

The final year of the Dragon

Sixty years ago this coming summer, Ron Musson and the popular Miss Bardahl race team were on the verge of accomplishing something that hadn't been done since 1935: winning a third straight Gold Cup. Things looked favorable for them



The *Miss Bardahl* being lowered to the surface of Lake Washington at the Stan Sayres Pits in 1965.

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as the season got underway; the team had won the past two national championships, after all. But there also were some concerns. The Green Dragon hydroplane was becoming worn by the standards of the early-1960s. Owner Ole Bardahl once said that he couldn't expect a wooden hydroplane to last much more than three seasons, given the abuse they receive crashing across the water at tremendous speed. Bardahl was entering its fourth year of competition and, in fact, its replacement was already built—a radical cabover hull that had

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been created by Ron Jones. Meanwhile, other teams were hot on the heels of the Bardahl, most notably the Miss Exide, which was campaigned by an innovative crew that operated a craft that started its career as Miss Wahoo in 1956. The following story of that summer six decades ago was first published in the April 1986 issue of the Unlimited NewsJournal and was taken from Jon Osterberg's book *Dragon Days*, which chronicles the exploits of the Miss Bardahl team. While physical copies of the book are no longer available, you can read the full account in a Kindle version that is available for \$19.99 on Amazon or wherever e-books are sold.

BY JON OSTERBERG

The warm August sun dropped behind Mount Baker Ridge. Die-hard race fans, weary from a week of excitement, plodded toward the Genessee parking lot toting lawn chairs, ice chests, and transistor radios.

The Big Event was over. A Green Dragon, tamed by a diminutive jockey wearing yellow and black coveralls and a crafty smile, still reigned supreme in the premier class of powerboat racing. The Gold Cup would stay in Ballard.

When Ron Musson, crew chief Leo Vanden Berg, and the *Miss Bardahl* team won the 1965 Seattle race, they achieved something unheard of since the Depression-era days of George Reis and *El Lagarto*: three consecutive Gold Cup victories.

Despite racing with a patched-up boat and temperamental equipment, and despite facing the fastest fleet in Gold Cup history, Musson successfully defended his title against the best in the sport: Bill Brow, Rex Manchester, Chuck Thompson, Warner Gardner. Other names making headlines that week included Bill Muncey, Bill Stead, and Norm Evans.

Today, all are dead. Musson, Manchester, and Thompson never even made it to Seafair in 1966.

In many ways, 1965 marked the end of Unlimited racing's age of innocence. Never again would race fans watch passively as thunderboats rocked on their

sponsons or nosed skyward. Not for years would drivers again throttle their mounts beyond the 120-mph barrier or consistently race at pre-1966 speeds.

As 1965 waned, so, to a degree, did the sport of Unlimited hydroplane racing.

Coeur d'Alene's Diamond Cup on July 11, 1965, stirred excitement for that year's Gold Cup. Sportswriters covering the Idaho race reported it as "the greatest Diamond Cup ever ...the racing was superb."

And it was.

The winner, *Miss Exide*, hit the water for the first time in 1965 just two days before the race. Burien's Bill Brow guided the Happy Hydro home to first-place money despite bringing only one

engine to Coeur d'Alene. ("Happy Hydro" referred to *Exide's* use of nitrous oxide—"laughing gas"—an engine coolant and power booster first adapted for hydro use by crewman Bernie Van Cleave in 1964.)

Heat 1A saw Bill Cantrell in *Miss Smirnoff* come from behind to nip Warner Gardner and *Mariner Too* by three boat lengths at the finish. In Heat 1B, Brow used nitrous to smoke past Rex Manchester and *Notre Dame*. When Musson and *Bardahl* overhauled *Notre Dame* and pressured *Exide* on lap three, Brow hit the nitrous button again. Goodbye, *Bardahl*. At the finish, Manchester squeezed by Musson to snatch second—barely. *Exide* averaged 110.882 (with one lap at 114.165); *Notre Dame*, 108.173; and *Bardahl*, 108.129.



Notre Dame during a test run on Lake Washington before the 1965 season.

Bob Carver Photos



Bob Carver Photos

Minutes later, a crane hoisting *Bardahl* out of the lake slipped its brakes. *Bardahl* dropped to her trailer and bounced three times before settling, a gaping hole punched through her bottom. Ninety minutes of frenzied work followed. With Chuck Hickling's help, Vanden Berg and crew patched the 15-inch hole in time to send Musson out for Heat 2A.

Bardahl led *Exide* until the final turn of the last lap when Brow nudged ahead on the outside, then cut to lane one. Musson nicked a buoy and claimed Brow chopped him off. The officials disagreed, leaving *Exide* with 800 points for the day. Brow averaged 108.564 for the heat; Musson checked in at 107.100.

Notre Dame took Heat 2B, and again racing was close: the U-7 clocked 103.369, *Budweiser* 101.809, and *Madison* 100.896. *Tahoe Miss*, suffering auxiliary-blower woes (she fried her experimental turbocharger two weeks earlier in the Dixie Cup), failed to start and scored zero points for the day.

Bardahl charged to an early lead in the final heat and never looked back. *Exide* followed until lap two when Manchester powered *Notre Dame* into second. But third place was all Brow needed to secure his second consecutive Diamond Cup victory. At the finish it was *Bardahl* at 105.820, *Notre Dame* at 103.033, and *Exide* at 101.694—again, tight racing.

Seattleites ballyhooed the fact their hometown fleet finished one, two, three in the final standings: *Exide*, 1,025 points; *Notre Dame*, 1,000; and *Bardahl*, 925, plus the fastest race average of 107.008.

Over the next four weeks (including a no-contest ruling at New Town, North Dakota), the hydro camps rested, patched hulls, and repaired equip-

ment for the Gold Cup. *Exide's* crew built more engines. The *Tahoe* team pieced its turbocharger back together. Dixie Cup winner *Miss Madison*, eager to reassert itself as one of the hot dogs, languished in a lot at the *Bardahl* plant in Ballard along with *Miss San Diego* and the four-seat *Miss Budweiser*.

A few yards away, behind a big roll-up door, the *Bardahl* crew worked feverishly to restore the Green Dragon to its 1963–64 form. It was literally a last-minute effort. The reason: on the floor, just behind and to the side of the U-40, sat a shiny new green and yellow cabover sporting the “Miss Bardahl” moniker on its deck. This was the Ron Jones-designed hull the crew intended to race in 1965 but had to abandon at the last minute when a custom-made Casale gearbox wasn't ready in time.

And it was in this new *Bardahl* that, the following year in Washington, D.C., Ron Musson ran his final race.

Qualifying for the 1965 Gold Cup opened with a roar. On Tuesday, August 3, Buddy Byers powered *Miss Madison* around Lake Washington's three-mile course to a three-lap average of 115.139—the boat's fastest speed ever. Warner Gardner put *Mariner Too* into the race at a respectable 111.340. Six other boats qualified, including *Notre Dame*, *Savair's Mist*, *Miss Budweiser*, and *Such Crust IV*. Bill Muncey qualified the *IV* as a favor to owner Jack Schafer, then turned the wheel over to Red Loomis on race day.

Chuck Thompson provided most of Tuesday's thrills. Setting *Tahoe Miss* up for a qualifying run, he swept wide around the north turn, his eyes fixed on the gauges. *Tahoe* straightened out, Thompson stomped on the throttle—and charged directly toward the log boom that hugged the shoreline!

Although Bill Brow and *Miss Exide* won the race, Ron Musson drives *Miss Bardahl* to victory in the final heat of the 1965 Diamond Cup on Lake Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

Sportswriters covering the Idaho race reported it as “the greatest Diamond Cup ever ...the racing was superb.”

Jon Ostergerg



Bob Carver Photos



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TOP: There was nearly a month between the Diamond Cup and the Gold Cup. During that time, *Miss Madison* and several other boats were parking near the Bardahl factory in northwest Seattle. **MIDDLE:** The Stan Sayres Pits as the competitors got ready for the Gold Cup. That's *Savair's Probe* on the lift being hoisted to the lake's surface. **ABOVE:** The "Gray Ghost" *Tahoe Miss* in the lagoon about to be driven onto Lake Washington by Chuck Thompson.

Quickly he saw his mistake and backed off, swung behind the log boom and patrol boats, circled the north turn, and continued his qualifying run. He averaged 111.035.

Pre-race excitement peaked on Wednesday when Bill Brow blasted *Miss Exide* around the course at a world record speed of 120.356 for three laps, including one scorching lap at 120.536. The old mark, set on Lake Washington in 1958 by Bill Stead driving the *Maverick*, was 119.956, with a fast lap of 120.267.

Brow told reporters that damp weather, flat water, and quick cornering earned him the record. "I hit about 165 mph going into the first turn," he explained. "After that, I never hit more than 160 in the chutes."

Bill Stead ambled up to congratulate Brow, then pretended to strangle him for "running off with my record." Brow and his crew members laughed. They were happy and confident—so confident that, before Sunday's Final Heat, they gave their wallets to a friend for safekeeping so their money wouldn't get wet in the victory dunking.

The rest of qualifying, though less spectacular, was dramatic. *Miss Bardahl* joined the field Thursday after suffering mechanical malfunctions for two days. That morning, Musson took aim at *Exide's* record but broke his only qualifying engine. Late Thursday afternoon he made a conservative run with his race-day engine but still lost a magneto. *Bardahl* limped home with a three-lap average of 110.279—slow, perhaps, but fast enough to qualify.

"It's too late in the game to go for 120 now," said crew chief Vanden Berg. "You don't win races in qualifying."

Eighteen boats now crowded the Stan Sayres pits. Thirteen had managed 104 mph or better for three laps, and five others waited for their chance to make the final 12. Some boats were sure to be "bumped" on Friday.

Budweiser fell first, then *Savair's Mist*. Norm Evans pushed *Miss Lapeer* around

the course at 109.238, *Mariner Too* driver Warner Gardner qualified *Miss San Diego* (the former *Coral Reef*) at 108.506, and there sat *Bud* and *Mist*—on the outside looking in—with speeds of only 105 and 107 mph.

Other boats upped their speeds, including *Gale's Roostertail*, *Bardahl*, and *Miss U.S. 5*, which bounced and leaped around the course at 114.407 mph.

Chuck Thompson played mind games with the other drivers before making a run on Saturday. He told KING-TV sportscaster Rod Belcher the *Tahoe* was faster than any boat in the pits and, what's more, he would prove it by qualifying the *Gray Ghost* at 130 mph. (!!!) In the end, however, referee Bill Newton ordered him off the course for "wasting time" and robbing unqualified boats of their chance to run.

The final qualifiers weren't decided until 3:59 p.m. Saturday when Warner Gardner raised *Miss San Diego's* speed to 109.091. That put Walt Kade and *Savair's Mist*, who had requalified at 108.724, on the beach for Sunday's race. Joining the *Mist* were *Miss Budweiser*, *Savair's Probe*, *Tri-City Sun*, *Berryessa Belle* (formerly *Slo-mo V*), and the new *Blue Chip*.

The fastest Gold Cup field in history was set: *Miss Exide* (Bill Brow), 120.356; *Miss Madison* (Buddy Byers), 115.139; *Miss U.S. 5* (Roy Duby), 114.407; *Miss Bardahl*



Sandy Ross Collection

The principals of the *Gale* team. From the left, Lee Schoenith, Joe Schoenith, and Bill Cantrell.

(Ron Musson), 113.524; *Notre Dame* (Rex Manchester), 112.971; *Mariner Too* (Warner Gardner), 111.340; *Gale's Roostertail* (Jerry Schoenith), 111.187; *Tahoe Miss* (Chuck Thompson), 111.035; *Miss Lapeer* (Norm Evans), 109.238; *Miss Smirnoff* (Bill Cantrell), 109.164; *Miss San Diego* (Gardner again), 109.091; and *Such Crust IV* (qualified by Bill Muncey), 108.871.

Collectively, the field averaged a record 112.193 mph, surpassing the 1964 Gold Cuppers' average of 111.500 mph. At the 1966 Gold Cup in Detroit, a decimated field of 12 boats mustered only 106.910 mph collectively; the 1966 Seafair race, where qualifying wasn't mandatory, featured a top test run of just

113.356. One final comparison: *Such Crust IV*, slowest of the 1965 Gold Cup entries at 108.871 mph, would have been the third fastest qualifier at Detroit the following year.

One of the largest crowds in Seattle's 15-year history of hydro racing lined Lake Washington when the gun fired Sunday for Heat 1A. *Mariner Too* hit the line first in lane three and led *Exide* by 100 yards exiting the south turn. *Tahoe*, *Madison*, *U.S. 5*, and *Gale's Roostertail* trailed.

Brow, on the inside, careened past Gardner in the first turn of lap two. Thompson followed suit at the exit pin and charged after Brow, cutting *Exide's* lead to four seconds at the end of the lap. *Tahoe* got no closer, though, as Brow throttled his mount to a blistering pace that earned him victory. *Exide* finished with a record 15-mile Gold Cup heat average of 112.172. *Tahoe* finished second at 109.800, followed by *Madison*, *U.S. 5*, and *Gale's Roostertail*. *Mariner Too* conked in the north turn of lap three and did not finish.

When *Mariner* conked, *Miss San Diego* owner Bob Fendler felt more disappointment than *Mariner* owner Jim Herrington: Gardner was slated to drive both boats but, because of the long tow back to the pits, arrived too late to pilot *San Diego* in Heat 1B. Fendler withdrew his boat, putting Walt Kade and *Savair's Mist*



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The four-seat *Miss Budweiser* was driven by Chuck Hickling.



Jerry Schoenith hangs on tight as his *Gale's Roostertail* plows through the wake left by *Miss U.S. 5*.

back in the Gold Cup as the 12th entry.

The next heat saw *Smirnoff* roar to an early lead followed by *Bardahl*, *Lapeer*, *Notre Dame*, and *Savair's Mist*. *Such Crust* lagged far behind. *Bardahl* powered into first at the exit pin of turn one and quickly opened a big lead over *Lapeer* and *Notre Dame*; while *Smirnoff* faded to fourth.

Manchester overtook Evans on the backstretch of lap two. Then Cantrell made his move, passing Evans on lap four. At the finish it was *Bardahl*, 108.651; *Notre Dame*, 105.099; *Smirnoff*, 100.259; then *Lapeer*, *Savair's Mist*, and *Such Crust IV*.

Heat 2A provided some bizarre excitement as two boats collided while dicing for the start. Halfway through the north turn, Norm Evans in *Miss Lap-*

peer veered in front of Roy Duby and *Miss U.S. 5*, causing the latter to climb over the stern of Evans' boat. *U.S. 5* suffered a punctured left sponson, while six feet of *Lapeer's* rear deck was ripped away.

For a moment the two vessels rode piggyback. Duby promptly killed his engine, but *Lapeer* kept running and the boats pulled apart. Evans, his shoulder badly bruised, steered an erratic course toward the official barge and signaled that his leaking boat needed a crane—quickly. After judging the *U.S. 5* was still seaworthy, Duby restarted and joined the race.

Meanwhile, *Notre Dame* slid past *Exide* and into the lead at the south turn, followed by *Such Crust*, *U.S. 5*, and *Lapeer*,

which pulled into the pits after making one circuit. Brow, his boat misfiring, struggled to fend off Loomis and Duby and eventually fell to fourth on lap two. Manchester had a close call in the north turn on lap one when *Notre Dame* hooked badly, but he later ran away from the field and came within 1,000 feet of lapping *Exide* at the finish.

The final order was *Notre Dame* at 100.037, then *Such Crust*, *U.S. 5*, and *Exide*.

Everyone made a near-perfect start in Heat 2B as *Tahoe*, on the inside, led *Bardahl* and *Mariner Too* around the south turn. Byers in *Madison* charged after Gardner, passed him in the north turn, then set his sights on *Bardahl*. Meanwhile, Thompson ran a 111-mph lap to stretch his lead to three roostertail-lengths over Musson. The Gray Ghost was on a tear, sizzling down the chutes, its turbocharger whistling and banging as Thompson backed off to set up for the turns.

Suddenly, *Tahoe* slowed to a crawl entering the backstretch on lap four. *Bardahl* quickly roared by on the outside and built a sizable lead before *Tahoe* surged to life and took off in pursuit. But Musson throttled his boat to a 110-mph lap and maintained his lead to the finish. *Bardahl* averaged 107.355 to *Tahoe's* 105.882. *Madison* finished a close third at 104.813, and *Mariner Too* nipped *Smirnoff* by less than a boat length to take fourth. *Savair's Mist*



The *Bardahl* crew works on the *Green Dragon* (left) while *Such Crust IV* also gets attention from its crew.



Ron Musson in the cockpit of *Miss Bardahl*.

blew an oil cooler on lap three and did not finish.

Only five boats started Heat 3A, as the *Mist* crew couldn't finish repairs in time. Bill Cantrell in *Smirnoff* led the field through the south turn and up the backstretch with *Notre Dame* charging hard in second. At the end of lap one Cantrell held a five-second lead over Manchester, *U.S. 5* edged by *Madison* to briefly take third, and *Such Crust* lumbered along at the rear.

Notre Dame swung wide through the north turn on lap two, poured on the power, and nosed past *Smirnoff* to take the lead entering lap three. Then *Madison* and *U.S. 5* closed on Cantrell until *Madison* sliced inside and gained second exiting the north turn. *U.S. 5* and *Such Crust* did the same thing one lap later when *Smirnoff* bounced badly entering the turn and bogged down. At the finish, *Notre Dame* posted 107.057 to win followed by a fast-closing *Miss Madison* at 106.592 and *U.S. 5* at 103.966.

Three of the hot dogs squared off in 3B: *Exide*, *Bardahl*, and *Tahoe Miss*. *Mariner*, *Gale's Roostertail*, and *Budweiser*—a late replacement for the crippled *Lapeer*—filled out the field. Race fans rubbed their hands in anticipation of a full-blown battle.

All six boats thundered toward the line in a tight pack. *Mariner* streaked across first on the outside—but too soon. Indeed, everyone jumped the gun except

Exide. Brow backed off the pedal at the last moment to make a perfect start and assume a one-lap lead over his rivals, although none of them knew it, yet.

Six abreast they piled into the turn. *Exide* and *Bardahl* tore through it and sprinted up the back chute with *Tahoe* close behind. Brow, on the inside, kept *Bardahl* on his hip and led by two boat lengths at the end of lap one.

Musson noticed the clock on the official barge was partially blacked out, signaling someone had jumped the gun. Not knowing who was penalized and who wasn't, he leaned on the nitrous button (*Bardahl's* crew first experimented with nitrous at the Diamond Cup a month earlier) and kept his foot to the floorboard.

Together, Brow and Musson ran

away from the field. Again, they rounded the south turn and pounded up the backstretch, Rolls-Merlins blaring, their roostertails arcing high above the lake; again, they charged toward the line with *Exide* still holding a slim lead.

Suddenly, *Bardahl's* engine popped and went raspy. Musson eased off the throttle and watched Brow pull away, hoping *Exide's* engine might blow from the strain. It didn't. As *Bardahl* exited the north turn on lap five, Brow took the checkered flag. Musson and the others took a green flag and had to run a penalty lap. *Exide* turned 109.223 to win the heat; *Bardahl* averaged 89.050 because of the extra lap. *Tahoe* finished third, followed by *Gale's Roostertail*, Chuck Hickling in *Budweiser*, and *Mariner Too*.

When Musson returned to the dock, his crew made an unusual discovery: some of *Bardahl's* spark plug cores were missing. Musson took the blame, saying he hadn't yet mastered the art of using laughing gas.

"I found out today you just can't push the button in and run," he said. "It blows spark plugs right out of the boat."

But the true cause of the spark plug failure had little to do with nitrous. Rather, it resulted from the crew fitting *Bardahl's* engines with innovative, high-compression (or "high-dome") pistons—something intended to give her a competitive edge, and something



Walt Kade drives *Savair's Mist*.

**Splash!
Bill Brow
jumped into the
lake. Notre Dame
rocketed across
the line
to complete
lap two just as
the red flares
pierced the
sky. The boats
slowed, circled,
and returned
to the pits.**

the crew wanted to keep secret. (The problem was corrected later when Champion Spark Plug custom-made a batch of heavy-duty plugs that *Bardahl's* mighty Merlins couldn't destroy.)

Vanden Berg and crew changed *Bardahl's* engine for the final, putting in the one they qualified with on Thursday. With 1,100 points, Musson was in good shape to defend his title. Eager to dethrone him were *Notre Dame*, also with 1,100 points; *Exide*, 969; *Tahoe Miss*, 825; *Madison*, 750; and *U.S. 5*, 619.

Because they were tied on points, Musson knew he had to beat Manchester to win, and vice-versa. Brow could steal the Cup if Musson and Manchester finished third, or worse. Thompson and Byers had to hope the others would break. Only Roy Duby and *U.S. 5* were mathematically out of the running.

The sun-soaked crowd cheered as the three Seattle boats led the pack across the line and into the first turn. *Miss Exide* cranked around the exit pin on the inside and scorched into the backstretch to open a lead over *Notre Dame* and *Bardahl*. Suddenly, near the middle of the chute, *Exide's* Rolls-Merlin backfired and burst into flames, the victim of a ruptured fabric fuel line. Brow steered the red speedster to the infield and coasted to a stop.

He jumped out, took one look at the fire and waved for help.

Meanwhile, *Notre Dame* roared by and into the lead with *Bardahl* and *Madison* trailing. *Exide* continued to burn. Brow tried to fight the blaze with a small extinguisher, but when this didn't work, he

waved his right arm in a frantic "come on!" gesture. Patrol boats nearby couldn't move, however, as long as the race continued.

And continue it did. Manchester, out front and in control of the course, opened a commanding lead over Musson and *Bardahl*. The Shamrock Lady was on her way to a Gold Cup win. At last, Manchester thought, he would savor victory. Five years earlier he had *Miss Spokane* just 17 seconds from winning the Seafair Trophy Race when Don Wilson jumped from a burning *Miss U.S. I* to halt the race. Bill Muncey piloted the *Thriftway* to victory in the rerun, and Rex had to settle for second. But not this time.

Splash! Bill Brow jumped into the lake. *Notre Dame* rocketed across the line to complete lap two just as the red flares pierced the sky. The boats slowed, circled, and returned to the pits. Much of *Exide's* deck was ablaze when the patrol boats finally arrived. Though it later went unmentioned in most accounts of the race, much of the fault was Brow's: rules stated that a driver requesting immediate help must "wave a visible object" such as a helmet or life jacket; a driver waving his hands meant that "everything is under control." Unfortunately, Brow waved only his bare hands.

Fifteen minutes after it started (and after many ill-advised attempts to douse the gas-fueled flames with water rather than foam retardant), the fire aboard *Miss Exide* flickered out. A patrol boat towed the badly charred hull back to the pits where *Exide* owners Milo and Glen Stoen exchanged heated words with race officials over



Musson and *Miss Bardahl* battle side by side with Norm Evans in *Miss Lapeer*.



Tahoe Miss crew chief Everette Adams helps Chuck Thompson get ready for a heat.

the handling of the fire. Meanwhile, the other camps prepared their boats for the rerun of the final heat.

Six hydros entered the course for the final, with *Such Crust IV* taking *Exide's* place. In a mild surprise, Musson shied away from his customary spot—lane two—while dicing for the start, and instead moved *Bardahl* to lane one. The field approached the line a bit early, held back, and then Musson shot the *Bardahl* across it and into the lead. *Notre Dame*, *Madison*, and *Tahoe* charged after him, while *U.S. 5* and a sick *Such Crust* trailed.

The Green Dragon pounded through the turn, then screamed up the backstretch all alone as Musson poured on the power. *Notre Dame* ran at break-neck speed trying to close the gap, but couldn't. *Tahoe* held down third, while *Madison* expired near the end of the backstretch.

At the end of lap two Musson held a three-second lead. Manchester managed to gain ground the following lap but “fell in a hole” in the north turn. Musson, feeling the pressure throttled *Bardahl* to 112+ mph to further secure his position. *Notre Dame* refused to give up, though, and thundered close behind.

Musson ran hard the final two laps to outdistance the field and even lapped

Such Crust near the end of lap five. Finally, after 69 fast, grueling miles (including the penalty lap in 3B and the two laps of the first final), Musson and *Miss Bardahl* streaked past the official barge to take the checkered flag and earn their third consecutive Gold Cup. *Bardahl* averaged 110.655 to win the heat, followed by *Notre Dame* at 107.612, *Tahoe Miss* at 94.869,

Miss U.S. 5 at 92.879, and *Such Crust IV* at 77.967.

An elated Musson flashed a wide smile as he coasted into the pits. Despite racing a boat that was supposed to be in mothballs—a boat that blew an average of three spark plugs in every heat and still showed the scars of its Diamond Cup accident—Musson made modern-day

STATBOX

APBA Gold Cup

Seattle, Washington; August 8, 1965
3-mile oval on Lake Washington; 60-mile race

QUALIFYING: (1) U-75 *Miss Exide* (#5677), Bill Brow, 120.356; (2) U-6 *Miss Madison* (#6079), Buddy Byers, 115.139; (3) U-2 *Miss U.S. 5* (#6402), Roy Duby, 114.407; (4) U-40 *Miss Bardahl* (#6240), Ron Musson, 113.524; (5) U-7 *Notre Dame* (#6407), Rex Manchester, 112.971; (6) U-99 *Mariner Too* (#6499), Warner Gardner, 111.340; (7) U-44 *Gale's Roostertail* (#6544), Jerry Schoenith, 111.187; (8) U-3 *Tahoe Miss* (#6403), Chuck Thompson, 111.035; (9) U-9 *Miss Lapeer* (#5825) Norm Evans, 109.238; (10) U-90 *Miss Smirnoff* (#6490), Bill Cantrell, 109.164; (11) U-19 *Miss San Diego* (#5719), Warner Gardner, 109.091; (12) U-70 *Such Crust IV* (#6277), Red Loomis, 108.871; (13) U-10 *Savair's Mist* (#6133), Walt Kade, 108.724; (14) U-13 *Miss Budweiser* (#6313), Chuck Hickling, 108.000; (15) U-50 *Savair's Probe* (#6004), Red Loomis, 106.649; U-37 *Berryessa Belle* (#5137), Bob Miller, DNQ; I-88 *Tri-City Sun* (#60130), Bob Gilliam, DNQ; U-80 *Blue Chip* (#6580), Fred Alter, DNQ.

HEAT 1A: (1) *Miss Exide*, 112.172, 400 points, 400 cumulative points; (2) *Tahoe Miss*, 109.800, 300, 300; (3) *Miss Madison*, 101.674, 225, 225; (4) *Miss U.S. 5*, 99.155, 169, 169; *Gale's Roostertail*, 98.576, 127, 127; *Mariner Too*, DNF, 0, 0.

HEAT 1B: (1) *Miss Bardahl*, 108.651, 400, 400; (2) *Notre Dame*, 105.079, 300, 300; (3) *Miss Smirnoff*, 100.259, 225, 225; (4) *Miss Lapeer*, 98.815, 169, 169; (5) *Savair's Mist*, 96.428, 127, 127; *Such Crust IV*, 94.803, 95, 95.

HEAT 2A: (1) *Notre Dame*, 100.037, 400, 700; (2) *Such Crust IV*, 137.663, 300, 395; (3) *Miss U.S. 5*, 93.232; 225, 394; (4) *Miss Exide*, 85.878, 169, 569; *Miss Lapeer*, DNF, 0, 169; *Gale's Roostertail*, DNS, 0, 127.

HEAT 2B: (1) *Miss Bardahl*, 107.355, 400, 800; (2) *Tahoe Miss*, 105.882, 300, 600; (3) *Miss Madison*, 104.813, 225, 450; (4) *Mariner Too*, 99.704, 169, 169; (5) *Miss Smirnoff*, 94.662, 127, 352; *Savair's Mist*, DNF, 0, 127.

HEAT 3A: (1) *Notre Dame*, 107.057, 400, 1100; (2) *Miss Madison*, 106.592, 300, 750; (3) *Miss U.S. 5*, 103.966, 225, 619; (4) *Such Crust IV*, 99.852, 169, 564; (5) *Miss Smirnoff*, 97.860, 127, 479; *Savair's Mist*, DNS, 0, 127.

HEAT 3B: (1) *Miss Exide*, 109.223, 400, 969; (2) *Miss Bardahl*, 89.050 (one-lap penalty for jumping the gun), 300, 1100; (3) *Tahoe Miss*, 84.375 (one-lap penalty for jumping the gun), 225, 825; (4) *Gale's Roostertail*, 83.469 (one-lap penalty for jumping the gun), 169, 296; (5) *Miss Budweiser*, 81.570 (one-lap penalty for jumping the gun), 127, 127; *Mariner Too*, 79.810 (one-lap penalty for jumping the gun), 95, 264.

FINAL HEAT: Heat stopped when *Miss Exide* caught fire and Bill Brow jumped into the water.

FINAL HEAT (Restart): (1) *Miss Bardahl*, 110.655, 400, 1500 (1st); (2) *Notre Dame*, 107.612, 300, 1400 (2nd); (3) *Tahoe Miss*, 94.869, 225, 1050 (3rd); (4) *Miss U.S. 5*, 92.879, 169, 788 (5th); (5) *Such Crust IV*, 77.967, 127, 691 (7th); *Miss Madison*, DNF, 0, 750 (6th); *Miss Exide*, DSQ, 0, 969 (4th).

hydro history. And this time he did it in front of the hometown fans.

Crew chief Leo Vanden Berg grinned as Musson climbed out of the lake following the traditional victory dunking. A much-used, battle-worn engine again had powered the Green Dragon to first place, and the crew couldn't wait to tell its driver.

"We've got an engine I don't like to use, and the crew keeps sneaking it in on me—number 22," said a dripping wet Musson after hearing the news. "They did it again today."

"That's the engine Ron hates," Vanden Berg added with a smile. "He always gripes about it, but he always runs well with it."

"I've been trying to get rid of that engine for years," Musson complained. "All that engine does is win," countered Vanden Berg.

The final Gold Cup standings showed *Bardahl* posting 1,500 points to take first, followed by *Notre Dame*, 1,400; *Tahoe Miss*, 1,050; *Miss Exide*, 969; *Miss U.S. 5*, 788; and *Miss Madison*, 750. *Notre Dame* had the fastest 60-mile race average—104.864—while *Bardahl*, because of her penalty lap, averaged only 103.132. Had Musson not jumped the gun in 3B, it's likely *Bardahl* would have averaged close to 107 mph for the race.

Following the awards ceremony, where *Tahoe* driver Chuck Thompson collapsed from a broken rib suffered in early heat action, *Miss Exide's* owners talked of retiring from the sport after losing their third hull in four years: *Miss Seattle Too* nosedived and blew apart during Seattle's 1962 Gold Cup. The first *Exide*, a new boat, disintegrated at the 1963 Diamond Cup. And now this.

"You can only come back so many

times," said a despondent Milo Stoen. But they did come back, and *Exide* raced again—later that year, in fact.

And it was in the final race of the 1965 season that Ron Musson closed out *Miss Bardahl's* career in a blaze of glory. Employing a new self-contained, fresh-water ADI system, he nearly blew the competition off the course to win the San Diego Cup with a perfect score of 1,200 points. In the process, he earned *Bardahl* a third consecutive National High-Points crown and shattered every major competition record in the book. His new marks remained unbroken for years: fastest three-mile competition lap, 117.130; fastest 15-mile heat, 116.079; and fastest 45-mile race, 115.056.

The Stoens finally did retire after San Diego, where *Exide* placed third. Bernie Little later jumped at the chance to buy the proven speedster and campaigned her as *Miss Budweiser*. *Tahoe Miss*, much like *Exide* in Seattle, caught fire in San Diego and suffered considerable damage. Her crew took her home for a face lift and signed a new driver. Chuck Thompson then looked for and found a new mount: *Smirnoff*. *Notre Dame's* crew members headed north with plans to modify their stock equipment for a faster ride in 1966.

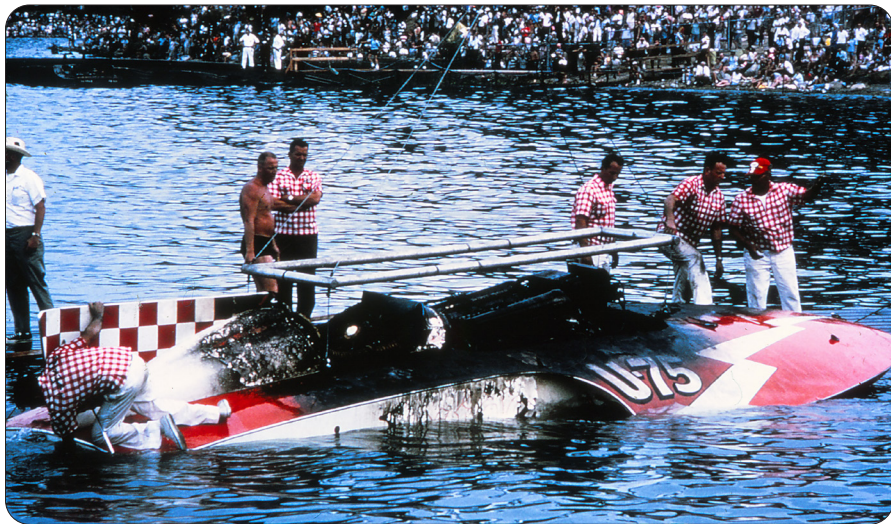
The *Bardahl* team had closed out another year as champions. Besides her Seattle and San Diego victories, *Miss Bardahl* won the Utah Cup on Willard Bay, the Lake Tahoe World's Championship, and ran away from the field in the Governor's Cup at Madison but lost the race on a disputed penalty.

Returning home from San Diego, Ron Musson must have wondered how he could do any better the next year. Perhaps he thought about the new boat waiting for him in Ballard, how its new design might revolutionize the sport, and how he'd love to win a fourth Gold Cup and another national championship with it. For Musson and the others, 1966 seemed like it might be a monumental year.

Sadly, it was exactly that. ❖



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

TOP: *Miss Bardahl* speeds to victory in the 1965 Gold Cup. **ABOVE:** The crew works to rescue the badly charred *Miss Exide* after it was towed back to the pits

Les Staudacher talks about **My Sweetie**



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Four different boats carried the name *My Sweetie*, or various versions thereof, during the late 1940s and early 1950s. By far the most successful of these was the first, a craft built in 1948 for two Detroit businessmen: Ed Schoenherr and Ed Gregory.

Created before the concept of a prop-riding hydroplane had become commonplace, the flat, narrow, and pointy-nosed boat was designed by John L. Hacker, regarded as one of the most notable designers of classic runabouts during the 1920s. While the sport's most contemporary boats at the time employed the three-point design offered by Ventnor Boat Works, Hacker remained a proponent of the older step-hull concept, in which shingle-like projections on the hull's underside would push the craft to the surface so that it skipped across the water like a flat stone tossed across a pond. Hacker designed the boat to be the most advanced step hull created in the previous 40 years. It employed three steps: one toward the bow, another amidships, and a third near the transom. It was powered by a V-12 Allison engine and used a single propeller that was placed under the engine at the center of the hull.

Sporting a polished mahogany hull with bleached sides (which provided a light background to display its name), and a bright-red engine cover and cockpit cowling atop its deck, *My Sweetie* made its debut at the 1948 Detroit Memorial with its co-owner Ed Schoenherr in the cockpit. He failed to finish a heat. The same was true later that year when Bill Cantrell took his place in the driver's seat for the infamous "Destruction Derby" Gold Cup, that saw all but one boat succumb to the rough Detroit River. In *My Sweetie's* case, Cantrell took the boat to an early lead in its first heat, but a plate at the boat's stern broke loose and allowed enough water to pour in that Cantrell eventually had to beach the boat before it went completely under.

Cantrell started the next year's campaign by driving the boat to victory in the 1949 Gold Cup. It was at this point that Horace E. Dodge, Jr., entered the picture. The son of Horace Dodge, a pioneer of the auto industry, Horace, Jr., lived in a world that was complicated by great fortune. After his father died in 1920 from pneumonia, his mother, Anna Thompson Dodge, became one of the richest women in the world. Yet, Horace, Jr., and his sister, Delphine, were left nothing. It meant that the two had no capital or income to call their own and that for the remainder of their lives they would have to depend on handouts from their mother for every penny that they would spend.

Using funds provided by his mother, Horace, Jr., got involved in boat racing in 1923, eventually won the 1932 Gold Cup with a boat named *Delphine IV*, won again in 1936 with his *Impshi*, then stepped away from the sport. He caught the bug again in 1949 when he decided to defend the Harmsworth Trophy that Gar Wood had won for the United States in 1933. After watching Cantrell win the Gold Cup, he bought *My Sweetie* from Schoenherr and Gregory immediately after the race and saw it win four more races and that season's national championship. It would successfully defend that title in 1950.

Les Staudacher, who would become one of the most prolific hydroplane builders of the 1950s and '60s, got his start in the sport when he built *My Sweetie* in 1948. What follows is the story that Staudacher told UNJ editors Dave Speer and E.K. Muller about the boat's creation, as well as its little-known and inglorious end. The interview first appeared in the October 1986 issue of the *Unlimited NewsJournal*.

UNJ: You met John Hacker through his brother?

Staudacher: Right, through Fred. I suspect that Fred had told John about our operation. We started building boats for Hacker about 1945 or '46. Cruisers.

We built a 52-footer, several 42-footers, and four or five 36-footers. John used to come up every week to see how we were getting along. We struck up a real good friendship.

So, in 1948, when Ed Gregory and

Ed Schoenherr asked Hacker to build them an Unlimited race boat, Hacker thought, well, we could do it up here. So that's how we got started in this business.

Had you done any race-boat work



before?

No. No, that was the first one.

Had you seen any races?

No, I hadn't. I had always been a fan of Gar Wood—I saw pictures of his boats, and admired them.

Did Hacker come to you and say, "I've got an order to build a hydroplane: Here are the plans"?

That's just the way it worked. We were really thrilled to have the opportunity to build it, especially to have someone come to us and ask.

John came up and helped us lay it out on the floor, because all he had was just a set of lines, and we had to develop everything full size. We worked that out together. We traded ideas, both construction and design.

It was a bold idea in its day.

It certainly was! Anybody who could come up with an idea like that, putting the propeller up in the middle of the boat, and in that streamlined housing...

Who machined the strut?

We made wood patterns and had Dow Chemical Company cast it out of magnesium. The *Pepsi's* was fabricated. The casting on the *Sweetie* was much finer—you get a real nice job that way. It was nice. And you know, that's one thing we never had to replace and never had a bit of trouble with, that magnesium strut. We never had any corrosion or any problem at all.

The first *Sweetie* was longer than the others, wasn't it?

The first *Sweetie* was 31... It was so shallow that it was hard to hold together; you had to put a lot of stuff in it, to make it strong. The first *Sweetie* was built, more or less, like a conventional inboard runabout. Heavy framing, stringers, and stuff. It looked more like a pleasure boat than a race boat as far as construction is concerned. That's the way we knew how to build a boat at the time.

The deck was in three parts—that was weak. The center section and then the two outside pieces. It was flat from the engine stringers out, quite flat. But the boat was quite narrow. I think it was about... well, the *Pepsi* was nine wide, so I suspect the *Sweetie* was probably eight or a little over. It was narrow.

Did you install the engine?

No, we just built the hull. We varnished it. We bleached the side decks. Regular dark color in the center. And they lettered it. They took it down to Detroit and rented a place. Ed McKen-

ABOVE: *My Sweetie* races on the Detroit River in 1949. **LEFT, TOP:** During the 1948 Gold Cup, the boat took such a beating on the rough Detroit River that it started taking on water. Bill Cantrell drove it onto the shore before it sank to the bottom. **LEFT, BOTTOM:** *My Sweetie* being towed through a marina in Detroit before the 1950 Gold Cup.

"John [Hacker] came up and helped us lay it out on the floor, because all he had was just a set of lines, and we had to develop everything full size."



The boat's last appearance was at the 1951 Gold Cup in Seattle. During the team's journey back to Detroit, they left the boat at Les Staudacher's shop in Kawkawlin, Michigan, where it was destroyed in a fire and replaced by another hull. The bill sent to Anna Thompson Dodge described the arrangement as "repair work."

zie built the gearbox and put it on the engine. I think he probably supervised the engine installation.

But we put the strut on it, you know, the shaft and that. Oh-h-h, I think we probably got it out in seven or eight weeks.

When the finished boat appeared—maybe this is a Cantrell story—it had a cowling from a midget car?

Yeah, parts of it. It was a metal cowling.

I first met Bill Cantrell when I went to Detroit to see the *Sweetie* run. It was either the first or second time. It was a real pleasure. Cantrell was there to drive it. I think he did all the driving. Bill was a natural for that type of boat—he just got it around. He was great. And he was young... or younger, anyway! But he was a heck of a driver.

You did a lot of testing later; did you ever drive that boat?

Nope—never drove a V-bottom.

At first, *Sweetie* didn't have that other step they called the buffer step...?

Ah, I think we possibly put that on later. It had a tendency to lope, porpoise, a little bit. It always did that. And the *Pepsi* had a little tendency to do the same thing.

We put a bumper step on it, and later we cut about 18 inches off the back end, to reduce the leverage.

Was that much later?

Only a year or two. After we cut the

back end off, you could live with that loping—it wasn't that bad.

'Course it had its propeller submerged, so that gave quite a bit of torque to the boat. The boat would always lie on its left side. In other words, when it would lope, it would always come down on its left side. Rode like that. So that helped it turn.

Was the *Sweetie* vented?

We just had small little mouse-trap type vents. We never did put big vents on the *Sweetie*. Well, actually, they were boilers, put in primarily to get the water out of the boat. They were just little doors that hung down, behind. We never got into a real venting problem until the *Pepsi*.

In 1949 the boat looked better; the cowling was cleaned up.

An aluminum cowling—that was done by a body shop in Detroit.

And then sometime after Dodge bought the boat, the sides were built



Before *My Sweetie* was burned, its nose was chopped off and mounted to a plaque.

Tony Bugeja Collection

higher so they could get bigger fuel tanks in it?

For the Harmsworth race.

So they could run the longer distance?

Yep. And we did that work for them.

Now, the end of the first *Sweetie* came suddenly, in the middle of the 1951 season.

It ran in Seattle, but then Horace wanted a new one, felt that Hacker could design him a better one.

The deal was, as long as Horace was acting decent, his mother would buy him anything. But during this time, his mother just cut off all the funds. For repair work you could always get paid. So, Horace told me out in Seattle, "We'll drop the *Sweetie* in. Burn it up, build a new boat, and send me a bill for repair work"

So that's what happened to the original one. They stopped in on the way from Seattle. We whacked off the front end, mounted it on a board, and gave it to Gregory and Schoenherr for their recreation room. They still have the nose of the *Sweetie*, four feet. Gregory—that's one of his prized possessions. We gave it to him for Christmas, I guess.

Mounted like a moose head?

Yeah, mounted on a big mahogany board.

That was the original hull. That's what happened. We whacked the front of the boat off, burnt the rest of it, and built Horace a new boat. So, the *Sweetie* worked out pretty well... and then the *Pepsi*, and then the *Such Crusts*, and the *Gale* boats, and then things got a little out of hand, you know!

We didn't make a lot of money at it. I got \$2,500 for the *Sweeties*, from Dodge. But the fun... I was interested in boats as long as I can remember. ❖

HERITAGE

Historical Perspective by Craig Fjarlie



Memories of friends

The new year is supposed to bring resolutions, hope for a bright future, and celebrations with loved ones. The early days of 2025 also brought news of the passing of two friends.

Norbert Anthony “Tony” Steinhardt passed away in the early hours of New Years Day. He was born on February 13, 1943, in Madison, Indiana, and spent almost his entire life in the small Ohio River town. He spent 34 years in the National Guard and rose to the rank of colonel. He supported a number of organizations in Madison, including the Boy Scouts. In 1977 he founded Steinhardt Heating and Cooling, and acquired a Serv-Pro franchise in 2023. Among boat racers, he was best known for his tireless work for the Miss Madison,

Inc., organization and for the Madison Regatta. “Everyone who was involved in Madison was involved with the boat and the regatta, in one way or another,” says David Williams, director of the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum.

Jak McCormick, the grandson of former *Miss Madison* driver Jim McCormick, describes Tony’s role when the boat won the 1971 Gold Cup. “He managed the team.” McCormick continues, “He was the brains of the operation. He had 40 years on the board and helped make business decisions for a number of years, until about the last 10 years.”

Williams remembers Tony’s participation in the movie, *Madison*. “He was incredibly involved with the *Madison* movie. He was sort of the script advisor

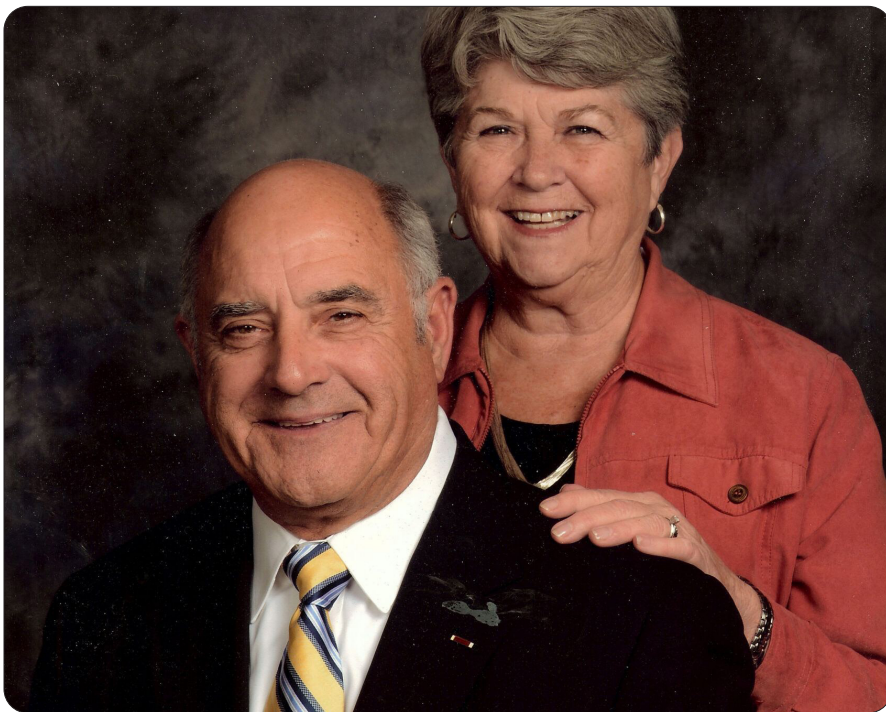
from early on.

Then, when the movie came to town, he helped locate sites for shooting.” Although some fans have expressed criticism of the movie because it took liberties with historical facts, Williams clarifies the reason for those changes and Tony’s willingness to go along with the movie’s digressions from history. “It’s not a documentary, it’s entertainment,” he explains.

On Sunday morning during the 2024 Regatta, Tony was presented with a plaque for his years of service to the Madison Regatta. “He had served as president of the Regatta, and was an advisor to me when I was president,” McCormick says. Although Tony was obviously in declining health, he clearly enjoyed attending the Regatta and was grateful to receive the honor.

The early days of 2025 also brought news of the passing of another friend of hydroplane racing. Craig Williams had served as editor of the Detroit race program during the last few years that races were held on the Detroit River. He was easy to work with and always supported those who contributed articles for the program. Although he never had the budget to pay writers, he worked to secure pit passes and parking passes for them, and made sure a few free copies of the program were made available to contributors. Williams had to deal with multiple sclerosis for several years, yet he maintained a positive outlook on life and was an inspiration to all who knew him.

Tony Steinhardt and Craig Williams will be missed, but they have left us with good memories of their friendship and work on behalf of hydroplane racing. As APBA always notes in *Propeller* magazine: Race in peace, gentlemen, and thanks for everything you did. ❖



Tony Steinhardt and his wife, Phyllis

Jefferson County Community Foundation

AROUND THE CIRCUIT

Race Team and Race Site News by Chris Tracy



We need your help.

The *Unlimited NewsJournal* (UNJ) publication committee meets each month. During those meetings we critique the previous issue, finalize the stories for the next issue, and start organizing stories for future issues. As part of the discussion during the past couple of months, we have talked about the future of this publication, and that's where you might be able to help.

It's no secret that several of our faithful *UNJ* writers have passed away over the past few years. I've written several obituaries, and so have others, that have been printed in the *UNJ*. Going forward, we could use your help. If you have a story that you'd like to tell about the sport of hydroplane racing or have thought about interviewing someone involved with the sport, or think you could write a race report, we'd enjoy hearing from you. (We do not need editorials and currently we have ample access for photographs.)

For example, the 2025 race schedule begins in Guntersville, Alabama race. If you are planning to attend the Guntersville race and would like to write the race report for the *UNJ*, we'd be thrilled to hear from you. We'd like somebody to provide us with some quotes from the participants and to help describe for our readers the atmosphere that was at the race site during the event. Don't worry about your writing skills; our editor will help you with that.

The *NewsJournal* is published by a club called Unlimiteds Unanimous that is based in Seattle. We can't pay reporters, but you can get something else. The race sites have always offered a media pass to our race reporter. Email our editor Andy Muntz, if you are interested in contributing. You can reach him at ajmuntz@icloud.com.



Dustin Echols decides to step down

Dustin Echols, the driver of the U-40 Bucket List Racing, recently announced that he would not be returning to drive for the 2025 season. In his Facebook post, Echols said, "I will be stepping out of the cockpit and plan to focus on my diesel shop and fun activities with my family." The *NewsJournal* had been hearing rumors of his decision for a couple of months. Echols has always been a good friend of the *UNJ* and welcomed talking with our reporters. We wish him well. The late Clint Newman interviewed Echols for the *UNJ* in a story that can be found in the August 2018 issue starting on page 7.

More news about the Madison team sale.

The sale of the two Madison Race Team boats and equipment has been completed. Bruce Ratchford, founder of Apollo Mechanical, is now the new owner. Apparently, the team's leased shop in Tukwila, Wash., was part of the deal, too. All parties have been quiet about the sale, but here's what the dots seem to connect:

NewsJournal contacts have reached out to several crew members of the

former Madison team. They report one common theme: They are out of the loop. As of this writing, they have no idea if they will be crewing next year, or not. The *NewsJournal* heard that some crew members were advised to take their personal possessions out of the Tukwila shop before January 1, in case the locks were changed. One crew member explained, "If the Hansons [crew chief Mike Hanson and his brother, Larry] know anything, they are not sharing the information."

Another rumor says that Dave Villwock will be associated in some way with the Ratchford team.

There is talk that there was some sort of meeting held at the team's Tukwila shop during the January 11 weekend. We've been told that Bruce Ratchford attended. Other contacts have told the *NewsJournal* that former Madison team manager Charlie Grooms also happened to be in Seattle during that time frame.

Another boat owner tells us that Ratchford expects to be in the sport for the long haul, and that his efforts will likely match in every way the Strong team.

Facebook reports say the Madison Race Team's Board of Directors is still in place and individual board members have teased about an imminent announcement concerning future boat sponsorship. Our *NewsJournal* contacts say Charley Wiggins has said he has not been contacted by the Madison group, although some speculated that Madison might sponsor his boat for the hometown race. Another unconfirmed rumor is that there may be some sort of Madison sponsorship of the second Ratchford boat, the eight-time national champion Hull #0706, at the Madison race and possibly also at Guntersville. ❖

MY \$0.02 WORTH

Editorial Comment by Andy Muntz



Those of us who grew up in the Seattle area during the 1950s and early '60s can legitimately claim that we were there when the sport had its Golden Age. No sport was as big to the residents of the Puget Sound area as Unlimited hydroplane racing was at that time—not even close. It became a key component of our region's heritage. We towed little wooden hydroplanes behind our bicycles, our sports heroes were people such as Bill Muncey and Ron Musson, and the annual race on Lake Washington attracted huge crowds of spectators as well as live coverage by the local TV stations.

The two feature stories in this issue of the NewsJournal stand as book ends to that remarkable period of time. The interview of builder Les Staudacher tells us the story of the first *My Sweetie*—the kingpin of the sport when the Golden Age began.

Seventy-five years ago, when Stan Sayres decided that he wanted to win the 1950 Gold Cup and bring the pres-

tigious event to the Pacific Northwest for the first time, Horace Dodge's *My Sweetie* stood most squarely in the way of accomplishing that dream. It was the defending Gold Cup champion, had also won the 1949 national championship, and was on its way toward winning a second title in 1950. More than any other, it was the boat to beat.

The 1950 Gold Cup brought a revolutionary change to the sport. On that day, Sayres's *Slo-mo-shun IV*, with its innovative prop-riding design, quite literally rendered obsolete the *My Sweetie*, and the others like it. That reality was played out in the skulduggery that Staudacher describes regarding the humiliating end of *My Sweetie*.

At the other end of that Golden Age is the 1965 Gold Cup that Jon Osterberg writes about. We didn't know it at the time, but a measure of innocence would end with that race. Three drivers, including the winner of the race described in this issue, would be killed in one horrible day during the following year, another

was taken only two weeks later, and a fifth death came at the very start of the following season. The good feelings that many had for the spectacular boats racing on Lake Washington was forever poisoned by the carnage.

Then, another blow to the sport came late in 1966 when the National Basketball Association announced that Seattle had been granted an NBA franchise. Hydroplane racing would no longer be the only game in town. The debut of the Seattle Supersonics the next year would provide something different for sports fans to follow and new sports heroes for the region's kids. A few years later came big-league teams for baseball, football, and soccer—and hydroplane racing's visibility on Seattle sports pages would greatly diminish.

So, as you think about the two articles in this issue, it might be illustrative for you to keep in mind the pivotal points they both represent in the history of this sport. ❖

EDITOR/WEBMASTER: Andy Muntz
ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Craig Fjarlie, Chris Tracy
TREASURER: Dick Sanders

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Letters are welcome, but may be edited for clarity and space.
Send comments to: ajmuntz@icloud.com

PLEASE JOIN US AT THE NEXT MEETING OF UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS

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