

Yukon 800 Marathon Encounters Rough Go

By MARY MOSES

"Miss Tip Top" was the winner of Alaska's most exciting boat race last weekend. The boat completed 800 miles on the treacherous Chena, Tanana and Yukon rivers in a record 20 hours, 27 minutes.

Owner of the boat and new

champion of the Yukon 800 Marathon is Fred Pitcher. He also won the 1962 Yukon 800 with the same boat, then called "Father's Folly."

The crews of the boats in this year's race, many of them Natives who have lived on the rivers all of their lives, said the water on the Tanana this year was the roughest they had ever seen. Chops up to four feet in depth were encountered below Minto. The Yukon water, usually rough, was smooth by comparison, crews said.

The "Boo Boo Too," owned by Bob Toombs, wasn't bothered by the weather. It streaked past the river villages to come to the finish line only four minutes behind "Miss Tip Top." Toombs also won the Marathon in 1963 and 1964 with the same boat.

Placing third, but with a considerably slower time, was Ralph Chase's "X-5." This boat was formerly "The Untouchable." Chase renamed it, he said, "When we got touched so often."

Last year's winner, Johnny Anderson's "Blue Goose," placed fourth. The "Blue

(Continued on Page 8)

Yukon 800 Marathon . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

Goose" limped into Fairbanks with a make-shift lift made of a long aspen pole. The lift hinge was improvised from two screwdrivers tied together.

It was a swift limp—the "Blue Goose" still made the fastest time in the race on the return from Nenana to Fairbanks. The lift was broken about 20 miles below Minto on the outgoing trip, Anderson said. The lift broke when the "Blue Goose" hit a log in the waves.

At another point on the trip the "Blue Goose" was swept into a log jam by the waves. The crew had to pack the boat across the jam.

In the Class B race round trip from Fairbanks to Minto, Mike Nussbaumer won with a 20-foot metal riverboat and a 50 horsepower motor. Jack Harrop's "Special" placed second.

The water was rough even in the shorter race. "Ollie's Sckow," the boat which won the Businessmen's Race for the Tundra Times on Memorial Day, broke down at Nenana. In a freak accident of bad luck, both the original 45 horsepower motor and the 30 horsepower spare motor were inoperative.

Two riverboats in the race to Ruby were also forced out of the running. The "Cat's Paw" damaged its hull when it was launched into the Chena. It turned around before breaking into the Tanana.

"Slo Mo's Kayak," one of the favorites in this year's race, had to turn back after hitting the heavy waves on the Tanana. The gas tank tie-down cables snapped loose and allowed the heavy tank to slap the floor. The hull was damaged so severely that the crew was forced to nail the bottom back on the boat at Tanana before returning to Fairbanks.

Only one pleasureboat was forced out of the race, the "Bearcat." Winner of the pleasureboat class was Allen Persinger's "Miss Mode

O' Day." Persinger's boat is a lake-type boat powered with a 100 horsepower motor.

Second in the pleasure class was Jack Distad's "Miss Alaska Insurance." Distad's boat, a 24-foot metal riverboat, popped 12 rivets and broke a rib in the rough water. It was powered by two 50 horsepower motors.

The "Bearcat" broke the steering gear on both of its 80-horsepower motors when it hit logs in the rough water. The "Bearcat" was forced to tie up in Manley Hot Springs, where it remained for repairs.

The racers were not the only boats which had trouble in the rough water. The pickup boat developed two holes in its gas tank near Tolovana on the outgoing trip. It managed to make the trip back upriver as far as Minto, where it tied up for repairs.

The trouble in the Tanana River this year was blamed on relatively high water and stormy winds. The high water made large choppy waves which hid the sandbars and driftwood, boat crews reported. It was difficult to control boats in turns and sometimes on the straight stretches when the wind hit the boat.