CARMEN PEREZ GUERRI



Catalan motorboating champion

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TEXT: Ariadna Pons Soler. Journalist.

FOTO: Alicia Caboblanco (Illustration)

In the nineteen seventies, Carmen Pérez Güerri established herself as a prominent figure in Catalan motorboating, competing in championships inside and outside Spain.

Little is known about Carmen Pérez Güerri, but we know enough that we can rightfully say that she deserves the following lines. Her name, unknown to the vast majority, is part of the history of sport in Catalonia. Considering she was a Spanish champion in motorboating, i.e. motorboat racing, only a few press clippings and the occasional fan of her sport are all that remains about her.

Carmen Pérez Güerri's beginnings in motorboating

Miquel Mallafré, president of the Catalan Motorboating Federation since 2009 and author of the book *Catalan Motorboating Federation: 1968-2018. History of the Federation*, had the opportunity to speak with her when he was documenting his book, in the early 2000s at the retirement home where she lived.

Mallafré learned that Pérez Güerri got into the world of motorboating through the influence of her brother, Eduardo Pérez, who also competed in the same discipline. Her husband, Tomás Hidalgo Torroella, also practiced motorboating: the couple occasionally competed together. All three were part of the Vilanova i la Geltrú Yacht Club.

Not much more is known about her personal life: married and childless, the couple ran a pharmacy located on Las Ramblas in Barcelona. They were comfortable financially speaking, although it was not thanks to the sports titles they had accumulated. At that time, there were no financial rewards for winning motorboat championships, but you had to have sufficient financial support to be able to keep up with the pace of the races: purchasing
the boat, fixing possible malfunctions and traveling to competition sites required a certain amount of financial solvency.

Motorboating in Catalonia

As Xavier Solà Barceló explains in the article "The motorboat industry in Barcelona in the nineteen sixties", in the magazine *Drassana*, recreational motorboating in Catalonia started in the early 1900s. In fact, the first evidence of a motorboat race being held dates back to 1904 in the Port of Barcelona, although most Catalan sailing clubs were not created until the 1910-1920s, he points out.

The appearance of these clubs would spur the sport of motorboating which served to entertain the club members. In those early days, both sailing and motorboats participated in the regattas, but without any regulation by any federation, since the Spanish Motorboating Federation would not emerge until 1965, followed by the Catalan Motorboating Federation in 1968. Solà notes that from the 1920s the sport became more professional and more regulated, and it was then that some Catalan captains left Catalonia and also Spain to participate in international championships.

In the second half of the 1950s, regattas became widespread, and local yacht clubs began to form their own teams. In the following decade, during the 1960s, the races were better organised, the hulls used were designed exclusively for competition, and the different categories were outlined, which varied depending on the engine displacements and the types of hulls used. According to Solà, these were the golden years of motorboating in Catalonia.

Although this is when motorboat competitions as we understand them today began to take shape, some differences separate the past from today: motorboating comes in a wider variety today —apart from motorboat competitions, there are also jet ski races—, safety measures are stricter and boats can reach higher speeds. If motorboating enjoyed greater visibility at that time, it was also due to the fact that competitions were held inside ports and it was thus more common for people to watch them. Miquel Mallafré explained in an article in *Espais* magazine entitled "Ports and motorboat competitions" that the lack of large navigable lakes and rivers in Catalonia—unlike in countries around us— means that most motorboat competitions are held inside and around ports." Mallafré adds that the ports offer visibility, an additional bonus for motorboat races, since the docks become a privileged space where fans could watch the races.

Her exploits

Within this timeline, Carmen Pérez's exploits in motorboating competitions took place in the early 1970s. Some press clippings from the time show that the name of the Barcelona native —as well as the names of her husband and brother— was rarely excluded from the podium.

In 1970 Pérez was the runner-up in the Spanish Motorboating Championship, which was held with races in Malaga, La Manga del Mar Menor and Sant Carles de la Ràpita.
The same year, she earned further plaudits by finishing seventh in the XXII Centomiglia international regatta on Lake Como in Italy. The pages of *La Vanguardia* on 11 October of that year followed the competition and the Catalan representatives. Under the title "Positive Spanish performances in international competitions on Lake Como", the media mentions our star athlete in the text: "Mrs de Hidalgo [the married name of Carmen Pérez], A. Platero, J. Malberti, J. Diamant, JA Orbea and M. Roselló achieved excellent classifications". Furthermore, the image that accompanies this short chronicle is precisely a portrait of Carmen Pérez, with a caption that confirms it: "A spectacular turn in which the outboard motor vessel crewed by Mrs Carmen P. de Hidalgo, from the Villanueva Yacht Club, appears".

The clipping also notes that, of the seventeen participants representing Spain, only three of them were women, competing in the outboard motor vessel category. *La Vanguardia* highlights Pérez's good performance, though not without a hint of condescension: "The Spanish representation that traveled to Italy has managed to showcase the merits of our motorboating athletes, including one woman, Mrs de Hidalgo, whose performances did not detract from those of her compatriots and many of the qualified foreign participants." The journalist Antonio Moragues also wrote a chronicle of the competition in the newspaper *Mundo Deportivo*, in which he emphasised that "one notable feat in this race is the performance of Carmen Pérez de Hidalgo —only one other woman competed in the race with her— who finished with a very honorable seventh place".

The following year, in 1971, Carmen Pérez won the Spanish Championship in the ET category, coming first in the Ceuta and A Coruña circuits. In fact, the NO-DO (News and Documentaries) published by the Franco regime on 16 August 1971 broadcast the National Motorboat Championship in A Coruña, in which Francisco Franco himself was present among the spectators. As in the previous championships, *La Vanguardia* also featured this competition on its pages, highlighting the name of Carmen Pérez as the undisputed winner of that race.

A year later, in 1972, Pérez also reached the podium, this time together with her husband, Tomás Hidalgo. Together they won the Spanish Offshore Championship —open sea races—, in which they participated in regattas in Vilanova, Palamós, Mallorca and Tenerife. Finally, in the same year, from 15 to 17 September, the Spanish Single Regatta Championship was held in the San Juan reservoir in Madrid. Although Carmen Pérez came first in the ET class, she was not awarded the title due to a lack of participants.

A forgotten legacy

A priori, the name of Carmen Pérez Güerri seemed destined to fall into oblivion: a woman in an essentially male sport, she practiced a little-recognised discipline and she did so for more than five decades. All in all, this combination seemed perfect to erase her from the collective memory. As I mentioned at the beginning, we know little about this athlete, but it is clear that we know enough for her to grace these pages.


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KODAK SAFETY
→1A
→2


→2A
→3


→4A
→5


KODAK PLUS X
→8A
→9





Illustration of Carmen Pérez Güerri. Artist: Alicia Caboblanco.

History of the Catalan Federation

Miquel Mallafré, the president of the Catalan Motorboating Federation since 2009, is the author of the book *Catalan Motorboating Federation: 1968-2018. History of the Federation* , which covers Carmen Pérez's participation in motorboating competitions in the nineteen seventies.



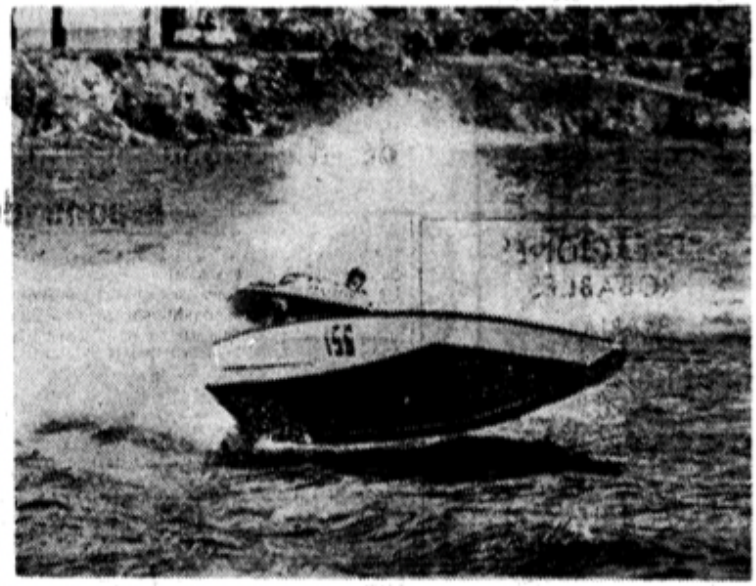
Programme of the Spanish Motorboating Championship. 1972. Photo: todocolección.

What the press said

The press clippings from the newspaper *La Vanguardia* are part of the main testimonies that recall the exploits of Carmen Pérez Güerri in motorboating competitions. The Catalan media echoed the accolades and performances of the Catalan athletes who competed in this sport.

MOTONAUTICA: Positivas actuaciones españolas en las competiciones internacionales del lago de Como

La señora de Hidalgo, A. Platero, J. Malberti, J. Diamant, J. A. Orbea y M. Roselló consiguieron excelentes clasificaciones



Un espectacular viraje en el que aparece el «fuera-borda» tripulado por doña Carmen P. de Hidalgo, del Club Náutico de Villanueva. — (Foto Carroggio)

Una de las más importantes reuniones motonáuticas de Europa, la «Centimiglia del Lario», se ha celebrado en el lago de Como (Italia), con dos regatas de 120 y 160 kilómetros, sobre un circuito de cuarenta, Como-Isola-Comacina-Como, y con distinto número de vueltas, naturalmente, en una y otra.

Varias han sido las naciones que compitieron esta vez: Italia, Alemania Federal, Gran Bretaña, Suiza, Francia, Venezuela, Noruega, Austria, Holanda y Estados Unidos, con un total de setenta pilotos, entre ellos tres femeninos en la categoría fuera borda. España aportó diecisiete participantes en esta concentración motonáutica de Madrid, Baleares, Málaga, Vitoria y Cataluña, representada ésta por doña Carmen de Hidalgo, Luis Campderá, Antonio y Jorge Raventós, Adolfo Platero, Antonio Figueras y Enrique Fatjó, Jaime Malberti, Eduardo Pérez Güerri, Joaquín Diamant y Sabino Molina.

A las naturales dificultades que esta clase de pruebas ofrecen, hubo de añadírseles un fuerte viento que fue un difícil handicap a superar por todos los participantes hasta el punto que en la primera prueba se clasificaron trece pilotos de los cincuenta salidos y en la restante doce de los diecinueve que se alinearon. Varios pilotos españoles como Antonio y Jorge Raventós, Angel Sanz Piñal, Antonio Sureda González, Antonio Figueras, Enrique Fatjó y Luis Campderá, hubieron de abandonar tanto por aquel factor climatológico como por averías.

En el Trofeo Motors Marine Italia, prueba matinal ganada por Aldo Narduzzi, en la clase Sport —850 c.c.—, una española y cinco compatriotas suyos figuraron entre los trece que terminaron dicha prueba. Ocuparon los siguientes lugares: 2.º Jaime Malberti; 3, Joaquín Diamant; 4, J. A. Orbea; 7, Doña Carmen Pérez de Hidalgo, y 11, Mariano Roselló.

Joaquín Diamant realizó la vuelta más rápida, en 37 minutos, 4 segundos y 6 décimas, efectuándolo de salida, en la primera de la prueba.

En la «Centimiglia», otro español —del C. N. Villanueva—, Adolfo Platero, a 56,377 Km. por hora, se clasificó en primer lugar en la clase de 1.000 c.c. Y vencedor absoluto de dicha prueba sería el italiano Abbate Tullio, de Motonáutica Italiana Lario, al soberbio promedio de 112,114 kilómetros por hora con una embarcación con motor de 7.000 c.c. Se trata del piusmarquista mundial del kilómetro lanzado en esta espectacular modalidad náutica.

La representación española que se desplazó a Italia, casi de incógnito, ha conseguido con los resultados que anteceden confirmar que nuestra motonáutica cuenta con positivos valores entre los que cabe destacar una dama, la señora de Hidalgo, cuyas actuaciones no desmerecieron de las de sus compatriotas y de muchos de los calificados participantes extranjeros en estas clásicas pruebas italianas desarrolladas en el lago de Como con el éxito deportivo que confirman los resultados que anteceden. — M. V.

The information appeared in La Vanguardia on 11 October

1970. The caption reads: A spectacular turn in which the outboard motor vessel crewed by Mrs Carmen P. de Hidalgo, from the Villanueva Yacht Club, appears. Photo: La Vanguardia Archive. ARGO 16. Museu Marítim de Barcelona.