



the GAZE

Serving the Lower C



Lined up before the race—masts, rafts and people. Over 100 rafts competed and some 5,000 people watched. The event went off without a serious mishap. Complete story and photos on pages 9, 16 and 17.

Levine photo

Rafters Race, Party Way Down The River

By Dick Lehr

ESSEX - By late afternoon last Saturday the Fourth Annual Connecticut River Raft Race had evolved into the Fourth Annual River Party on Notts Island whose membership was wide open to anyone who could figure out a way to get to the island.

As for the race itself, the raft "Riverwurst" had outdistanced the 100 or so other entries with a decisive win some $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile ahead of second place "Morning Star II," the winner of the two previous raft races.

Built in Essex and captained by Robert Tripp "Riverwurst" would have been a difficult winner to predict after it sank during a test run just three days before the event to improve buoyancy, foam was used to reinforce the two sheet metal, canoe-like pontoons which supported the catamaran design.

On Saturday, however, "Riverwurst" bolted off the line when race chairman Frank Burton fired the starting guns shortly after noon. The raft took a commanding lead early in the race and successfully held it throughout the $6\frac{1}{2}$ mile course, finishing in a scanty 1 hour and 15 minutes, 15 minutes ahead of its competition.

Unlike last year, the race began before the tide changed. So in addition to stifling heat, racers battled a stiff upstream current which not only prevented some rafts from making headway, but pushed them backwards.

One "nameless raft" captained by Dwight Griswold of Lyme was inadvertently swept north to Chester before it "got underway" as the tide changed in the mid-afternoon. A full seven hours after the start of the race, the crew landed at Notts Island, only to find themselves too late even for the awarding of the last raft award. According to one of the crew the trip was not that uncomfortable, "we just kept eating and drinking beer," and as if to dispell the demeaning thoughts some might have

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