

UNLIMITED NewsJournal

A CHRONICLE OF SPEED

AUGUST 2021

Kelly and Shane are winners in the first two H1 events.



Chris Denslow

With the first two events of the 2021 H1 Unlimited Racing Series in the books, both J. Michael Kelly and Jimmy Shane have come away winners. Kelly won the Southern Cup in Guntersville, Alabama, aboard U-9 *Miss Tri-Cities* and Shane won his fifth Gold Cup at Madison, Indiana, while driving U-1 *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*. The field of starters at both races was six boats, but both contests featured competitive heats and some spectacular action. One of the most memorable was the incident above when Corey Peabody in U-9 *Pinnacle Peak Consulting* got caught in the roostertail of Andrew Tate's U-12 *Graham Trucking* and went flying during Heat 2B at the Guntersville Lake Hydrofest.

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GUNTERSVILLE LAKE HYDROFEST: After 21 months away, the hydros were finally back!

BY BRAD LUCE

After nearly two years without H1 Unlimited hydroplane racing, the series prepared for the 2021 season opener on Lake Guntersville in Guntersville, Alabama. The race for the Southern Cup was scheduled for June 26 and 27. Event organizers had trimmed the event to a two-day affair in an effort to insure continuous action on the water. They were successful. The tag line from event organizers seemed to be, “LET’S RACE.” It was everywhere you turned. And race we did. It was so good to be back!

In the weeks leading up to the Lake Guntersville event, Miss Madison Racing President Charlie Grooms announced that, due in part to uncertainty about the upcoming racing season, the team would field only a single boat. That boat would be the 2007 hull, originally slated to run in 2020 under the sponsorship of Goodman Real Estate.



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Dave Villwock in *Miss Beacon Plumbing* and Jamie Nilsen in *J&D's*

The boat would carry both the Goodman Real Estate and Miss HomeStreet identities for the Guntersville event and it showed up in the pits with the predominately black and gold Goodman Real Estate colors, along with the familiar HomeStreet blue and white on both the canard and rear wings. Jeff Ber-

nard was scheduled to drive the boat in Guntersville, although the driver plans included 2019 national driving champion Jimmy Shane, testing the boat and potentially driving a preliminary heat.

In all, seven H1 Unlimited hydroplanes showed up for the 2021 Lake Guntersville Hydrofest. The field included: U-1 *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet* with Jeff Bernard and Jimmy Shane; U-8 *Miss Tri-Cities* with J. Michael Kelly driving; U-9 *Pinnacle Peak Consulting* with Corey Peabody driving; U-11 *J&D's* with Jamie Nilsen driving; U-12 *Graham Trucking* with Andrew Tate driving; U-40 *Beacon Plumbing* with Dave Villwock driving; and U-440 *Bucket List Racing* with Dustin Echols driving.

LATE-BREAKING NEWS!

Corey Peabody drove U-9 *Pinnacle Peak Consulting* to victory at the 2021 HAPO Columbia Cup, coming from behind in the last lap of the final heat to edge out his childhood friend and teammate on the Strong Racing Team, J. Michael Kelly in *Miss Tri-Cities*. It was Peabody's first victory in the H1 Unlimited Racing Series. We'll have more details about the race in the September issue, including information about something called Sago pondweed. With one event remaining in the 2021 season, U-1 *Miss HomeStreet* now leads the points race for the national championship with 4,854 points, followed by U-8 *Miss Tri-Cities* with 4,035, U-9 *Pinnacle Peak Consulting* with 3,463, and U-12 *Graham Trucking* with 3,380. On the driver's side, J. Michael Kelly is ahead in the national title chase with 4,035 points, followed by Jimmy Shane with 3,825, Corey Peabody with 3,463, and Andrew Tate with 3,380.

Friday

The weekend's events kicked off Friday morning when the media and public were invited to a Meet and Greet with the H1 Unlimited teams. The event was held in an open field just off Highway 431, north of town. All seven H1 Unlimiteds were on tilt in the field

and drivers were available for photos and autographs.

The event was well attended, and many wide-eyed young fans got up close and personal with teams and personalities. One reporter asked Shannon Rane the specific shade of blue that replaced the familiar carnival orange on the decks of the U-11. Unable to answer directly, Shannon turned to a young fan admiring the boat and asked what color he thought the blue represented. “Royal blue,” he said. Shannon turned to the reporter and answered, “royal blue it is!” It stuck, and for the remainder of the weekend, announcers often referred to the boat as the chartreuse and royal blue U-11 hydroplane. The young man’s name? Colton Pierce, a 10-year-old from Bakersfield, California.

At precisely 11 a.m., the haulers were fired up and, complete with a police escort and horns honking loudly, the boats made a slow parade through the middle of town and across the causeway to the pit area. It was an impressive sight as local shop keepers and fans alike lined the streets to cheer for the race teams. For the record, the chartreuse and royal blue U-11 *J&Ds* led the parade, while the U-12 *Graham Trucking* was at the back of the group.

Friday night found race teams, sponsors, and VIPs, enjoying a southern barbeque in the pit area. With large tents and umbrellas providing shade, it was a casual gathering highlighted by what can only be referred to as Guntersville’s special brand of Southern Hospitality. There was a sense of anticipation by all in attendance. Much more so than normal, everyone was anxious to finally get boats on the water the next morning. Twenty-one months without racing was about to come to an end.

Saturday

The course opened for testing at 9 a.m. on Saturday as scheduled, under blue skies, white puffy clouds, and absolutely perfect water con-



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TOP: The Guntersville Lake Hydrofest started with a gathering of the hydros and fans in Marshall County Park on Friday morning. **MIDDLE:** J. Michael Kelly is interviewed by a reporter from a TV station in nearby Huntsville, Alabama. **ABOVE:** Andrew Tate takes U-12 *Graham Trucking* for a test run on the Lake Guntersville racecourse.



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ABOVE: The start of Heat 2A on Sunday morning. J. Michael Kelly had the inside lane in *Miss Tri-Cities*, in the middle is Jimmy Shane driving *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*, and on the outside (far left) is Jamie Nilsen in *J&D's*. **RIGHT:** Kelly battles side by side with Jeff Bernard in *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*.



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ditions. The anticipation of the night before carried over to that test session as nearly all the boats were ready and awaiting their turn on the water.

Officials allowed three boats on the course at a time. The test session was followed by qualifying and, in the end, only four boats were able to post legal qualifying runs. Somewhat surprisingly, the top qualifying speed was turned in by Corey Peabody and the U-9 *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*. His speed of 158.623 mph earned the team 100 points.

The rest of the qualifying results included the U-8 *Miss Tri-Cities* and J. Michael Kelly (157.930 mph), the U-40 *Miss Beacon Plumbing* and Dave Villwock (157.844 mph), and the *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet* and Jeff Bernard (156.052 mph). The U-11 and U-440 didn't make qualifying attempts and the U-12 had its time disallowed due to a fuel violation. All of the boats were allowed to compete in the race for the Southern Cup.

The race format called for three sets of elimination heats of three laps each and a five-lap winner-take-all final. Finally, it was time to go racing.

Heat 1A matched Corey Peabody and *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, Andrew Tate and *Graham Trucking*, J. Michael Kelly and *Miss Tri-Cities*, and Dustin Echols in U-440 *Bucket List Racing*. Unfortunately, Echols was not able to answer the call because of gearbox problems and the team received a DNS.

The other three boats made their way onto the course for what turned out to be a quiet milling period. The boats were tightly grouped at the start line, albeit a tick or two late. Tate was in lane one, Peabody in lane two, and Kelly on the outside in lane three.

Peabody broke the clock and had a boat-length lead on Kelly and Tate. He led out of the first turn with Kelly and Tate in hot pursuit. It was good, close racing. At the end of lap one, it was Peabody in first with Kelly in second, holding a

slight lead on Tate from lane three.

All three boats shared the same roostertail up the backstretch on lap two with Peabody maintaining the lead. Tate went inside a buoy in turn two on the second lap and received a one-lap penalty. With Tate no longer a factor, Kelly set sail for teammate Peabody, but he was unable to run him down. Peabody claimed the win by over a roostertail.

In their first race as H1 Unlimited owners, Darryl and Vanessa Strong had claimed first and second place in their first-ever heat of competition, that after finishing first and second in qualifying for the event. The new owners were off to a great start!

Peabody averaged an impressive 154.421 mph in winning the heat and in the process turned a fast lap of 157.803 mph on lap two, proving his top qualifying speed was no fluke. In discussing the win at the trophy presentation, Peabody admitted to being nervous prior to the heat, but being able to finally relax when a crew member and good friend leaned into the cockpit and told him not to worry. "It is just like driving your 1-liter (hydroplane)," he said.

Heat 1B called for Jamie Nilsen in *J&D's*, Jeff Bernard in *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*, and Dave



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Tait Meyer filming the action for the live-stream broadcast of the race on the H1 Unlimited YouTube Channel.

STATBOX

Guntersville Lake Hydrofest - Southern Cup

Guntersville, Alabama; June 26-27, 2021

2.5-mile course on Guntersville Lake; 35-mile race

QUALIFYING (1) U-9 *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, Corey Peabody, 158.623, 100 points; (2) U-8 *Miss Tri-Cities*, J. Michael Kelly, 157.930, 80; (3) U-40 *Miss Beacon Plumbing*, Dave Villwock, 157.844, 70; (4) U-1 *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*, Jeff Bernard, 156.052, 60; U-11 *J&D's*, Jamie Nilsen, DNQ - .0; U-12 *Graham Trucking*, Andrew Tate, 156.431 DNQ - flagrant fuel violation, 0; U-440 *Bucket List Racing*, Dustin Echols, DNQ - repairing gearbox, 0.

HEAT 1A (1) *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, 154.421, 400 points, 500 cumulative points; (2) *Miss Tri-Cities*, 152.826, 300, 380; (3) *Graham Trucking*, 97.194 (penalized one lap for missing a buoy), 225, 225; *Bucket List Racing*, DNS - cockpit air regulator system, 0, 0. Fastest lap: (1) *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, 157.803.

HEAT 1B (1) *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*, 150.474, 400, 450; (2) *J&D's*, 147.048, 300, 300; *Miss Beacon Plumbing*, DNS - cockpit air regulator, 0, 70. Fastest lap: (2) *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*, 151.344.

HEAT 2A (1) *Miss Tri-Cities*, 154.559, 400, 780; (2) *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*, Jimmy Shane, 151.647, 300, 760; (3) *J&D's*, 144.097, 225, 525; *Bucket List Racing*, DNS - repairing gearbox, 0, 0. Fastest lap: (2) *Miss Tri-Cities* 159.452.

HEAT 2B (1) *Graham Trucking*, 144.978, 400, 625; (2) *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, 129.055, 300, 800; *Miss Beacon Plumbing*, DNS - gearbox issues, 0, 70. Fastest lap: (1) *Graham Trucking* 148.804.

HEAT 3A (1) *Goodman Real Estate*, 153.327, 400, 1160; (2) *J&D's*, 152.934, 300, 825; *Miss Beacon Plumbing*, DNS - igniter failure, 0, 70; *Bucket List Racing*, DNS - gearbox, 0, 0. Fastest lap: (3) *J&D's*, 154.546.

HEAT 3B (1) *Miss Tri-Cities*, 151.091, 400, 1180; (2) *Graham Trucking*, 141.032, 300, 925; (3) *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, 100.183 (one-lap penalty for encroachment prior to the start), DSQ - Flagrant Fuel Violation, 0, 800. Fastest lap: (1) *Miss Tri-Cities*, 156.600.

FINAL (1) *Miss Tri-Cities*, 148.990, 400, 1580; (2) *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, 147.769, 300, 1100; (3) *Miss Beacon Plumbing*, 135.586, 225, 295; (4) *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*, 116.615 (penalized one lap for jumping the gun), 169, 1,329; *J&D's*, DNF - didn't run penalty lap (penalized one lap for jumping the gun), 0, 825; *Graham Trucking*, DSQ - entered Safety Zone prior to the start, 0, 925. Fastest lap: (3) *Pinnacle Peak Consulting* 151.980.

COMPILED BY ALLEN STILES

Villwock in *Miss Beacon Plumbing*. Astute H1 Unlimited fans were excited to see Villwock, the winningest driver in the sport's history, return to competition after a six-year absence. They had to wait until later in the weekend, however, as the U-40 was unable to get on the course by the one-minute gun due to a faulty air regulator in its cockpit. As such, Nilsen and Bernard were left to race by them-

selves. Again, the milling period was a quiet one, and with Bernard in lane one and Nilsen in two, the boats were literally dead even at the start.

Nilsen held a very slim advantage as the boats entered the first turn, but Bernard, with the inside lane position, was able to make up the difference and exit with a two-boat-length lead. Bernard built the lead up the backstretch and had



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Craig Fjarlie



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TOP: Jamie Nilsen, driving *J&D's*, was able to grab the inside lane at the start of Heat 3A and thrilled the fans with a close battle to the end with Jeff Bernard in *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*. **MIDDLE:** The return of Dave Villwock, the sport's all-time greatest driver, was frustrated with various mechanical problems to *Miss Beacon Plumbing* during the preliminary heats. **ABOVE:** *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet* rounds a turn on Lake Guntersville.

a full roostertail on Nilsen at the completion of the first lap. By the end, it was Bernard winning by two roostertails at an average of 150.477 mph for the three-lap heat. His fast lap was 151.344 mph.

With the completion of Heat 1B, H1 Unlimited racing was complete for the first day of the Guntersville Lake Hydrofest.

Sunday

With late-afternoon thunderstorms forecasted, race officials and event organizers decided to move the schedule up by an hour on Sunday morning. As such, the course was open for testing at 8 a.m. As expected, Jimmy Shane took to the water aboard *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet* and quickly grabbed everyone's attention by posting a lap of 160.122 mph—the fastest lap of the weekend.

Heat 2A called for four boats: Kelly and *Miss Tri-Cities*, Shane in *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*, Nilsen in *J&D's*, and Echols in *Bucket List Racing*.

For the second time of the weekend, the *Bucket List* would not answer the starting gun. At the two-minute mark before the heat, both Nilsen and Kelly cut the course from the backstretch to the front in an effort to improve their starting lane sequence. While the move eventually afforded Kelly with the inside lane, the results were not as positive for Nilsen.

Nilsen appeared to be early and exited the lower corner with 1:24 remaining on the clock. Realizing his dilemma, he got on the throttle hard up the backstretch and cut the course again at the top end. The result was a much better timing sequence, although he was now on the outside of both Kelly and Shane.

The three-boat field entered the upper corner prior to the start with Kelly in lane one, Shane in two, and Nilsen on the outside. Kelly was down on boat speed at the start and trailed both Shane and Nilsen to the first turn. Exiting the first turn, it was Nilsen on the outside with a

two-boat-length lead over Shane, who held a similar two-boat-length advantage on Kelly.

The run down the back chute on lap one was the best of the weekend. Shane began to reel in Nilsen while Kelly did the same to Shane. When the boats entered the upper turn, you could have thrown a blanket over all three. They were virtually dead even. As the three boats exited the corner and headed to the completion of the first lap, Kelly held a slim lead on Shane as Nilsen began to drop back.

Kelly lengthened his lead to a full roostertail over Shane on lap two, with the eventual margin of victory being nearly two full roostertails. Nilsen was a solid, but distant third place.

Said Kelly on the dock after the heat win, "This *Miss Tri-Cities*, Strong Racing U-8 has really got some ponies in it, and top end (speed)." Kelly's fastest lap in the heat was the second when he moved away from Shane at an impressive 159.452 mph.

Heat 2B matched Tate in *Graham Trucking*, Peabody in *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, and Villwock in *Miss Beacon Plumbing*. The heat looked like a good one on paper, and again, fans were excited for the racing return of Villwock. But they would again have to wait, as the bright orange *Beacon Plumbing* would score a second DNS for the weekend, this time reportedly due to gearbox issues. The weekend was proving a difficult one for both entries of Kelly and Sharon Stocklin.

When Peabody and Tate took to the beautiful waters of Lake Guntersville, the racing conditions were ideal. Peabody seemed content to start in lane two, just outside of Tate, who got the jump on him at the start aboard the bright red *Graham Trucking*. He held a three-boat-length lead at the start line.

Tate maintained that advantage up the backstretch and through the second turn. Exiting the corner, Peabody got caught in the roostertail of Tate's boat and was thrown high in the air. It was a scary sight, and one that could have been much worse. As it was, the boat landed right side up and still on the racecourse, on the inside of Tate.

Peabody quickly regained control of his boat and was back on the throttle, but by then it was too late. Tate was well on his way to a heat victory. Damage to the Peabody's *Pinnacle Peak Consulting* was clearly visible as a result of the incident. It was missing a large piece of the cowling and air scoop above the cockpit, and further damage had also affected the front canard wing.

Heat 3A matched Nilsen, Villwock, Echols, and Bernard, who was back in the cockpit of *Goodman Read Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*. Such had been the plan for the weekend, and the team stuck to that plan as the weekend continued.

The bad luck continued for both of the Stocklin orange boats. Again, neither was able to answer the call. Villwock tried numerous times to spool up the Lycoming turbine on *Beacon Plumb-*

The *Miss Tri-Cities* with J. Michael Kelly in the cockpit. The boat was built in 2014 for the Ellstrom Race Team and was purchased by Vanessa and Darrell Strong of the Tri-Cities, Washington, last winter. Though the boat was always among the fastest, it didn't win a race until this year's Guntersville Lake Hydrofest.



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ing, but as the starting clock reached the one-minute mark, the boat was still at the dock. Both boats again received a DNS and zero points. Thus, Heat 3A was reduced to another two-boat affair.

It would be a good one, though. Nilsen, with a much better start sequence, was able to claim lane one away from Bernard. Both drivers brought a lot of boat speed to the starting line and were literally dead even as the clock struck zero. The boats remained even through the lower corner and exited the turn side by side.

Initially, *J&D's* seemed to drop back slightly on the backstretch, but then closed the gap again at the top end. From the perspective of this writer, the superior boat ride associated with the U-1

proved to be the difference.

As the boats entered the second turn, Nilsen seemed to struggle a bit with the rougher water on the inside lane. Conversely, Bernard had a beautiful boat ride in the black and gold U-1. That being said, Nilsen got the most out of the chartreuse and royal blue U-11. He trailed Bernard by three boat lengths at the end of lap one, and the margin was unchanged at the end of two.

The U-11 clearly had plenty of power and was lacking only in boat ride. Still, Nilsen closed to within a boat length and a half as the two entered the upper corner for the last time. Coming to the finish line, Bernard held off a hard charging Nilsen for the victory by the slimmest of margins. Bernard's average speed for

the heat was 153.327 mph, compared to 152.934 mph for Nilsen. It was that close.

Not surprisingly, the fastest lap of the heat was claimed by Nilsen when he closed quickly on Bernard on lap three. His speed on that last lap was an impressive 154.546 mph.

Heat 3B pitted Kelly against Peabody and Tate—the drivers of three of the top four boats in points heading into the third section. With their spots all but guaranteed on the front row for the final, the mission for all three was simple: get a clean start, garner some points, and don't jeopardize your equipment before the final heat.

It was not to be.

Tate and Peabody, his *Pinnacle Peak* sporting a new, all-white engine cowling and repaired front canard wing, cut the course at the top end during the milling period. Peabody re-entered the front straightaway ahead of Tate, who was ruled to have already established his right of way. Tate took on some of the roostertail from the U-9 before swerving to clean water to his right. Peabody was subsequently disqualified from the heat, although he would complete the three laps.

Kelly's slow start in Heat 2A was not duplicated in Heat 3B. This time Kelly hung back behind Peabody and Tate, and while the two boats were legal at the line, both were way down on speed. Kelly, on the other hand, was hard on the throttle and wired the start. So good was his start, it was under review by H1 officials for nearly two laps before being ruled legal.

For all intent and purposes, the heat was over at the starting line. Kelly had a full roostertail on Tate at the entrance to turn one and never looked back. Kelly averaged 151.091 mph for the three-lap event, with lap one being the quickest at 156.600 mph.

With the successful start sequence and impressive boat speed, the *Miss Tri-Cities* and Kelly looked to be the favorite for the Southern Cup finale. While Peabody was disqualified in Heat 3B,



Craig Fjarlie



Chris Denslow

TOP: The view from the center of the racecourse as Jeff Bernard in *Goodman Real Estate* presents *Miss HomeStreet* (left) battles J. Michael Kelly in *Miss Tri-Cities*. **ABOVE:** Corey Peabody finished second in the race while at the controls of U-9 *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*.

scoring zero points, he would not lose his position on the front row of the final.

Final Heat

The final heat was set. H1 officials decided to put five boats on the front row, with a single trailer boat. It would be the first time five boats had been on the front row since the series returned to Lake Guntersville in 2018.

The front row would include Kelly in *Miss Tri-Cities* (1,180 points), Bernard in *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet* (1,160 points), Tate in *Graham Trucking* (925 points), Nilsen in *J&D's* (825 points), and Peabody in *Pinnacle Peak Consulting* (800 points). By virtue of the 70 qualifying points earned on Saturday, Villwock would be in the trailer-boat position with *Miss Beacon Plumbing*.

But having five boats on the front row would not happen. Not even a minute into the milling period, Tate drove *Graham Trucking* straight from the pits and through the Safety Zone in the center of the course, earning him a disqualification. He immediately turned around and returned to the pits with three minutes still remaining on the clock.

For the first time all weekend, Villwock and *Beacon Plumbing* made their way onto the course for racing action. As the boats came off the upper corner for the run to the start, Nilsen and Bernard were early in lanes one and two, respectively. Nilsen had rounded the upper corner with 26 seconds remaining and with Bernard right behind. It would cost both drivers dearly as both were ruled to have jumped the starting gun and assessed one-lap penalties.

Kelly was third across the line but the first legal starter, with his teammate Peabody in hot pursuit. Physically on the racecourse, Bernard exited turn one as the leader while the referees still reviewed the start, but Kelly was moving up on his outside with Peabody. Nilsen fell way back on the inside lane.

At the top end of the course, Kelly showed superior boat speed in *Miss Tri-Cities* as he drove around his good friend Bernard and built a slim one-and-a-half-boat-length lead at the end of lap one. Peabody was running third physically on the outside. Kelly then built the lead to a full roostertail up the backstretch on lap two, while Peabody on the far outside pulled even with Bernard at the completion of the lap and moved ahead up the backstretch.

As Kelly completed lap three, race announcers confirmed the jumping the gun penalties to both Bernard and Nilsen, while Kelly continued to pull away. He claimed a Southern Cup victory with a two-roostertail advantage over teammate Peabody at the finish line.

With Tate having been disqualified before the start of the heat and both Nilsen and Bernard having been assessed one-lap penalties, Villwock found himself with a podium finish despite not starting in a preliminary heat. Kelly averaged a



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The Kelly family celebrates the Southern Cup victory.

respectable 148.990 mph for the five-lap final heat. Somewhat surprisingly, the fastest lap of the final was turned in by Peabody on lap three—an average of 151.980 mph.

In their first race ever as H1 Unlimited owners, Darryl and Vanessa Strong of Tri-Cities, Washington, claimed both first and second place and let it be known to the others that they would be a force to be reckoned with on the remaining tour.

On the trophy stage following the race, a very happy J. Michael Kelly was emotional discussing the win. He was joined on the presentation stage by his wife, Angela, and two young sons. Kelly graciously deflected the attention from himself and spoke of the incredible personal journey his entire family had endured to get to that point. For all who know the story, it was a special moment.

In the end, any storms forecast for the area stayed away on Sunday, and the racing conditions were ideal. The H1 family had been apart for nearly two years, and the reunion was a good one.

Event organizers, specifically event coordinator Katy Norton, event chair Kenny Shifflett, vice chair Philip Mosley, their committee members, and over 200 volunteers did an outstanding job putting on the event. It was very well attended, and the race committee has clearly adopted a continuous improvement philosophy.

When addressing the public prior to the racing, Shifflett spoke first to the fans. “Without you, we don’t race,” he said. Simply stated, the organizers of the Guntersville Lake Hydrofest “get it” and the H1 Unlimited family is fortunate to have them on the schedule.

Unlimited hydroplane racing is back! ❖

THE APBA GOLD CUP:

Patience and care required at Madison.

BY CRAIG FJARLIE

Storms pounded the Ohio River Valley for several days before the 2021 Madison Regatta. The effects of the inclement weather played havoc with the water level and course conditions when regatta weekend arrived.

Thursday evening, a buffet banquet was held at the Broadway Livery Stable. Host of the event was former race director Nate Davis and the history of racing at Madison was recalled by several speakers, including emcee Jeff Ayler, Mayor Bob Courtney, Dave Taylor, Charlie Grooms, Bob Hughes, and Tony Steinhardt. Among those in attendance were current Madison drivers Jimmy Shane and Jeff Bernard, and former driver and current crew chief Mike Hanson.

That same evening, Grand Prix racer Mario Maraldo was driving his motorhome, towing his boat, on a back road into Madison when he encountered a rainstorm that caused the rig to slide off the road. Maraldo and his wife were taken to a local hospital, the boat and motorhome were both damaged.

Friday

A drivers' meeting was held on Friday morning to prepare for the APBA Gold Cup. Referee Rick Sandstrom said he hoped testing for the six Unlimitees there to compete could occur later in the afternoon. As the meeting was wrapping up, Dave Villwock told the others that because the course ran under the bridge, drivers would need to be careful about bearing out. Bridge

pilings were close to the course and bearing out could have fatal consequences.

Miss Beacon Plumbing was moved into the pits at 11:15 a.m., followed by *Graham Trucking*, and then the two Strong boats: *Pinnacle Peak Consulting* and *Miss Tri-Cities* (aka "The Tri"). Boats were moved into

the pits with a large tractor. The team haulers were left on Vaughn Drive so it would be easier to pull the boats out again for the Regatta Parade that evening. At about 2 p.m., officials announced that there was too much debris in the water and that testing was canceled.



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Bill Osborne

TOP: The J&D's team in the Madison Regatta Parade on Friday night.
ABOVE: Jan Shaw (left), director of operations for H1 Unlimited, chats with Sharon and Kelly Stocklin, owners of the U-40 *Miss Beacon Plumbing*.

Saturday

The boats were back in the pits by Saturday morning, but testing was on hold until at least 11:30 a.m. because of high water and debris. Finally, an announcement was made that testing would start at one o'clock. Grand Prix boats would test first, then Unlim-iteds would have the water from 2:30 to 4 p.m.

Following Grand Prix testing, a buoy came loose in turn two, which caused a delay before the Unlim-iteds could run. When the opportunity finally arrived, *Miss Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet* was first on the course with Jimmy Shane driving, followed by *Miss Beacon Plumbing* and *Villwock*, and *Miss Tri-Cities* with J. Michael Kelly in the cockpit. Shane took *Miss HomeStreet* out a second time, and then Andrew Tate took *Graham Trucking* onto the course.

Graham Trucking suddenly went dead in the water in turn one and staff on a patrol boat had difficulty securing a tow rope to the boat, which meant the river current took both boats past the outside course marker in turn one. Finally, the rope was attached and, because Tate was to drive in the first Grand Prix heat, he had to be rushed back to the pits in a separate boat to avoid missing his heat. In local jargon, the patrol boat driver was instructed to take Tate to the pits “at battle speed.”

Following the Grand Prix heats, a buoy in turn two needed to be reset, then *J&D's* and *Beacon Plumbing* both tested. *Miss HomeStreet* also ran a couple of laps, as did the vintage *Miss U.S.* (built in 1957 as *Miss U.S. IV*) with Mark Weber in the cockpit.

When Weber came in, *Villwock* took *Miss Beacon Plumbing* out for one more test run and the boat hit debris, which did minor damage to the prop. When the course was closed at 6:30 p.m., the only boat that never reached the water was *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*; the crew had been doing work on the hull.



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TOP: U-8 *Miss Tri-Cities* with J. Michael Kelly in the cockpit. **MIDDLE:** *Miss Beacon Plumbing* has a flaming start before Dave Villwock drives the boat onto the Ohio River. **ABOVE:** As the boats prepare to start Heat 1B, Andrew Tate grabbed the inside lane in *Graham Trucking*, with J. Michael Kelly in *Miss Tri-Cities* in the middle and Jamie Nilsen in *J&D's* on the outside.

The U-440 Bucket List Racing also was in town but was withdrawn from the race. The crew had focused its attention on *Miss Beacon Plumbing* between the Guntersville and Madison races, and no work was performed on the 440.

Sunday

Officials announced on Sunday morning that there would be no qualifying because of the poor course conditions and time constraints, although a brief test session was scheduled. All six boats would run in the three sets of elimination heats and each elimination heat would be three laps, with a five-lap final. The draw put *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, *Miss HomeStreet*, and *Beacon Plumbing* in Heat 1A, which was scheduled for 12:15 p.m., which meant Heat 1B, at 12:40 p.m., would feature *J&D's*, *Graham Trucking*, and *Miss Tri-Cities*.

Heat 1A ran as scheduled. Jimmy Shane in *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet* had lane one and was first to cross the starting line. Corey Peabody in *Pinnacle Peak Consulting* was second across, followed by Villwock in *Beacon Plumbing*. Shane led all the way with no serious challenge while Villwock passed Peabody in turn two of lap one and had the position secured by the end of the lap. The field strung out to the finish.

J. Michael Kelly had *Miss Tri-Cities* in lane two at the start of Heat 1B and led into the first turn. Andrew Tate was second on the inside aboard *Graham Trucking* and Jamie Nilsen was third in *J&D's*.

Half-way up the backstretch, Kelly got into *Graham's* roostertail and was drenched. *Miss Tri-Cities* then slowed and was passed by *J&D's*.

Officials said Tate should run an extra lap, "just in case," which he did. But following a review of photos taken by drones, they decided there was no penalty on Tate. The result put *Graham Trucking* first, followed by *J&D's*, and *Miss Tri-Cities*.

The draw for second set of preliminary heats put *Graham Trucking*, *J&D's*, and *Beacon Plumbing*

BELOW: Jimmy Shane, driving *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*, took the inside lane at the start of the Gold Cup's final heat. Dave Villwock was to his outside in *Miss Beacon Plumbing* and in lane three was Andrew Tate in *Graham Trucking* (left).

RIGHT: *Miss Beacon Plumbing* passes under the bridge.

Corey Peabody in *Pinnacle Peak Consulting* was second across, followed by Villwock in *Beacon Plumbing*. Shane led all the way with no serious challenge while Villwock passed Peabody in turn two of lap one and had the position secured by the end of the lap. The field strung out to the finish.

J. Michael Kelly had *Miss Tri-Cities* in lane two at the start of Heat 1B and led into the first turn. Andrew Tate was second on the inside aboard *Graham Trucking* and Jamie Nilsen was third in *J&D's*.



Bill Osborne



Chris Denslow



The Gold Cup winner, *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*

in Heat 2A, with *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, *Miss Tri-Cities*, and *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet* in the B section. *J&D's* had suffered damage to its left side and was scratched from Heat 2A so the crew could make repairs. That meant the heat would be a two-boat race.

Tate had lane one in *Graham Trucking*, while Villwock and *Beacon Plumbing* were to his outside at the start of Heat 2A. Both were early and had to slow down to avoid jumping the gun. Tate accelerated and reached turn one first while Villwock ran wider and trailed up the backstretch. He closed the gap in turn two, but Tate had better handling and pulled away down the front straightaway. That's when Villwock gave up the chase. *Graham Trucking* won by two roostertails.

Shane in *Miss HomeStreet* and Kelly in *Miss Tri-Cities* were both almost over the starting line early in Heat 2B, while Peabody and *Pinnacle Peak Consulting* trailed. In lane one, Kelly led into turn one, but Shane pulled even at the exit buoy and were side by side up the backstretch. Shane took the lead in turn two with Kelly giving chase, but Kelly then let him go after turn one of lap two. Peabody trailed throughout.

The draw for the third set of heats had *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, *Graham Trucking*, and *Miss Tri-Cities* in Heat 3A,

with *Miss HomeStreet*, *Beacon Plumbing*, and *J&D's* in Heat 3B.

Kelly took lane one, Peabody was in lane three, and Tate had lane two, but was behind the others at the start of Heat 3A. Kelly led through the first lap while Tate and Peabody battled for second place.

In turn one of lap two, *Miss Tri-Cities* dug its right sponson into the rough water, hooked, and spun around—almost flipping. Kelly tried twice to restart and finally got the engine to respond, but by then the others were far into the lead. Tate beat Peabody by a boat length, while

Kelly's boat finished at reduced speed. EMTs were called to the dock to meet *Miss Tri-Cities* when Kelly came in and he was checked for rib injuries and a possible broken nose but remained in the pits. The boat was withdrawn from the final heat.

J&D's, still undergoing repairs, was scratched from Heat 3B, which again left a two-boat race. Shane was in lane one in *Miss HomeStreet* and Villwock took the outside lane in *Beacon Plumbing*. Shane led throughout, but Villwock kept the pressure on a roostertail back.

STATBOX

Madison Regatta - A.P.B.A. Gold Cup

Madison, Indiana; July 4, 2021

2.5-mile course on the Ohio River; 35-mile race

QUALIFYING - Canceled due to poor river conditions. **ENTRANTS** U-1 *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*, Jimmy Shane; U-8 *Miss Tri-Cities*, J. Michael Kelly; U-9 *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, Corey Peabody; U-11 *J&D's*, Jamie Nilsen; U-12 *Graham Trucking*, Andrew Tate; U-40 *Miss Beacon Plumbing*, Dave Villwock.

HEAT 1A (1) *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*, 138.239, 400 points, 400 cumulative points; (2) *Miss Beacon Plumbing*, 132.523, 300, 300; (3) *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, 126.461, 225, 225. Fastest lap: (1) *Goodman Real Estate*, 141.888.

HEAT 1B (1) *Graham Trucking*, 137.536, 400, 400; (2) *J&D's*, 133.556, 300, 300; (3) *Miss Tri-Cities*, 122.392, 225, 225. Fastest lap: (1) *Graham Trucking*, 140.265.

HEAT 2A (1) *Graham Trucking*, 138.893, 400, 800; (2) *Miss Beacon Plumbing*, 134.011, 300, 600; *J&D's*, DNS – repairing hull damage, 0, 300. Fastest lap: (2) *Graham Trucking*, 140.064.

HEAT 2B (1) *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*, 141.332, 400, 800; (2) *Miss Tri-Cities*, 135.554, 300, 525; (3) *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, 127.177, 225, 450. Fastest lap: (1) *Goodman Real Estate* 143.834.

HEAT 3A (1) *Graham Trucking*, 139.690, 400, 1200; (2) *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, 139.229, 300, 750; (3) *Miss Tri-Cities*, 78.731, 225, 750. Fastest lap: (1) *Miss Tri-Cities*, 146.651.

HEAT 3B (1) *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*, 138.096, 400, 1200; (2) *Miss Beacon Plumbing*, 135.173, 300, 900; *J&D's*, DNS – repairing hull, 0, 300. Fastest lap: (1) *Goodman Real Estate*, 142.873.

FINAL (1) *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*, 138.462, 400, 1600; (2) *Graham Trucking*, 136.497, 300, 1500; (3) *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, 130.336, 225, 975; (4) *J&D's*, 120.807, 169, 469; (5) *Miss Beacon Plumbing*, 85.673 (penalized one lap for bearing out in 1st turn), 127, 1027. Fastest lap: (1) *Goodman Real Estate*, 142.450.

COMPILED BY ALLEN STILES

Final Heat

The final heat would be a five-boat affair. A coal barge, just upriver, needed to pass through by 7 p.m., so it was imperative that the countdown for the final begin no later than six o'clock. If anything were to cause a stoppage of the final, there would be no opportunity for a re-start.

As the boats milled during the five-minute gun period, Shane in *Miss HomeStreet* noticed that lane one was open, so he dove for the inside as the field exited the shape-up turn and headed for the starting line. Villwock was in lane two in *Beacon Plumbing*, Tate had lane three in *Graham Trucking*, Peabody was back in lane four in *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, while *J&D's*, fresh from repairs, trailed with Nilsen driving.

Shane stayed on the buoy line through the first turn and headed up the backstretch, but Villwock moved over on Tate in the first turn, damaging *Graham Trucking's* rear wing. Villwock received a one-lap penalty for bearing out and *Graham's* wing fell off as the field reached the second turn.

Tate challenged Shane as they ran down the front straightaway, and the

Chris Denslow



Chris Denslow



Bill Osborne



TOP: J. Michael Kelly and *Miss Tri-Cities* suddenly hooked and spun out leaving the downstream turn during Heat 3A. **MIDDLE:** The U-9 *Pinnacle Peak Consulting* with Corey Peabody in the cockpit. **ABOVE:** Another view of the start of the final heat. From the left, Corey Peabody in *Pinnacle Peak Consulting*, Andrew Tate in *Graham Trucking*, Dave Villwock in *Beacon Plumbing*, and Jimmy Shane in *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet*.

partisan crowd enjoyed the contest. Tate kept the pressure on, but to no avail. Shane won and the crowd cheered the hometown boat heartily. Tate finished second, followed by Peabody, and Nilsen. Villwock had slowed and was lapped by the others, in addition to the requirement of running a penalty lap.

When all the boats were back in the pits, course patrols began pulling buoys so the river would be clear for the approaching coal barge while a large crowd watched the awards presentation in front of the judges' stand.

Because there was no qualifying, J. Michael Kelly was awarded the fast-qualifying award for turning the fastest lap in competition. Shane was given the Indiana Governor's Cup and the Gold Cup.

Rebecca Nichols, director of operations for the American Power Boat Association, was on hand to present the Gold Cup. Crew chief Mike Hanson joined Shane as the awards were given out, then the entire crew surrounded him. Fans asked for autographs and children wanted photos with him. Shane smiled broadly and patiently granted their requests.

Asked to comment on course conditions, Shane said it was probably the worst water he had ever experienced at Madison. "I think the team made a smart decision to run the older boat," he said. "This one is a little more forgiving than the newer boat. I think we had the only boat that got through the entire race without any damage."

Andrew Tate put on a good face during the trophy presentation, but later admitted he was very disappointed. "I thought we had a chance to win," he said, adding, "It was the first time I drove an Unlimited without a rear wing."

Jim McCormick drove *Miss Madison* to victory in the Gold Cup before the hometown crowd in 1971 and, 50 years later, Shane drove *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet* to another Gold Cup win. The hometown hydro came through again, sending fans home with hearts full of joy once more. ❖



Craig Fjarlie



Chris Denslow



Craig Fjarlie

TOP: Jimmy Shane and *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet* plows its way across the Ohio River. **MIDDLE:** *Graham Trucking* lost its horizontal stabilizer during the final heat. **ABOVE:** Crew chief Mike Hanson (left) and Jimmy Shane celebrate their victory.

A HYDRO FAN'S PERSONAL HISTORY



BY ROGER LIPPMAN

When I was four years old, my family moved from Seattle's Central Area to 32nd Avenue and Marion Street, on a ridgetop in Madrona, where we could hear hydroplanes testing on Lake Washington. When there was a boat out on the lake, the Morrisons, our neighbors across the street, would jump in their

mammoth Frazer and lumber down to watch from the lake shore.

Soon I was best friends with their son Dave, born two days after me, and I was invited to ride along. Before long I was joining them for the full week of time trials, first at Mt. Baker and then the new Stan Sayres pits. After the heartbreaking 1956 demise of *Slo-mo-shun IV* in Detroit, they took me to the KING-TV parking lot, where the Old Lady's remains were on display. Everyone cried.

It wasn't until I was 10 that my parents allowed me to go on race day. They were concerned that a little kid like me wouldn't be able to hold his own in the crowd of reputedly half a million. Till then, I watched the race on another neighbor's TV.

In those early years, I had gotten to know about all the boats. Like so many other typical Seattle 1950s kids or, at least, the boys, Dave and I replicated the races on our own turf, racing bicycles, flattened pop cans, marbles, what-have-

you. *Slo-mo IV* was a green cat-eye marble, the *V* was a blue one, *Gale V* was red, and of course *Miss Thriftway* was orange. The *Slo-mos* always won.

In that first race I attended, 1958, Jack Regas in *Hawaii Ka'i III* won it all – three heat victories, fastest lap, fastest heat, fastest race. A local favorite, the *Ka'i* had inherited the *Slo-mo* crew, carrying the legacy of Stan Sayres and winning the national championship in 1957. The U-12 *Maverick* had a couple of second places, but when the final came, it was nowhere to be seen. From the shore, it looked to us like the boat had slunk out of the pits and away on its trailer.

A lot changed for me in 1959. On the first of August, our family moved to Lake Forest Park. I still managed to get to the pits every day of the week. That meant for testing on Monday and qualification Tuesday through Friday, with more testing Saturday, plus, of course, race day.

Early that week I became acquainted with our new neighbors across the street. The father was a sales rep for Bardahl and drove a company Volkswagen van all

done up in the corporate green, yellow, and black, with the name in big letters. He had bundles of the brand-new 1958 National Champ Bardahl buttons, and he gave me and my three younger brothers one each, attached to a Chubby & Tubby cap.

When I innocently walked into the outer pit area (accessible in those days to anyone with a Seafair Skipper Pin), I was mobbed by collectors who hadn't yet seen the new Bardahl pin. One fellow pulled five buttons out of his pocket as an offer: a couple of Pay 'n Saves, a Thriftway, an Adios, and a Miss Spokane.

I didn't know anything about buttons, but five for one seemed like a good deal. When I got home that evening, I went to my young friend across the street to see about getting the Bardahl replaced, and he offered to sell me one for a dime. I took several and sold them at the pits the next day for fifteen cents apiece, which built up my capital and gave me the chance to buy deeper into the button market.

That night I went back for more, but my friend's father caught him dealing



PREVIOUS PAGE: The author (right) and his life-long hydro friend, Dave Morrison.

ABOVE: This photo of *Slo-mo-shun IV* was taken by the author on June 26, 1999, on the 49th anniversary of the day the boat set the world's straightaway record. The Grand Old Lady was fully restored and was driven by Ken Muscatel during this test run, which took place on Lake Washington at the site of that record run near Sand Point.

and said, “You don’t sell buttons to your friends,” so he gave me a couple more handfuls. By the end of the week my collection was too big to fit on the ballcap and I had to get a floppy tropical sunhat.

Not all was well that week, however. The new U-00 *Maverick*, based in Las Vegas, won the race, which meant that Seattle would not host the 1960 Gold Cup.

On that same 1959 race day, the *New York Times* published an article by my father, who was a press representative for various organizations and a keen observer of the media –though notably disinterested in sports. In “Seattle Boat Race on The Air,” he described hydroplane racing as “the sport that television made” in the Northwest. (Link: <http://roger.lippnet.us/LDL.pdf>) And just as important, the technical advances achieved here in remote broadcasting later contributed to TV field coverage of news as well as other sporting events.

Seattle had the Seafair Trophy in 1960 instead of the Gold Cup, but the prestige wasn’t there. It was hard for me as a pre-teen to accept the loss of something that seemed so rightfully ours.

And there were worse consequences. The 1960 Lake Mead Gold Cup was forced to cancel on race day due to high winds and inept management. Somehow that led to a change in the tradition of winner hosting, and pretty soon the Gold Cup location went to the highest bidder. It all seemed to be the result of the influence of Nevada, where money rules everything. Seattle had lost its long-term grip on the Cup.

Nevertheless, my attraction to the boats continued. I got in the full week’s experience for years to come, usually with my buddy Dave, even though my family moved to California for a couple years in the 1960s. In fact, I’ve missed only three Seattle races since the day the *Ka’i* won. But the Morrison parents stopped going after the time some kid next to them got drunk and puked on their beach blanket.

One day in the pits I met Joe Taggart. I told him that I had been rooting for him from the shoreline and he said, “Yeah, I heard you cheering.” When I was young and impressionable, Dave told me that Taggart made the turns so tight that he could reach out and touch the buoys. It wasn’t till I actually sat in a hydroplane driver’s seat that I realized I couldn’t even reach to the edge of the boat.

It was in 1963 that I met Bob Senior. Ten years older than me, he had been a hydro enthusiast long before I was. Then he went into the Army. When he got back to Seattle, he put an ad on the sports page of the *Seattle Times*, looking to connect with other fans. I invited him over to our family home and showed him my collection of newspaper articles from every race of the past five years, some race programs, my index cards about each boat, and, of course, my button collection.

We bonded and during my years of dislocation (finishing high school in California and then college in Portland), he regularly mailed me news clippings, with the errors in reporting always underlined in red ink. Years later I traded Bob my collection of documents for a small fortune in buttons, including



The water-color sketches of hydroplanes from a 1958 newspaper that are displayed by Roger Lippman’s desk.



In this photo taken by the author at the re-launch of *Slo-mo IV* in 1999, Ted Jones (left), the boat's designer, meets with its builder, Anchor Jensen. The two hadn't spoken to each other since a falling out between them in the early 1950s.

a Pink Gale, then seen as the ultimate collector's trophy.

The only item in my paper files that I later regretted giving up was the water-color sketches of 19 boats from the Sunday paper on race day in 1958. Years later, I found another copy, now displayed by my desk.

In the summers of 1966 and/or 1967, I forget which, a bunch of us crowded into Bob's Volvo and were off to the races at Kelowna, B.C., and the Tri-Cities. Along with Bob and me were Fred Farley and Pat Fahey. On arrival we hooked up with Bob Greenhow, Roy Pedersen, and other luminaries of fandom.

Several of us had crammed into one motel room, leading to tensions. Fred was taking pills for some kind of itch and was getting on Pat's nerves. I remember Pat declaring, "Fred is the seven-year itch." Whatever one would say, though, Fred knew just about everything about hydroplane history and didn't forget any of it.

Roy, the champion of hydro-button collecting, had the greatest collection I

ever saw, and he swore that he had never paid a penny for a button. Most of them he charmed out of boat owners and crews.

They weren't the only people Roy charmed. He had his own room at the motel. Jostled by the overcrowding, I asked Roy if I could sleep on his floor. He demurred, in case he had "company." I was still kind of a clueless teenager, but by the end of the weekend I had figured out what he meant.

Alas, Roy died much too young.

I got up early in Kelowna and found my way to the end of a pier with a nice view of the racecourse. I was joined there by an old fellow, and by "old," I mean somewhat younger than I am now. As the morning went on, the pier filled up behind us, and not long before race time, a boy squeezed through the crowd and sat down in front of us. My older friend grabbed him by the shoulder and told him to get lost, announcing that we had been there all morning.

At Tri-Cities, all I remember is dust and the encephalitic heat. (Why do

old-timers refer to the race as "Pasco," when that's actually across the river from the pit area?) I returned there with my brother a few years later.

The shore was filled with hard-drinking young folks. As the afternoon went on, they needed to mellow out and we needed to quench our thirst, so we cooked up the perfect deal: we traded them some marijuana for a couple beers.

I had become a political activist when I went to college, in 1965. There was plenty to protest, especially the Vietnam War, and I was also actively supporting the efforts of farmworkers, led by Cesar Chavez, to organize a union in the fields of California. My activism did not always endear me to some of my fellow hydro fans. A few took strong exception, like E.K. Muller and Douglas MacArthur Shultes (who made sure I heard his middle name, though that may not have been it for real).

But I had allies, too, including Fred Farley, who would affectionately address me as "Roger the Draft Dodger," and Bob Senior, a union man who had outgrown his Republican upbringing and came to revere Chavez as a labor hero.

On the flip side, my political pals had a hard time figuring me for a sports fan. They were more like the writer Fran Lebowitz, who said, "What is truly chilling is that there are a lot of smart people interested in sports. That just gives you no hope at all for the human race." I disagree, of course, at least about people interested in hydroplanes. But I digress.

I thought I might have to miss much of the 1966 Seafair race. It was the summer after my first year of college. I came back to Seattle and got a job at Safeco, starting at the bottom, literally—in the basement mail room.

Off work, I was organizing support for the striking farmworkers. The Teamsters, who opposed the farmworkers' campaign (they wanted the action for themselves) and were trying to break the strike, sent a couple of goons to show up at my workplace one day. They had an in

with management there, so I was allowed (ordered) to take a few minutes off work to be reasoned with. I knew their game and wasn't about to be convinced to drop my work on behalf of the union. Within the week, Safeco fired me. The upside: I had plenty of time to go to the races.

Come 1970, I had a reputation, at least with the FBI. It was the year of Nixon's invasion of Cambodia and the killing of Kent State student protesters by National Guard troops. The anti-war movement in Seattle was massive, and I was one of its top leaders—in the imag-

ination of the Feds. Thus, I was indicted on federal conspiracy charges and became famous as one of the Seattle Seven defendants.

Long story short, as part of the fallout from that case, I was rewarded with an all-expenses-paid 1971 summer vacation in beautiful Puget Sound, at McNeil Island Federal Penitentiary. That accounts for the missed Seafair race, though I managed to watch it on TV from my cell. The conspiracy case was eventually dropped by the government. I later sued the Nixon gang of crooks,

knaves, and zealots for civil rights violations, but I didn't win my million dollars or get my race back.

I had more reputable excuses for the other two Seattle races I missed. In 1974, I hitchhiked to Alaska with my brother for six weeks there. That was the year the race was at Sand Point, with rain, an admission charge (first time ever in Seattle), and lousy viewing, so it was just as well to miss it. In 1989, I went to the Montana wedding of a friend from work.

Next month: How I got involved with working on the boats, and more. ❖

Detroit race officially canceled.

The officials at Detroit Riverfront Events, Inc., have announced that the 2021 Detroit Hydrofest scheduled for August 27–29 will not occur. “It is with great disappointment that our attempt to have a hydroplane race on the Detroit River will not happen,” said Mark Weber, president of the organization. “Our board is adamant that we need to have a quality event that makes our sponsor proud and our fans happy.”

Weber said his group worked well into June to put a program together that they felt could have been produced to meet their expectations, but with the scheduled event less than 60 days away, they simply ran out of time. “We will now look forward to 2022 and continuing the tradition of boat racing on the Detroit River,” he said.

This will be the second year in a row with no hydroplane racing in Detroit. Last year's event was canceled because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The organizers were hoping to feature Grand Prix boats from the Hydroplane Racing League (HRL) again this year, like they did in 2019. The HRL, however, also has announced the cancellation of its entire four-race 2021 season, primarily because the border between Canada and the United States continues

to be closed.

“The verdict of canceling our season for a second year in a row has been reluctantly reached,” said Didier Bernard Seguin, commissioner of HRL. “However, I am positive for the resumption of our activities for the 2022 season. The organizing committees are already working hard to put a full eye on it at their next event.”

The HRL said that with the border closed since March 2020 to non-es-

sential travel, they faced a major logistical challenge. Even if the border was re-opened soon, organizing committees would not have the time to plan quality events.

Anne-Marie Leboeuf, director of HRL operations, explained that there was little time to find partners, sponsors, and infrastructure that would adhere to mandatory health standards due to Covid-19. ❖

We love to hear from our readers

Greetings Andy.

I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed and appreciated the article you wrote about Fred Alter in the February issue of the *Unlimited NewsJournal*. It was a wonderful tribute to Fred and his racing career.

I did, however, have a concern at the end of the article where it said, “he eventually was confined to a wheelchair...”

While in his last years, he used the devices of a cane or walker to assist in walking, and used an electric scooter when he went to events, he worked hard to make sure he would never be wheelchair bound. He did not even have a wheelchair.

I think it leaves his fans with an incorrect image as they picture him confined to a wheelchair. While he had slowed down considerably in his last years, due to issues with his health, he was alert, still had his “kickass” ways, and was a fighter to the end, which, I believe should be part of his legacy, and is what he would have wanted.

Thank you again. I really appreciate your support of Fearless Freddie's legacy.

Respectfully yours,
Peggy Kennard, Fred's life partner

MY \$0.02 WORTH

Editorial Comment by Andy Muntz



During the 118-year history of this sport, competition has been suspended only twice for an entire season or more. The first of these interruptions came from 1942 through 1945, when boat racing activities were put on hold while the nation battled World War II. The second came last year when the Covid-19 pandemic caused all racing activity to be canceled.

So, in terms of perspective, that's the magnitude of what happened last year—unprecedented, except in the case of world-wide hostilities.

This comes to mind because lately I've read lots of complaints on social media about the current state of hydro racing. Only seven boats showed up at Guntersville, the pessimists point out, and only six were in Madison. Only two boats started some of the heats, they cry.

Let's remember what happened following the last (and only other) season cancellation. It was 1946. Guy Lombardo won the Gold Cup that year and Dan Arena introduced the first Allison-powered hydro. Pretty exciting stuff, right? Both notable achievements.

But do you know how many Gold Cup-class boats started that race in Detroit? I'll save you the effort of looking it up—Five. And, only two of them finished. Not only that, the field was augmented by a bunch of 225-class hydros. One of them finished second! How would that have gone over amongst today's complainers?

Then, there was the 1946 season itself. If you define a race as being an event where three or more top-class boats start and there are at least two heats, how many races do you suppose there were in 1946? Again, I'll save you the effort—Two. In addition to the Gold Cup, the President's Cup also had three or more starters, and it had only five.

In the only other races that year that could even be remotely described as a major race, Lombardo's *Tempo VI* was the only Gold Cup-class starter for the National Sweepstakes in Red Bank, New Jersey, and Lou Fageol's *So-Long Jr.* was the only such starter for an event in West Virginia. And, technically, his boat was really a 7-litre.

That's it!

If Facebook had existed then, can you imagine the intense whining there would be? Never mind that we had just been through a world war—the sport is dying, they would likely gripe.

The situation is not all that different now. We have just been through a worldwide pandemic that pretty much shut down everything and impacted in some way just about every aspect of our lives. In particular, it had a huge impact on the non-profit civic organizations that the sport depends upon to hold races. For them, it meant losing an entire year of revenue—no small thing.

It's no surprise, therefore, that the sport must rebuild itself, just like it did in 1946. What's more, it faces a double whammy. Like all motorsports, boat racing was struggling in many ways even before the pandemic arrived.

So, please stop and consider before you dive in with a complaint on Facebook. Do a reality check, learn what you're talking about, and show just a little patience and understanding. ❖

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