

## BATTLE OF THE SEXES

# So are big toys just for big boys?



Herald journalists Philip Hedderman and Caitlin McBride took a supercar and went powerboat racing to find out



I COULDN'T help but whistle the theme tune to James Bond as I fiddled with the fob of the brand spanking new Z4.

Now, this is no ordinary Z4. No, sir. It's the 3-litre, twin turbo, 305bhp, V6 convertible.

It's my chariot for the day and I'm 007 ... well, in my head I am anyway.

Just minutes earlier I'd received my mission - 'get yourself and the newbie out to Malahide for a quick spin around the bay for a him-versus-her-type piece'.

Yesshhh, I replied in my best Scottish accent to the boss, who had earlier pondered the whole Toys for Big Boys phenomenon which kicks off tomorrow night in the RDS.

Easy-peasy-lemon-squeezy, as my six-year-old would say.

We hit the marina car park in double-quick time, but already I was getting a bad vibe about the what may lie ahead.

We meet our mentor for the day, Stephen Taylor of the Bucaneer Powerboat Club, a member of the Irish Sailing Association, which has a stand at the show this weekend.

They'll be welcoming newcomers to their sport and can

**He says**

help source boats, provide advice on racing, training, insurance, and basically tell anyone interested how they can get involved.

Waddling down the jetty to where the boats are stationed I know it's too late to back out.

Bravado, bluster and a bit of old guff ... that'll do the trick.

I'm afraid not. No hiding place for bluffers here - not in this sport.

## GUFFAWS

Colin is our pilot for the day, a gentle, friendly, if somewhat restless, hulk of a man.

In the boat, I ask where do I sit and after guffaws of laughter am told to lie down - casually, like I'm having a pint in the local.

I realise, all too late, that I have mistaken Colin's restlessness with dogged determination and hunger to be the best.

It's game on and we've cleared the marina traffic and

all hell is about to break loose.

The engine snorts it way to full throttle and I hang on for dear life as the Zapcat raises it's head out of the waves. This bucket accelerates at break-neck speed and is quicker than a Ferrari over the same distance. I getting a bit nervy now.

Terror quickly replaces fear as the boat starts to become airborne as the sea gets a little rougher. Death, paralysis, partial paralysis - the options are endless as my hand goes numb and my grip is weakening.

Just as I think it's going to somersault, Colin brings it back from the brink. It's at that precise moment I know he's a real pro.

I begin to relax, the adrenaline starts pumping and the fun begins.

The following day my body aches, the ego is forever battered and bruised, but the smile is still etched on my face.

Hats off to my brave colleague Caitlin, who didn't whimper like this big girl.

Maybe it time to move over boys, or at least move up.

**Toys for Big Boys RDS, Dublin, Thurs-Sun**

AS I geared up to test some of the toys on offer for this year's Toys for Big Boys exhibition, my initial reservations were a lack of knowledge or concern for engine-powered vehicles in general.

Admittedly, I know very little about cars and motors, other than their basic functions.

My first toy was a Zapcat powerboat, complete with two sets of rope and a foot grip to keep you as secure as possible while it flies around at 50mph. While on land that may not sound fast, on water, it feels like a rocketship.

As a self-confessed girly girl, my ideal afternoon wouldn't normally consist of wearing three layers of waterproof clothing in order to go speeding through the water while simultaneously gripping on to wet rope for dear life - but I'm always interested in trying something new.

But, surprisingly, the experience was a combination of both extreme terror and enjoyment.

**She says**

As I was being thrown around the tiny boat, I could feel my abs working at the same pace as an intense session on a rowing machine, and my Kung Fu grip required the exertion of some serious upper body strength.

While men may stereotypically have upper hand when it comes to physical strength, I was still more than able to hold my own.

But be warned that there is nothing feminine about it - the clothes, the bitter cold and the embarrassing faces you can't control when you're facing sharp winds at high speed are not exactly the epitome of beauty.

I would advise any woman attempting this to bring waterproof mascara and a hairbrush. Helmet hair is one thing, but these protective helmets are

intended to be tighter for safety reasons, and there is nothing attractive about being an Albert Einstein lookalike.

After my time on the boat, I also got my hands on the new BMW Z4 convertible.

While both female and male car enthusiasts may be hoping for an in-depth analysis of all the car has to offer, I'm only qualified to point out two simple things: it looks sleek and goes incredibly fast.

The first thing I noticed was the impressive amount of leg room in spite of its small size and while convertibles might traditionally be seen as feminine, this may be one of the most appropriately unisex cars I've seen.

It can also hit more than 200mph and the rally driver in me couldn't help but be impressed.

After my adrenaline-filled afternoon, I can safely say that these toys certainly aren't just for big boys, but for the big children in all of us.