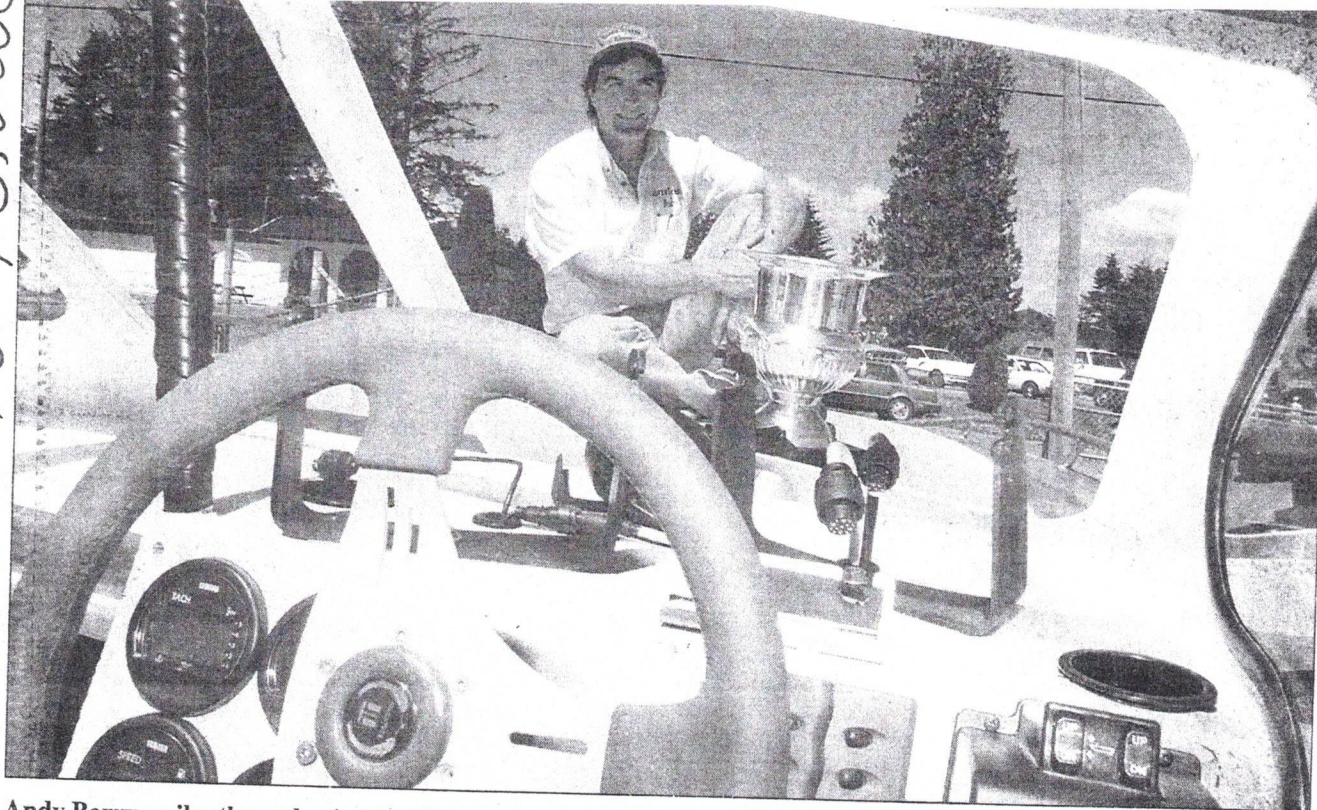


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Andy Barry smiles through windshield that was shattered during storm he encountered as he circumnavigated Vancouver Island and won the Island Challenge.

Ian McKain/Times Colonist

# Silver Streak wins hair-raising race around Vancouver Island

BY SUSAN DOWN  
Times Colonist staff

When Andy Barry made it back to Victoria Harbour from his day on the water his 28-foot Silver Streak aluminum speedboat was taking on water and the windshield was smashed.

Electronic gear was ripped from its mounts, and the transom extension that supports the twin 250-hp outboard engines was tearing away from the hull.

Barry circumnavigated Vancouver Island during the 580-nautical-mile Island Challenge, held July 1.

This week he is still nursing blistered hands from clutching the wheel and sore legs after hours of bracing himself against pounding waves.

"It was like going skiing for a few days when you're not used to it," said Barry, a Sooke aluminum boat designer and builder.

Not only did he win the race, but by the end his boat was the only participant. During the bone-jarring race, it reached

speeds of about 58 knots, close to 70 nautical miles an hour.

In a wild ride down the Island's west coast Barry and crew member Brian Baird were schussing down waves steep as ski slopes, encountering extreme weather especially between the Brooks Peninsula and Estevan Point. The narrow windshield offered the only protection against cresting waves on the open boat. Even that shattered under the breaking seas that disabled the radar and electronic navigational equipment.

Silver Streak, a boat Barry designed especially for the race's conditions, took the lead soon after the event began at 4:38 a.m. from Ogden Point. The trip up inside waters to Port Hardy took 5 1/2 hours. There they made their only stop, to refuel and to change clothes.

At that point, Barry found his was the only vessel left in the challenge. The 34-foot Spirit of Sooke had bowed out south of Nanaimo with engine trouble.

The 31-foot Maverick, a former Island Challenge winner, dropped out due to

engine trouble north of Campbell River.

But Maverick's Seattle crew had the right priorities. They left the disabled boat up Island and caught a ride by car back to Victoria in time for the post-race party.

Rounding the Island was surprisingly calm, said Barry, before the 30-knot winds on the west coast battered both boat and crew.

Meanwhile, Silver Streak's tracking device had stopped working and the people back in Victoria hadn't heard from the crew in 10 hours.

"When we lost contact with him it gave us all a bit of a scare," said race organizer Lorna Robertson, who alerted the coast guard and the Rescue Co-ordination Centre. But 15 minutes later, the Silver Streak streaked across the finish line. The time: 16 hours, 30 minutes and 32 seconds.

The Island Challenge race is organized by the Sooke Marine Rescue Society as a way to raise awareness and financial support for its community rescue boats.