45-99 Horsepower: 1—Jerry Baldino, Miami; 2—Gene Hope, Davenport; 3—Sig Walker Jr., Miami; 91-125 hp: 1—Johnny Jones, Davenport; 2—Jerry Baldino, Miami; 3—Ernie Liviolett, Hialeah; 126-150 hp: 1—Gary Thurman, Melbourne; 2—Walter Williams, Davie; 3—Howard Yates, Davie; 151 and up: 1—David Gore, Davenport; 2—Don Medlin, Davie; 3—Bob Hoowood, Melbourne; Cross Country: 1—John Jacobs, Ft. Lauderdale; 2—Butch Harrison, West Palm Beach; 3—Ben King, Davie; 15-mile Feature: 1—Gary Thurman, Melbourne; 2—Jerry Baldino, Miami; 3—Ernie Liviolett, Hialeah; Official's Race: 1—Ralph Broncius, Hollywood; 2—Butch Harrison, West Palm Beach; 3—Ben King, Davie; Halftrack Race: 1—Krusc & Belcher, Ft. Lauderdale; 2—Don Bergeron, Davie; 3—Marty Smith, Hallandale.

That happened while he was fighting for the lead with Ft. Lauderdale's John Jacobs, who went on to win the cross-country race handily with his 280-horsepower rig.

Most of the winners donated all or most of their prize money to Johnny Ellis of Hialeah. Ellis, the father of five, lost an arm, most of his teeth and suffered severe body cuts Saturday when his 10-foot fiberglass airboat became airborne during practice and threw him into the propeller.

A Game Commission helicopter flew him to Broward General, where he is reported in serious condition today.

While Ellis was out of the competition



(Staff photo by John Foster)

yesterday, his small boat (he has two) was the day's big winner under the hand of Gary Thurman, a Melbourne buddy of Ellis'. The boat won Class 3 (125-150 horsepower), the 15-mile overall championship and dusted off all comers in becoming top eliminator in the quarter-mile drags.

Immediately after the program was completed, it was announced that Bos

Boswell of Ft. Lauderdale, a one-time power boat racer of note, had bought both of Ellis' boats and that he was going to donate any winnings in the April 19 Broward Championships to help defray hospital expenses.

With the driver's contributions (\$850) and from what the 4,300 spectators donated (\$564), there was a kitty of \$1,414 for Ellis.

**WINNER** — John Jacobs of Ft. Lauderdale happily waves the checkered flag for himself as he goes across the finish line first in the cross country race.