

2016 Augusta Southern Nationals: July 15 - 17, 2016

Supercharged horsepower race boats charged wildly down the Savannah River in Augusta. It was a liquid quarter-mile at speeds exceeding 240 MPH!

The boat drags are sanctioned by Lucas Oil Drag Boat Racing Series and total prizes and awards exceeding \$140,000. The proceeds from the event benefit the Georgia Special Olympics, Augusta Chapter.

The basics of drag boat racing are very similar to those of land drag racing. It is an acceleration race over a measured quarter mile straightaway on water between two high performance race boats. However, drag boats use a slight moving start. This starting system was implemented as a safety precaution because it is difficult for a boat driver to determine if the boat will launch straight from a standing start.

As two boats are "paired up" on the holding rope, a



countdown clock begins before the boats get the green light. During competition, if either boat crosses the starting line before the green light is illuminated, it is disqualified.

Each boat is allowed to qualify for eliminations by making at least one quarter-mile timed run. Each of the boats is clocked for an elapsed time (ET) that is determined from the time it takes the boat to cover the quarter-mile race from start to finish. Drag boats qualify on Saturday for a two-day event and on Friday and Sat-



urday for three day events. Only the top qualifying boats will compete in the championship elimination rounds. The winner of each round of racing advances to the next round until only one boat remains as the class winner.

Consider different hull designs and propulsion methods, there are three basic boat types: hydroplanes, flat



bottom and jets, each with a variety of styles.

The Hydroplane drag boat uses a three point hull design to trap air. During acceleration, the hydro rides mainly on a cushion of air, with only its propeller and two rear edges of its sponsons (large torpedo-shaped pods on the sides of the hull that form a tunnel similar to pontoons on a catamaran) touching the water.

Flat Bottom drag boats cannot be designed with a tunnel bottom, although a modification called a "runner bottom" is now accepted. The flat bottom resembles a family ski boat in design; in fact, many drag boats retire to become ski boats.

A Jet drag boat can have any hull design, but differs from other drag boats types by the jet pump, which is its sole means of propulsion and steering.

For more information, visit augustasonthernnationals.org

Photos by Brad Chase for MSA

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