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Hovercraft championships heat up

By David /Tribune-Star

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Hovercraft drivers Conrad Beale of the United Kingdom and Michael Metzner of Germany consider each other friends.

Beale even built the craft that Metzner races in Formula 1, the fastest class sanctioned by the World Hovercraft Federation.

But Thursday afternoon in the lake across from the Wabash Valley Family Sports Center, both drivers' crafts touched in water while they battled for first place in their second 10-lap heat race of the day.

Metzner went on to win the heat after Beale shut off his engine to avoid further contact, concluding a rain-delayed first day of racing in the 2002 World Hovercraft Championship.

Afterward, Beale claimed the incident in Turn One of the 10th lap was Metzner's fault -- and Metzner agreed.

"It was not clean racing, but there's no hard feelings," said the 32-year-old Beale, who qualified fastest in Wednesday's time trials, won Thursday's first heat from start to finish, placed second behind Metzner in the second heat and still owns the Formula 1 points lead heading into today's heat racing at the same lake.

Metzner, 25, had taken the second-heat lead on the ninth lap. Later, he offered his opinion of the late mishap in which nobody was injured.

"I saw that I was fast in the turns and Conrad was fast in the straightaways," explained Metzner, who moved up to second in the F1 point standings after finishing fourth in the first heat. "I came inside and touched Conrad's left side with my right side. My acceleration was much quicker than Conrad's. He had no chance."

When told that Beale believed the incident was Metzner's fault, the Bamberg, Germany, resident made no excuses.

"I made a mistake," Metzner admitted. "I was going too fast. . . He showed good sportsmanship by going off the throttle."

Andreas Feulner of Germany is third in the F1 point standings after coming in second and third in Thursday's heats.

In fourth place is two-time defending world champion Michele Scanavino, an Italian who managed finishes of third and eighth in Thursday's heats.

"It was tough today," Scanavino acknowledged. "I couldn't do any better [with the equipment available]. This was the best performance I could get. It was quite annoying. . . I need more horsepower."

Other class leaders after Thursday's races are Belgium's Michel Thiry in Formula 2, the United Kingdom's Daniel Turnbull in Formula 3, Australia's Clinton Buckwell in Formula S, Canada's Chris Barczynski in Formula 25 and Sweden's Marcus Westerberg in Formula J.

World hovercraft champions will be determined Saturday at the same lake.

Thursday's heat finishes and total points

(order of drivers based on points accumulated from 2 heat races)

Formula 1 (10 laps each) -- Conrad Beale (United Kingdom) 1-2 45 points, Michael Metzner (Germany) 4-1 38, Andreas Feulner (Germany) 2-3 36, Michele Scanavino (Italy) 3-8 24, Jonathan Spedding (United Kingdom) 6-5 21, Paul Hibbard (United Kingdom) 7-7 18, Magnus Ivanoff (Sweden) 5-10 17, Daniel Newton (United Kingdom) 13-4 16, Tony Goldney (United Kingdom) 9-9 14, Jonas Cnattingius (Sweden) x-6 10.

Bill Zang (USA) 12-11 9, Colin Horne (United Kingdom) 8-x 8, Luke Sedzikowski (United Kingdom) 10-x 6, John Oberg (Sweden) 11-x 5, Marquis Songer (USA) 14-13 5, Gary Lutke (USA) x-12 4.

Formula 2 (eight laps each) -- Michel Thiry (Belgium) 2-1 45 points, Francois Dupont (France) 1-3 41, Tony Sullens (United Kingdom) 3-5 27, Clinton Buckwell (Australia) 5-6 21, Craemers Frank (Netherlands) 8-4 21, Chris Barlow (United Kingdom) 15-2 21, Kent Gano (USA) 7-7 18, Hans Westerberg (Sweden) 4-14 15, Owen Ellis (Australia) 9-8 15, Leif Westerberg (Sweden) 12-9 11.

Clyde Carstairs (Australia) 6-x 10, Henk Martens (Netherlands) 13-10 9, Denis Ragot (France) 10-15 7, Robert Waugh (Australia) 11-x 5, Raoul Dahms (USA)

17-11 5, Mike McFarland (USA) x-12 4, Shinji Kato (Japan) 18-13 3, Jason Kuehn (USA) 14-x 2, Kazutoyo Matsuda (Japan) 16-x 0, Anne Christine-Dupont (France) 19-x 0.

Formula 3 (eight laps each) -- Daniel Turnbull (United Kingdom) 1-1 50 points, John Bucknall (United Kingdom) 2-2 40, Daniel Thibault (France) 3-3 32, Christian Godicheau (France) 4-4 26, Fred Wilson (United Kingdom) 7-7 18, Bryan White (United Kingdom) 6-9 17, Tom Hyde (United Kingdom) 9-8 15, Jamie Lewendon (United Kingdom) 10-10 12, Ralph Baker (United Kingdom) 5-x 11, Anthony Lallier (France) x-5 11.

Scott Tilley (United Kingdom) x-6 10, Klaus Blank (Germany) 8-x 8, Terry Chapman (USA) 11-x 5.

Formula S (eight laps each) -- Clinton Buckwell (Australia) 1-1 50 points, Alain Larribe (France) 2-2 40, Kent Gano (USA) 4-3 29, Carl Smith (United Kingdom) 7-6 19, Steve Pope (USA) 9-5 18, Raoul Dahms (USA) 8-7 17, Owen Ellis (Australia) 12-4 17, Clyde Carstairs (Australia) 3-x 16, Kevin Bedsworth (USA) 10-8 14, Robert Waugh (Australia) 5-x 11.

Angus Kerr (Australia) 6-x 10, Michel Thiry (Belgium) 11-x 5.

Formula 25 (six laps each) -- Chris Barczynski (Canada) 2-1 45 points, Billy Zang (USA) 4-2 33, Graham Spencer (USA) 3-3 32, Shane Wilkey (USA) 1-x 25, Owen Ellis (Australia) 5-4 24, Lynne Ellis (Australia) 6-5 21, Kevin Pratt (USA) 7-6 19, Bob Rennick (Canada) x-7 9.

Formula J (four laps each) -- Marcus Westerberg (Sweden) 1-1 50 points, Chris Chapman (USA) 3-2 36, Tommy Osterman (Sweden) 2-x 20.

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