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GUNTERSVILLE AND MADISON:

Thunderstorms prevail at year's first two races.



Chris Denslow

From the left, *Bucket List Racing*, *Beacon Electric*, and *Beacon Plumbing* on the Ohio River in Madison.

BY CRAIG FJARLIE

When unmuffled Rolls and Allison piston engines powered unlimited hydroplanes, they were regularly called thunderboats. The roar of World War II airplane engines

has given way to the whine of turbines. However, nature picked up where the pistons left off this year at Guntersterville and Madison. Thunderstorms provided plenty of excitement at both races, and action on the water had to be squeezed in whenever the weather granted a break.

GUNTERSVILLE:

The course on Lake Guntersterville opened for testing at 2 p.m. on Friday. The first boat on the water was U-11 *Legend Yacht Transport*, driven by Jamie Nilsen. It was followed by U-40 *Bucket List Racing* with Dustin Echols in the cockpit, and U-8 *Beacon Electric*, J.

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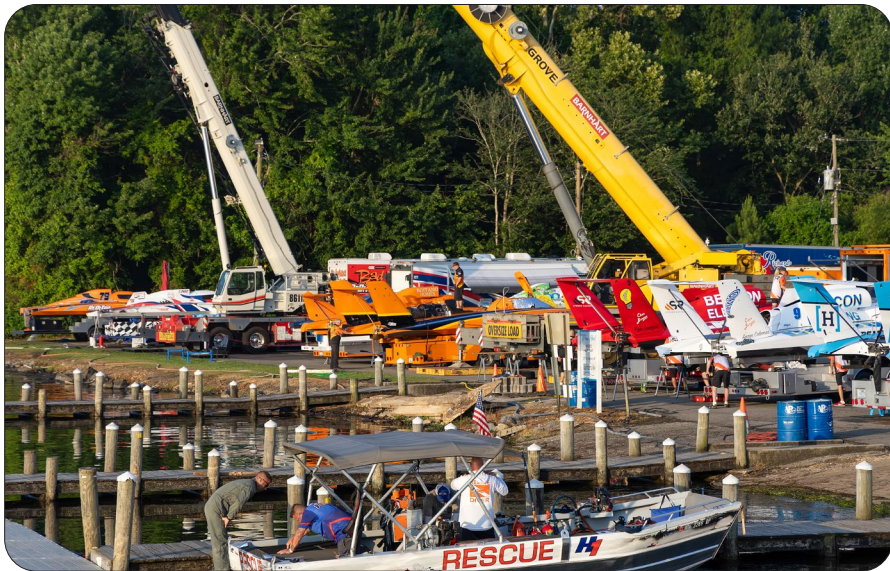
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TOP: Dustin Echols drives *Bucket List Racing* to a qualifying speed of 171.294 mph on the Guntersville racecourse. It was the fifth fastest time ever recorded in the sport's history.
MIDDLE: The pit area on the banks of Lake Guntersville. **ABOVE:** Corey Peabody in *Beacon Plumbing* (left) battled Andrew Tate in *Miss Goodman Real Estate*.

Michael Kelly driving. They were all trying out the course with its wide turns and relatively short straightaways. The layout was patterned after the course used in Hawaii in 1989.

A few minutes later, U-9 *Beacon Plumbing* with Corey Peabody came on the course, and Andrew Tate followed in *Miss Goodman Real Estate*. Right behind him was Dylan Runne in *Miss HomeStreet*. *Bucket List Racing* had gone dead in the water and was being towed in as Brent Hall took his first ride in U-440 *Boitano Homes*.

Hall ran some laps and was returning to the pits as the tow boat released *Bucket List* at the dock. The tow boat began heading toward the course and Hall had to take evasive action to avoid a collision. The result is that *Boitano Homes* approached the dock too fast, and Hall had to turn right to scrub off speed. He missed the dock but hit some rocks on the beach, leaving a small scratch in the tip of the left sponson. Echols said *Bucket List* seemed to lack acceleration and he also noticed a vibration. He turned off the engine as a precaution. "If there is a problem, I think everything will be repaired quickly," he said.

Jimmy King made a couple of modest laps in U-3 *Griggs presents Miss Ace Hardware*, the last active boat that still uses a turbocharged Allison. *Legend Yacht Transport* wanted to test three different propellers, and it was the last boat on the course just before testing time ended at 5 p.m.

Saturday in Guntersville

On Saturday, the course opened for qualifying at 8 a.m. The first boat out was *Boitano Homes*. It was followed by *Beacon Electric*, then *Bucket List*. The crew of *Legend Yacht Transport* knew which propeller they wanted to use, and Jamie Nilsen turned three quick laps. *Goodman Real Estate* ran next, then *Beacon Plumbing*, *Miss HomeStreet*, and *Miss Ace Hardware*.

Brent Hall needed to run 15 laps, 10

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Rounding a turn are, from the left, Dustin Echols in *Bucket List Racing*, Jimmy King in *Griggs presents Miss Ace Hardware*, and J. Michael Kelly in *Beacon Electric*.

of them over 130 mph, in *Boitano Homes* in order to qualify as a driver. He would turn a total of eight laps, six over the required minimum, before a gearbox problem developed and he was done for the weekend. That leaves him with needing seven more laps, four over 130 mph, to become the first African American driver to qualify for H1 Unlimited competition.

Bucket List went out a second time and Echols got everyone’s attention with a record lap of 171.294 mph. It is the fastest lap on a 2.5-mile course since fuel re-

strictions have been in place and the fifth fastest in the history of the sport. “I’m just so glad that everyone else can see that our hard work is finally paying off,” Echols said. “We’ve known it was going to be fast for a while and it finally shows.”

Other qualifying speeds were *Beacon Plumbing*, 167.320 mph; *Miss HomeStreet*, 166.740 mph; *Beacon Electric*, 165.639 mph; *Goodman Real Estate*, 164.458 mph; *Legend Yacht Transport*, 163.758 mph, and *Miss Ace Hardware*, 159.945 mph. *Boitano Homes* also qualified at 148.536 mph, but because Hall wasn’t yet qualified, the

boat did not compete.

The draw for heats put *Miss HomeStreet*, *Beacon Electric*, *Miss Ace Hardware*, and *Bucket List* in Heat 1A; *Legend Yacht Transport*, *Beacon Plumbing*, and *Goodman Real Estate* in Heat 1B.

Because Dylan Runne was a rookie driver, he would have to start his first two heats in the outside lane, five seconds behind the field. *Bucket List* physically led Heat 1A throughout, but Echols jumped the gun and had to run an extra lap. Kelly and *Beacon Electric* won the heat, with *Miss Ace Hardware* a close second and *Miss HomeStreet* third.

“Testing and qualifying went well today,” Kelly said. “Winning Heat 1A was an excellent way to start our racing weekend.” Echols, disappointed with his fourth-place finish, explained his mistake at the start, “I didn’t have my timing marks figured out.”

Tate took *Goodman* to the inside at the start of Heat 1B. Peabody and *Beacon Plumbing* had lane two and *Legend Yacht Transport* was in lane three. *Beacon* and *Goodman* were even at the end of lap one, then Peabody began to pull away and won by a roostertail over *Goodman*. His average speed for the three laps was 162.910 mph, which was the fastest heat on a 2.5-mile course in the history of the sport—beating a record set by Mark Tate

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Jimmy King in *Griggs presents Miss Ace Hardware* is side by side with Jamie Nilsen in *Legend Yacht Transport*.

in 1993. Nilsen and *Legend Yacht Transport* were two buoy lengths back at the finish.

That was a really good heat,” Peabody said afterward. “Me and Andrew had a great race there. It was fun being deck-to-deck with him but coming out with a win. I’m looking forward to what we’ve got for the rest of the weekend and hope to get the Beacon boats on the podium.”

With that, racing was concluded for Saturday. The draw for the first set of heats on Sunday placed the two *Beacon* boats, *Goodman*, and *Bucket List* in Heat 2A; *HomeStreet*, *Ace Hardware*, and *Legend Yacht Transport* in Heat 2B.

Sunday in Guntersville

The weather on Sunday was windy and cloudy, with a thunderstorm forecast for mid-afternoon. The crowd on the beach was anxious to see some racing, but local residents knew the thunderstorm warning was likely to prove true. Lake Guntersville was lumpy and grew progressively worse throughout the morning. The original schedule was compressed in an effort to complete the race before the thunderstorm was likely to arrive.

Heat 2A began at 8:45 a.m. Tate and *Goodman Real Estate* had lane one and led into the first turn. Peabody and *Beacon Plumbing* had lane two and was only a length behind as the boats started up the backstretch. Echols in *Bucket List*, running in lane three, settled into third place, while Kelly and *Beacon Electric* followed in fourth.

Tate and Peabody had a great duel for the lead until the final turn, when Peabody pressed *Beacon Plumbing* into the lead and won by two lengths. In the process, Peabody turned in a final lap of 164.597 mph, setting a competition lap record for the Lake Guntersville course, and again averaged over 160 mph for the heat.

Did *Miss Ace Hardware* have a realistic chance to win a heat? At the start of 2B, Nilsen and *Legend Yacht Transport* had the inside and led through the first turn. King had *Ace Hardware* right behind in lane two, while *Miss HomeStreet*, which had to start outside and five seconds back, trailed on the outside.

Jimmy King nibbled at Nilsen’s lead and pulled even in lap two. *Ace Hardware* surged ahead in turn one of lap three and held the lead to the checkered flag. *Legend* took second while Runne in *Miss HomeStreet* made no effort to challenge the leaders.

A few minutes after the heat came word from the tech truck that *Ace Hardware* was disqualified for dropping below 80 mph for more than five seconds before the start. That gave the heat win to Jamie Nilsen and *Legend Yacht Transport* and moved Runne and *HomeStreet* into second.

Making matters worse for *Ace Hardware*, when the boat returned to the pits, a seal in the engine had blown and the boat was full of oil. The boat was drawn into Heat 3A, but given the compressed schedule, there was no chance it could be made

Under golden skies cast by the approaching storm, the boats head for the starting line in the event’s final heat. From the left are Dylan Runne in *Miss HomeStreet*, Corey Peabody in *Beacon Plumbing*, and Andrew Tate in *Miss Goodman Real Estate*. Seconds later, Tate’s boat would ride up on the skid-fin spray from Peabody’s craft, roll over onto its top, and then be struck by *Bucket List Racing* coming from behind. The stopped the heat and the race.



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ready in time. Owner Ed Cooper was disgusted with the disqualification for violating the 80-mph rule, until a crew-member informed him the speedometer in the boat wasn't working and King had no way to know he was going too slowly.

The wind was picking up and buoys were blown out of position, so there was a brief delay while the course was re-set. The apex buoy of turn one had come loose and was blown onto rocks at the base of the causeway that bisects Lake Guntersville. While the buoy was being reattached to the marker, three boats that were drawn into Heat 3A left the pits. As they approached the course, they slowed, turned around, and returned to the pits.

A 30-minute lunch break was announced, in the hope weather conditions would improve when action resumed. One course boat came to the dock and two high-school-aged girls got out. They walked to a car and left. One of the girls was feeling seasick from rocking in the rough water and needed to go home.

The wind died down slightly during the lunch break and water conditions were better. However, there were indications that a thunderstorm was going to make a direct pass over the course a little later in the afternoon. Heat 3A, with *Miss HomeStreet*, *Beacon Electric*, and *Goodman Real Estate*, would start as soon as course personnel were in position.

The three drivers proved the old adage that no one is perfect; they all jumped the gun and had to run an extra lap. Tate and *Goodman* led wire-to-wire. Kelly challenged in *Beacon Electric* for two laps, then gave up the chase. Runne and *HomeStreet* trailed throughout. Following the heat, as Andrew Tate walked up the ramp from the dock, he was heard to mutter, "I did not jump the gun."

Nilsen grabbed lane one in *Legend Yacht Transport* at the start of Heat 3B. He was then quickly passed in the first turn by Peabody in *Beacon Plumbing*, which went on to win the heat easily. Nilsen and Echols in *Bucket List* had a duel for second until the backstretch of lap three,

S T A T B O X

Guntersville Lake Hydrofest - Southern Cup **Guntersville, Alabama; June 24-25, 2023** **2.5-mile course on Guntersville Lake; 22.5-mile race (shortened)**

QUALIFYING: (1) U-40 *Bucket List Racing* (#0721), Dustin Echols, 171.294, 100 points; (2) U-9 *Beacon Plumbing* (#92102), Corey Peabody, 167.320, 80; (3) U-91 *Miss Goodman Real Estate* (#0706), Andrew Tate, 167.078, 70; (4) U-1 *Miss HomeStreet* (#1801), Dylan Runne, 166.740, 60; (5) U-8 *Beacon Electric* (#1496), J. Michael Kelly, 165.639, 50; (6) U-11 *Legend Yacht Transport* (#0925), Jamie Nilsen, 164.977, 40; (7) U-3 *Griggs presents Miss Ace Hardware* (#0203), Jimmy King, 159.945, 30; U-440 *Boitano Homes* (#1218), Brent Hall, 148.536, 30 boat points, 0 driver points, unqualified driver).

HEAT 1A: (1) *Beacon Electric*, 152.651, 400 points, 450 cumulative points; (2) *Griggs presents Miss Ace Hardware*, 150.763, 300, 330; (3) *Miss HomeStreet*, 143.715, 225, 285; (4) *Bucket List Racing*, 114.604, 169, 269. FAST LAP: (2) *Bucket List Racing*, 163.434.

HEAT 1B: (1) *Beacon Plumbing*, 162.910, 400, 480; (2) *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 160.956, 300, 370; (3) *Legend Yacht Transport*, 151.781, 225, 265; *Boitano Homes*, DNS – unqualified driver, 0, 30. FAST LAP: (2) *Beacon Plumbing*, 163.710.

HEAT 2A: (1) *Beacon Plumbing*, 160.881, 400, 880; (2) *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 160.181, 300, 670; (3) *Bucket List Racing*, 155.868, 225, 494; (4) *Beacon Electric*, 148.741, 169, 619. FAST LAP: (3) *Beacon Plumbing*, 164.597.

HEAT 2B: (1) *Legend Yacht Transport*, 150.632, 400, 665; (2) *Miss HomeStreet*, 144.966, 300, 585; *Griggs presents Miss Ace Hardware*, DSQ (80-mph violation prior to the start), 0, 330. FAST LAP: (2) *Legend Yacht Transport*, 153.314.

HEAT 3A: (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 115.553 (penalized one lap for jumping the gun), 400, 1070; (2) *Beacon Electric*, 114.094 (penalized one lap for jumping the gun), 300, 919; (3) *Miss HomeStreet*, 110.780 (penalized one lap for jumping the gun), 225, 810. FAST LAP: (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 155.126.

HEAT 3B: (1) *Beacon Plumbing*, 158.132, 400, 1280; (2) *Legend Yacht Transport*, 155.420, 300, 965; (3) *Bucket List Racing*, 152.866, 225, 719. FAST LAP: (2) *Beacon Plumbing*, 159.988

FINAL HEAT: Canceled because of an approaching thunderstorm. *Miss Goodman Real Estate* flipped in the first running delaying the final heat.

FINAL STANDINGS (based on preliminary heat points): (1) U-9 *Beacon Plumbing*, 1280 points; (2) U-9 *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 1070; (3) U-11 *Legend Yacht Transport*, 965; (4) U-8 *Beacon Electric*, 919; (5) U-1 *Miss HomeStreet*, 810; (6) U-40 *Bucket List Racing*, 719; (7) U-3 *Griggs presents Miss Ace Hardware*, 330; (8) *Boitano Homes*, 30.

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when the orange *Bucket List* took a big bounce. That incident allowed Nilsen to put enough distance on Echols to secure second.

The final heat would include the top five boats on the front line, based on accumulated points, plus the sixth boat,

Bucket List, as a trailer. There was a sense of urgency to run the final heat before the approaching thunderclouds arrived. Spectators on the beach could be seen preparing to make a quick dash for their shuttle buses as soon as the heat was concluded. The wind was coming up again.

There was just enough time to re-fuel the boats and make any last-minute changes before the countdown began. All six boats were on the course as the green flag went up. Kelly in *Beacon Electric* made a move to get lane one. He was a bit too anxious and had to back down on the way to the starting line. He pushed the throttle a moment too soon and jumped the gun. While he was accelerating, the other boats on the front line all passed him.

Nilsen and *Legend Yacht Transport* had the inside as the field entered the first turn. Tate and *Goodman* were in lane two, Peabody and *Beacon Plumbing* were in lane three and powering through the turn. *Goodman's* lane then began to shrink and Tate turned slightly to the right to avoid *Legend's* roostertail. He hit *Beacon Plumbing's* skid fin spray, rode over it, and landed upside down, directly in front of the oncoming *Bucket List*.

With nowhere to go, Echols hit the transom of *Goodman*, bent its rudder forward, and tore off the boat's right shoe. The race was immediately stopped. Neither driver was injured, but both boats sustained damage.

Bucket List had a hole in the tip of its left sponson and damage to the leading edge of its skid fin. The sponson filled with water as the boat was towed back to the pits. The crane was ready when *Bucket List* reached the dock and lifted the boat just enough to set it gently across the dock. Owner Kelly Stocklin and a crew-member both used hand pumps to feverishly pump water from the left sponson.

Just as they finished, the storm arrived. The boat was set on its trailer as the skies opened up and thunder rolled. *Goodman Real Estate*, meanwhile, was still on the course, upside down, at the site where the accident happened. People in the pits sought shelter wherever they could find it. Ten minutes into the deluge, power in the H1 tech truck and elsewhere in the pits went out. There would be no re-run of the final heat. The finish order was based on accumulated points



Craig Fjarlie

Patrol-boat crews attending to the overturned *Miss Goodman Real Estate*.

through Heat 3B.

First place belonged to Corey Peabody and *Beacon Plumbing*, second went to Andrew Tate and *Goodman Real Estate*, and third place was earned by Jamie Nilsen and *Legend Yacht Transport*. J. Michael Kelly in *Beacon Electric* was fourth, Dylan Runne drove *Miss HomeStreet* to fifth in his rookie race, and Dustin Echols was awarded sixth in *Bucket List*.

About 20 minutes after the thunderstorm began, there was a break in the rain and people who had sought available shelter were able to hurry to the shuttle buses and leave the race site. A course patrol boat began to slowly tow *Goodman Real Estate* to the pits.

MADISON:

When the fleet moved on to Madison, it was determined that *Goodman Real Estate* would have to return to Seattle for repairs. That meant Madison would have only five boats. Kelly Stocklin spent hours grinding on the skid fin of *Bucket List*, repairing the damaged leading edge.

Friday was a pleasant day—warm and no rain. Unfortunately, the race committee was slow setting buoys and having patrol boats in position, so it was after 1 p.m. before testing could begin. The first boat to take the course was *Miss*

HomeStreet. Dylan Runne ran several laps; his best speed was 149.152 mph. He was followed by *Beacon Plumbing*. Corey Peabody demonstrated he had no lingering concerns about his 2022 flip. His fastest lap was 152.101 mph. Peabody's teammate, J. Michael Kelly, was next on the course. *Beacon Electric* turned a lap of 150.748 mph. Jamie Nilsen ran three laps with *Legend Yacht Transport*, his fastest being 149.385 mph. The last boat to run during the testing period was *Bucket List*. Dustin Echols had a lap of 151.105 mph.

Qualifying began at 3 p.m. First on the ladder was *Bucket List*. Echols's first lap was his fastest at 155.671 mph. *HomeStreet* was the next to run but Runne was a bit off the pace with a best lap of 153.149 mph. *Beacon Electric* followed with a best average of 153.149 mph. *Legend Yacht Transport* tried to crack 150 mph, but fell just shy with a best lap of 149.422 mph. *Beacon Plumbing* was the last boat to run in the first qualifying round with a fast lap of 154.961 mph. *HomeStreet* made a second run and raised its speed to 154.336 mph. *Beacon Electric* also made a second run and increased its qualifying speed to 154.921 mph. The last boat to run was *Beacon Plumbing* with a mark of 156.086 mph, making it the top qualifier.

With qualifying finished, the H1 Board of Directors had to hold a special meeting to approve a format change.

It was agreed that there would be five preliminary heats. Each boat would run four times and have one bye heat. Five ping pong balls, numbered one through five, were placed in a bucket. Each driver would draw one ball. The number on the ball would determine which heat would be that driver's bye heat. Corey Peabody drew number one, which meant *Beacon Plumbing* would have the first bye.

Saturday in Madison

The pleasant Friday evening turned nasty in the middle of the night. At 3:45 a.m., a violent thunderstorm with pounding rain arrived in town. The original schedule had an hour of testing on Saturday starting at nine o'clock. At 8 a.m., there was rain with occasional lightning strikes, and there was no activity in the pits. All the cranes had their booms lowered, to help prevent them from being hit by lightning. The official tower was without power, and all equipment was covered. Most concession stalls were closed and covered. Only a handful of spectators braved the elements.

At 9:45 a.m., a minivan with members of the local American Legion Post pulled up. They had come for the opening ceremonies. The men emerged from



Chris Denstow



Craig Fjantle



Chris Denstow

TOP: Dylan Runne waves to the hometown crowd during the annual parade on Friday night. **MIDDLE:** Activity at the dock. **ABOVE:** Dustin Echols, Corey Peabody, and J. Michael Kelly in a run to the starting line.

STATBOX

Bob Hughes Memorial Madison Regatta Indiana Governor's Cup

Madison, Indiana; June 30-July 2, 2023

2.5-mile course on the Ohio River; 22.5 miles (shortened race)

QUALIFYING: (1) U-9 *Beacon Plumbing* (#92102), Corey Peabody, 156.006, 100 points; (2) U-40 *Bucket List Racing* (#0721), Dustin Echols, 155.671, 80; (3) U-8 *Beacon Electric* (#1496), J. Michael Kelly, 154.921, 70; (4) U-1 *Miss HomeStreet* (#1801), Dylan Runne, 154.336, 60; (5) U-11 *Legend Yacht Transport* (#0925), Jamie Nilsen, 149.422, 50.

HEAT 1: (1) *Legend Yacht Transport*, 134.595, 400, 450; (2) *Bucket List Racing*, 130.289, 300, 380; (3) *Beacon Electric*, 128.110, 225, 295; (4) *Miss HomeStreet*, 127.882, 169, 229. FAST LAP: (1) *Legend Yacht Transport*, 137.789

HEAT 2: (1) *Beacon Plumbing*, 141.068, 400, 500; (2) *Beacon Electric*, 140.029, 300, 595; (3) *Miss HomeStreet*, 137.668, 225, 454 (4) *Bucket List Racing*, 137.231, 169, 549. FAST LAP: (1) *Beacon Plumbing*, 143.655.

HEAT 3: (1) *Beacon Electric*, 141.367, 400, 995; (2) *Legend Yacht Transport*, 95.296 (penalized one lap for jumping the gun), 300, 750; (3) *Bucket List Racing*, 91.285 (penalized one lap for encroachment prior to the start), 225, 774; *Beacon Plumbing*, DNF – lost steering and broken prop strut, 0, 500. FAST LAP: (1) *Beacon Electric*, 145.649.

HEAT 4: (1) *Beacon Electric*, 140.255, 400, 1395; (2) *Legend Yacht Transport*, 124.685, 300, 1050; *Miss HomeStreet*, DNF – went outside outer course buoy, 0, 454; *Beacon Plumbing*, DNS – damaged strut, 0, 500. FAST LAP: (2) *Beacon Electric*, 143.157.

HEAT 5: (1) *Miss HomeStreet*, 144.797, 400, 854; (2) *Legend Yacht Transport*, 125.681, 300, 1350; (3) *Bucket List Racing*, 86.872 (penalized one lap for jumping the gun), 225, 999, *Beacon Plumbing*, W/D – damaged strut, 0, 500. FAST LAP: (2) *Miss HomeStreet*, 148.116.

FINAL HEAT: *Bucket List Racing* flipped on the front straightaway after the start. The final heat was canceled because of inclement weather.

FINAL STANDINGS (based on preliminary heat points): (1) *Beacon Electric*, 1395; (2) *Legend Yacht Transport*, 1050; (3) *Bucket List Racing*, 999; (4) *Miss HomeStreet*, 854; (5) *Beacon Plumbing*, 500.

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the minivan and looked around and found the place nearly deserted. One man lit a cigarette and they talked while he smoked, and when he finished, they all climbed back into the minivan and drove away.

The rain eased, power to the official tower was restored, and a revised schedule was announced. There would be two heats on Saturday, three heats on Sunday plus the winner-take-all final. It was

mid-afternoon when the boats in Heat 1 left the pits. They made one warm-up lap when the black flag was displayed. The buoys were out of position and needed to be re-set. *Miss HomeStreet*, *Bucket List*, *Legend Yacht Transport*, and *Beacon Electric* returned to the pits.

It was late afternoon when the course was finally ready. The four boats left the pits and dived for lanes. At the start, Nilsen and *Legend Yacht Transport*

had lane one and led into the first turn. Nilsen used the inside to his advantage and won the heat without a serious challenge.

The race for second was another matter. Echols in *Bucket List* and Kelly in *Beacon Electric* duelled for a lap, but in the first turn of lap two *Beacon Electric* stuffed and bounced wildly. *Bucket List* pulled away to take second. *Beacon Electric* held on to finish third, while *Miss HomeStreet* was fourth, never being in contention. Following the heat, it was discovered that *Beacon Electric* had a broken wing.

Heat 2 had all the makings for a great race. Both *Beacon* boats were in it, in addition to *Bucket List* and *HomeStreet*. *Bucket List* was late leaving the pits, and the three other boats already had lanes chosen when Echols finally came on the course. As a result, he was relegated to the outside. Kelly and *Beacon Electric* had lane one, Peabody and *Beacon Plumbing* started in lane two, and Runne and *HomeStreet* were in lane three. Peabody took the lead in the first turn and powered up the backstretch while Kelly and *Beacon Electric* gave chase for two laps before settling for second. Echols challenged *HomeStreet* for a lap and-a-half, but *Bucket List* then slowed and the battle was over.

Sunday in Madison

The weather on Sunday morning was a bit more promising than it had been on Saturday, but forecasters said there was a possibility that a thunderstorm could hit at about 4 p.m. The schedule was set so the race would be over before the storm would arrive. The opening ceremony was planned for 9:30 a.m., and it went without a hitch. Heat 3 was set for 10 o'clock, but weather issues and delays having the course ready pushed the start to 1 p.m. By that time, there was a growing sense of urgency to finish the race before weather could disrupt the event.

The two *Beacon* boats were in Heat 3, along with *Legend Yacht Transport* and



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Bucket List. During the five-minute-gun period, Echols in *Bucket List* was attempting to maintain a lane between the two *Beacon* boats as they headed into the first turn. The *Beacon* boats then moved close together and *Bucket List* was drenched by their roostertails. Officials ruled *Bucket List* was guilty of encroachment for trying to make a lane where one didn't exist and was assessed a one-lap penalty.

At the start, Nilsen had the inside in *Legend Yacht Transport* and led into the first turn. But,

unfortunately, Nilsen had jumped the gun and earned a one-lap penalty. In the first turn, *Beacon Plumbing* spun out violently. Peabody had tried to turn the steering wheel but the quick-connect coupler was broken and the boat wouldn't turn. During the spin, the strut broke off.

The field quickly strung out. *Beacon Electric* went on to take the checkered flag, followed by *Legend* and *Bucket List*. The damaged *Beacon Plumbing* was withdrawn from the remainder of the race.

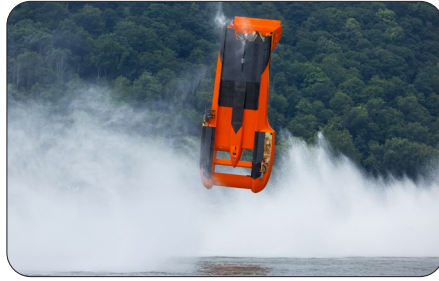
The afternoon was beginning to slip away when the green flag for Heat 4 went up at 3 p.m. With *Beacon Plumbing* gone, there were only three boats in the heat: *Miss HomeStreet*, *Beacon Electric*, and *Legend Yacht Transport*.

Again, Jamie Nilsen secured the inside lane. J. Michael Kelly had lane two, and Dylan Runne was outside. Nilsen was passed by the others in the first turn and the leaders had a duel up the backstretch. In the first turn of lap two, *Beacon Electric* nearly spun out, going sponson-to-sponson. Kelly regained control and went on to win the heat. *HomeStreet* was a length behind, while *Legend* trailed. Following the heat came the announcement that *HomeStreet* was disqualified for going outside the course markers, which gave second place to *Legend Yacht Transport*.

Heat 5 began at 4 p.m. There were occasional drops of rain, but the potential thunderstorm appeared to be skirting Madison. The heat was another three-boat affair. Nilsen and *Legend* again had lane one, Echols and *Bucket List* were in lane

ABOVE: Three boats emerge from the first turn and head down the backstretch. From the left, Dylan Runne in *Miss HomeStreet*, J. Michael Kelly in *Beacon Electric*, and Jamie Nilsen in *Legend Yacht Transport*.

LEFT: An overhead shot of the race winner, *Beacon Electric*.



Photos by Chris Denslow

The U-40 *Bucket List Racing* goes end over end during the final heat at Madison. Driver Dustin Echols was not seriously injured.

two, with Runne and *HomeStreet* in lane three. *Bucket List* jumped the gun and although it led up the backstretch, it was for naught, given the one-lap penalty. In turn one of lap two, *Bucket List* lost power and went dead in the water. *HomeStreet* went by and continued on to victory, to the cheers of the partisan Madison crowd. *Legend* took second, while *Bucket List* restarted and finished third.

The final heat would have four boats, all starting on the front line. The water was better than it had been earlier in the day, but officials kept a wary eye on the cloudy sky. At the start, all four boats hit the line together. There was no clear leader as they powered through the first turn and started up the backstretch. People wondered, was Dylan Runne going to win his first race? Would J. Michael Kelly use his experience on the tough Ohio River to give Strong Racing its second win of the season? *Legend* had won a heat

on Saturday, could Nilsen do it again?

Bucket List was outside, but Echols was keeping up with his rivals. The four boats came down the front straightaway in what was shaping up to be the best heat of the weekend. Just as they crossed the start-finish line at the end of lap one, everything changed. *Bucket List* took off, went around backwards in mid-air, and came to rest right-side up. Red flags instantly went up. Just like Guntersville, the final heat had to be stopped because of an accident.

Rescue personnel reached Echols in a few seconds. He was conscious and talking, but was taken to Kings Daughters Hospital to be examined, as a precaution. The three other boats returned to the pits to be refueled in anticipation of a restart. A patrol boat had a tow rope on *Bucket List*. Initially, an announcement was made that the final heat would be re-run. *HomeStreet* and *Beacon Electric* went

back in the water. Slings were on *Legend Yacht Transport*, but it was still on the trailer.

Light rain was beginning to fall. The crane operator was instructed, “Hold the 11 for two minutes.” Officials checked water conditions and the sky, then the announcement came: “Start picking up buoys, we’re done.” *HomeStreet* and *Beacon Electric* went back on their trailers, as rain continued to fall.

Bucket List had a crack in the after-plane, and it was missing the non-trip on the right sponson. The extent of the damage would be more thoroughly examined when the boat was back at its shop. Final standings were determined by total points at the conclusion of Heat 5. That gave the win to J. Michael Kelly and *Beacon Electric*.

“I’m thrilled to get the win overall for the weekend,” Kelly said. “It was a much needed victory for myself and the team, especially for me—started off slow and got that confidence back. I’m just thankful that we ended on a good note and now we can look forward to going to the Tri-Cities and have some fun.”

Second went to Jamie Nilsen and *Legend Yacht Transport*, while third was awarded to Dustin Echols and *Bucket List*.

Commenting on water conditions, Kelly remarked, “It wasn’t too bad for all four of us to deal with. For all of us to run side-by-side, it was going to be a barn burner of a heat.” Nilsen was pleased with second place, the best finish of his career. “We’re leaving here with a boat in one piece, which is more than some people can say.”

Guntersville and Madison offered some of the worst weather that unlimited racing has had to cope with in recent memory. Boats were damaged, spectators were soaked, and schedules were revised repeatedly. Still, given everything nature could produce, both sites survived and will proceed with hopes for better conditions next year. ❖

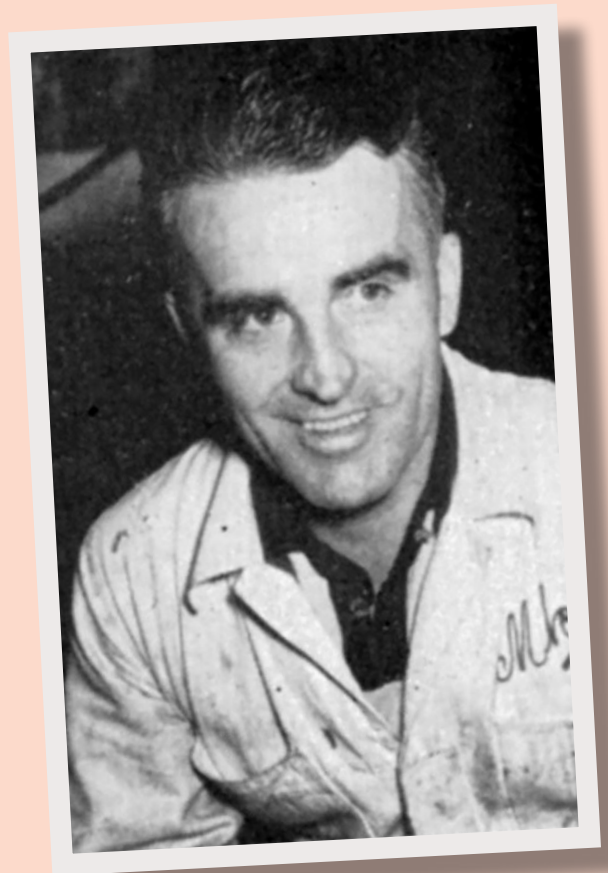
FROM THE UNJ VAULT:

A conversation with Mike Welsch

With the Gold Cup coming to Lake Washington this month for the first time in 38 years, we thought it might be a good opportunity to tell the story of how the Gold Cup race first came to Seattle. And, there's no better person to tell that story than the man who was the crew chief of the boat that in 1950 set a world straightaway speed record then went to Detroit, won that prestigious event, and brought it to the Pacific Northwest the following year.

Leonard "Mike" Welsch began his career in Unlimited hydroplane racing in 1949 when he became associated with a strange looking boat named *Slo-mo-shun IV* that had recently been launched in Seattle. The craft was owned by a local Chrysler dealer named Stan Sayres, it was designed by Ted Jones, and built by an expert craftsman named Anchor Jensen.

Welsch became the crew chief of the team and remained in that position until a fateful day in 1956 when the boat crashed on the Detroit River. In the years in between, he guided the "Grand Old Lady" to two world straightaway speed records, three Gold Cup victories, and a Harmsworth Trophy. He and the team also captured the hearts of Seattle-area residents and made the sport the biggest



event in town throughout the 1950s and into the early '60s.

After his time with the *Slo-mo* race team, he then became a central figure in another beloved hydroplane of that time: *Hawaii Ka'i III*. During his time with the "Pink Lady," the boat won eight race victories as well as the 1957 national championship. The boat also set a mile straightaway speed record and, in the process, exceeded 200 mph during one leg of a run through a kilometer course.

When Mike Welsch wasn't working on hydroplanes, he was employed by The Boeing Company and eventually became operations manager for the program that retrofitted a 747 to carry the Space Shuttle. In December 1979, a short time after his retirement from the company, he agreed to sit down with *Unlimited NewsJournal* reporters David Greene and E.K. Muller at his home in West Seattle. The following is the result. The interview was originally published in the *NewsJournal* in January and February 1980.

The interview will be provided to you in two parts. In this segment, Welsch discusses the process of getting the *Slo-mo* team organized, the victory at the 1950 Gold Cup in Detroit, the first four Gold Cups held in Seattle, and more.

UNJ: When and how did you first become aware of the boat racing, particularly for the Gold Cup?

Welsch: Ted Jones and I worked together at Boeing. He told me that he had a boat that could go 120 or better and he needed a rider in the boat to read instruments. This was in 1949. We went out to the Jensen boathouse and from there we were towed out to Lake Washington where we made a few runs. After I got back on shore, I said to myself, "Who wants to ride in these monsters?"

How did Stan Sayers come to invite you to work on the crew?

Stan came to me and said, "There is no money involved, but we would like to have you around to work on the crew." I said that I would have to think about it and talk to my wife about it because I realized it would be very time consuming. She said that it was okay if that was what I wanted to do for a hobby.

Could you give us the background as to when and how the decision was made to build *Slo-mo-shun IV*?

Stan was interested in going fast. So, he talked to Ted Jones, who he had met while refining the *Slo-mo-shun III*, about building an Unlimited. Ted and Stan decided to hire Anchor Jensen, who was interested in the project, to build the hull.

Stan wanted Campbell's record so the boat was originally built and designed for straightaway runs only. After Stan found out how well the boat was running, he decided to go to Detroit to try and capture the Gold Cup. After we first



Mary Randlett

Shortly after the boat was launched in 1949, *Slo-mo-shun IV* sits at a dock at Jensen Motor Boat, where the craft was built. Designer Ted Jones is sitting with his feet in the cockpit.

launched her the *Slo-mo* was capable of 190 mph. However, it took you awhile to get there. The reason was that we did not have the right combination of a gearbox and propeller.

How did you come to be named crew chief of *Slo-mo-shun IV*?

Stan came to me and said, “How would you like to be crew chief?” I said, “Oh, I don’t have the time. You have some guys here who have been on it longer than I have.” But Stan kept on insisting. So, finally I agreed to do it. Stan then went and checked it out with the rest of the guys and they said okay.

Which of your past work experiences did you consider particularly helpful in being *Slo-mo* crew chief?

I began working for Boeing in 1941 and after nine months as an hourly worker, I was advanced into management in preflight final assembly. As a result of this, I had some management experience and also some experience with airplane engines. The only thing I really didn’t know about was boats. I also knew nothing of the Allison engine, per se, other than what I studied out of a book. I even went to night school to learn about engines.

How was the rest of the crew selected? Were there any specific criteria?

Yes. A crew member had to be an asset and work for nothing. The way we worked it, he would have a probationary period to determine whether he could get along with the rest of the crew. And, if he couldn’t, he would be gone.

Were the crew members assigned specific individual responsibilities or were the various work activities a group responsibility?

They were assigned specific responsibilities. For example, when we were building engines, everyone did a specific thing. Someone would take the blowers. Others would be assigned to the crankshaft, etc. You always knew who would be doing what. We always had check lists. When someone did something, somebody else checked it. In other words one



Mary Randlett



Kent Hitchcock



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

TOP: *Slo-mo-shun IV* speeds across Lake Washington during its first test run. The boat’s tail has yet to be installed. **MIDDLE:** The hydroplane as it appeared when it set the world straightaway speed record in June 1950. **ABOVE:** Returning to the boathouse after the successful record run. Stan Sayres has his hands over his ears. Ted Jones is standing behind him



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Slo-mo IV careens across the Detroit River during the 1950 Silver Cup.

guy would be prime and the other guy would be secondary. So, when you got time and your prime job was done, then you did your secondary job, which was to check somebody else's work. Everyone had a list and you signed it off.

When the *Four* was launched in the fall of 1949, were there any problems with the construction or design?

The boat was good from the beginning. We just made refinements to the sponsons to make it ride cleaner. We also modified the steering and changed the rudder location. However, after the first Gold Cup, the boat came apart a little because of rough water and we had to strengthen it, especially in the areas of the engine stringers and deck.

How was the decision made to use Allison power other than the Rolls Merlin?

The Allison was the first thing readily available in the Seattle area. We didn't know much about the Rolls until Lou Fageol got us thinking about them. This was about 1953.

What was the reaction in Seattle and the Northwest when the new record of 160 mph was announced in June 1950?

At the time, not many people knew what was going on. In fact, there were only a few people out at the lake when we set the record. Seattle really wasn't aware of what Stan Sayers had done until later.

How was it decided to have Stan Sayers drive in the mile trials?

That did create little controversy. Ted really wanted to drive the boat in the mile trial. But it

was agreed that Stan had paid for the boat, and he was going to drive.

How did you become riding mechanic for the Gold Cup and then for the Harmsworth Trophy?

Some of this was being a novice really. There were two seats in the boat and so we figured we would have a riding mechanic. I wanted to do it, so Stan said, "Be my guest." I would never do it again. No way. If you can't have the wheel, don't get in the boat.

Was the plan to just run in the Gold Cup or was there a racing schedule contemplated?

We had no plan for the entire year. Stan, encouraged by the mile trial, was going to go back and see what he could do in competition with the boat. He had no idea what it would be like. It was just a one-shot deal with no intentions of going any further. Of course, after he won the Gold Cup, he became interested in the Harmsworth.

Did you have any interest in becoming the 1950 National High-Point Champion?

We thought about it. The thing was that we didn't have the crew that could be at all those races. In addition, Stan didn't have the money to put us at all the races.

When you arrived at Detroit for the 1950 Gold Cup, what was the reaction to the *Slo-mo-shun IV*?

It was kind of a mixed reaction. They knew we were fast on the straightaway, but we were called the "worm in the turn." Frankly, those old Ventnor V-bottom hulls were just better through the turn. You could take those boats like *Sweetie* and *Pepsi* and bank them around the turns.

At the time, which boats did you consider your major competition?

We were concerned about *My Sweetie* and the fact that Lou Fageol was available to drive her. You see, Stan, Ted, and Anchor had been back there in 1949 and watched the races. And, they decided who were the better drivers, like the Bill Cantrells, the Lou Fageols, and the Danny Fosters. They weren't looking at the boats. They were more just looking at the drivers.

What was your impression of the *Miss Pepsi*, which had just been launched?

At that time the *Pepsi* was not getting much horsepower per pound, even with the two engines. But it could turn and that was the thing that concerned us. The three-pointers just kept sliding out in the turns and hooking, so the V-bottom hulls really had an advantage here.

Were you confident that you could win the Gold Cup?

Yes. But we were just kind of blasé about it. We didn't know whether we would last mechanically or even whether the boat would take that rough river. And the boat took a beating in a lot of spots, and it cracked. But still we just kind of felt we could beat them.

When the *Slo-mo* lapped *My Sweetie* to win Heat 1, did you feel you had the race in hand or did you attribute the



The winners of the 1950 Harmsworth Trophy. From the left, Ted Jones, Mike Welsch, Lou Fageol, Stan Sayres, and the Harmsworth official presenting the trophy.

Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

***Sweetie's* performance to Bill Cantrell's injuries, which had been sustained several days previous?**

We figured we had the race in hand. We had the acceleration coming off the exit pin. There was no way that anyone could touch us, and we also had the chute speed. The only thing was that we were having trouble setting up for the turns in that lumpy river water.

In Heat 2 of the 1950 Gold Cup, *My Sweetie* increased her lead over the *Slo-mo* from seven seconds to 24 seconds in lap nine before going dead in the water. Was there any particular reason for this

turnabout from Heat-1?

The engine was loose in the boat because of the beating we had taken in the first heat and Ted Jones, who was driving, did back off because of it. But *Sweetie* really beat us in that second heat. We got a bad start, and we couldn't have caught him. The difference was that Lou Fageol was driving the *Sweetie* at the time. I could tell that he was going to burn up an engine because I could smell the oil burning. So, I kept telling Ted to keep on his tail until he blew, and he did.

Lou had replaced Bill Cantrell in the *My Sweetie* cockpit for the second heat. As you noted earlier, Cantrell had been badly bruised while testing *Delphine X* about three days before the race and had to be helped from the *Sweetie* cockpit after the first heat.

Even though the *Slo-mo* won the Gold Cup, *My Sweetie* had the fastest lap at 86 mph and potentially the fastest heat at 82 mph for nine laps. Did this in any way cause you to modify the *Slo-mo's* competitive set-up?

We realized we had to do something with the skid fin because we were doing nothing but sliding out. We did change that. We added a longer and deeper skid fin to make us turn better. In fact, it was twice as long as the original



Slo-mo-shun IV (top) and her new sister *Slo-mo-shun V* in 1951.

Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

skid fin.

After the race were there any converts to the three-point, prop-rider design, particularly among the tail-dragging three-pointers in the race?

After they saw us run, they were pretty concerned about our type of three-pointer. You never saw so many scales and measurements in your life. Everyone wanted to measure the boat. The thing they were really interested in was where the sponsons were in relation to the center of gravity of the boat. They wanted to know what made it ride the way it did.

After the Gold Cup victory, was there any thought given to entering the Detroit Memorial the next weekend or the August races on the Eastern Seaboard?

No. The next thing that concerned us after the Gold Cup was the Harmsworth Trophy. The Harmsworth was international, and Stan wanted to have it for that reason. But it was not as important to us as the Gold Cup.

What was the reaction to the *Slo-mo* victory in the 1950 Gold Cup after you returned to Seattle?

It was fantastic. That was part of the enjoyment of working on the boat because of the way the public was behind you—especially the little kids five or six years old. That was really something—



Stan Sayres



Slo-mo-shun IV during early tests in 1952. A trim tab with a square top has been added to the tail.

Courtesy of Jensen Motor Boat

the reaction of the city. That made working for nothing fun. It was a lot of self-satisfaction, really.

How did Lou Fageol come to replace Ted Jones as *Slo-mo* driver for the Harmsworth Trophy Race?

Lou was a friend of the Chrysler people in Detroit, who gave us a lot of help because, of course, Stan was their Seattle dealer. In fact, they were kind of glad we came back there because they felt that motor-boat racing needed some shaking up. Well, anyway, they recommended him. Stan had met him and was impressed so he got the job. Ted [Jones], as you know, had broken his hand when he slapped Joe Schobert on the back a few days before the race.

The Harmsworth was run over a five-nautical-mile course rather than the three-mile Gold Cup course. Did this cause you any particular problems?

Yes. That big course took us up into Lake St. Clair and there were waves off those ships up there that were six to eight feet deep. We just rode over the top of them. Lou [Fageol] just wouldn't back off, even though we were far ahead. I have never seen worse water anywhere.

After *Slo-mo-shun IV* completely dominated the field in the Harmsworth Trophy, were there any adherents left to

the *My Sweetie* design?

Yes. Horace Dodge built a few V-bottom hulls after that. He didn't give up. The Dossins were also running that kind of a boat. They were good mechanics and real fine people. Of course, Gar Wood didn't want to give up on the V-type hulls either.

After *Slo-mo-shun IV* won the first heat of the Silver Cup, she was forced to drop out. Why didn't she run the rest of the race?

We just fried the engine, and we didn't have any other engines to run.

***Miss Pepsi* set a lap record of 107.654 in the Silver Cup as opposed to the *Slo-mo's* 106 175. What was the *Slo-mo* camp's reaction to the new Detroit sensation?**

We were concerned about it because it was a turning boat. Chuck Thompson was driving it and there wasn't a harder driver. He and Lou Fageol were the hardest drivers I have ever known.

What was your impression of the hydro fans of Detroit in comparison to those of Seattle?

The enthusiasm in Detroit was terrific. There were people on the Bell Isle Bridge and also on the island. It was a big turnout. There were a lot of people. But the Gold Cup drew more because it was

on the weekend. The Harmsworth was run partly during the week. Those big crowds are kind of a culture thing there. It is part of Detroit.

When was the decision made to build *Slo-mo V*? What events led to this decision?

When Stan came back from the East, he wanted something a little faster and lighter. He also wanted a boat that would turn better than *Slo-mo IV*. Ted [Jones] decided that if he changed the crown on the boat, he could get more lift out of it and make it faster on the straightaway. The basic decision was made to build a competition boat and maybe just keep the *Four* for straightaway runs.

How much did the *Five* cost and did this represent a major expenditure for Sayers?

The *Five* cost about \$12,000. At the time, Stan's outlay for the boat was not that much since the crew was voluntary and we got our gearboxes, which ran about \$2,000, free from Western Gear because they liked the publicity. And, of course on the engines, the biggest cost was converting them. We bought engines for \$100 or even less. Shoot, we picked up some engines from Alaska for \$45 a piece.

Aside from the *Slo-mo V*, the two major new boats for 1951 were the

[Dan] Arena-designed *Gale II* and the Cantrell-designed *Hornet*. Both were prop-riders. Did the *Slo-mo* team think they presented any particular problem?

The only one that we were really concerned about was the *Gale* boat. Ted was impressed by the non-trip area of the hull and the improvement it brought about in the turning ability of the boat. But at the time they just didn't have the equipment we had.

Were there any other boats that caused you any particular concern in approaching the 1951 Gold Cup?

Well, as I mentioned before, the *Miss Pepsi* always had our attention.

When *Slo-mo V* was launched in July 1951, did the boat have any particular problems?

It was fascinating. The *Five* was launched about three weeks before the race and we had no problems. We didn't change anything. It was great right out of the box.

In your opinion, is there any magic formula in making a boat come out like this?

Truthfully, the designer and the builder have to stay close together. The key to the thing is to get the weight distribution in that hull from the sponsons to the strut correct. In the three-point suspension, that weight distribution has

got to be on the money. The reason the designer and the builder have to stay together is that sometimes the builder wants to put more weight into the boat and then you have to compensate in your design as to where the center of gravity should be. Otherwise, you have to start shifting the batteries, the fuel tanks, and even the engine to get the weight distribution right.

How was the decision made to assign you as crew chief to the *Slo-mo IV* and Elmer Linenschmidt to the *Slo-mo V*?

I had been on the *Four* and I was always leery of the *Five*. I felt that she was too flighty. Stan and I always did the off-season testing and one day I had the *Five* up to 160 mph and she got airborne. I was never so scared in my life.

Did the fact that *Miss Pepsi* qualified nine mph faster than either *Slo-mo* for the 1951 Gold Cup cause you any particular concern?

No. And for one reason. We were aware of the fact that the *Pepsi* was throwing oil at the rate of about 40 gallons a heat. We also knew the reason why it was doing it. It was because their breather system was hooked up wrong and it was just sucking the oil right out of the tank. The way we discovered it was that you could see an oil slick running behind the *Miss Pepsi*. And for this reason, we knew he would never last a heat.

Was there any particular strategy for the race that *Slo-mo V* try to run in front and *Slo-mo IV* merely try to finish?

Stan's approach to the race was that if the two boats could stay together, the other boats would have to go around both of them. And he never told which driver to be first or which to be second.

What was your impression of the capabilities of the two hulls after the conclusion of the Seafair Trophy Race, which in effect was match race for the two boats? [The race took place one week after the 1951 Gold Cup.]

A lot depends on the drivers. But I just felt that *Five* was faster out of the turns. Once she came out of the turn,



The Grand Old Lady with its set-up for the 1952 straightaway record attempt. An air scoop has been added to the nose cowling.

Courtesy of Jensen Motor Boat

Taggart Family Collection



Bob Carver Photos



Taggart Family Collection



TOP: Joe Taggart, Stan Sayres, and Lou Fageol. **MIDDLE:** *Slo-mo IV* in 1953 with a new fiberglass tail that was intended to improve the boat's handling down the straightaways. **ABOVE:** The *Slo-mo* team gathers on the deck of *Slo-mo V*. From the left, Don Ibsen, Marsh McCann, Mike Welsch, Elmer Linenschmidt, Martin Headman, Wes Keisling, George McKernan, Joe Schobert, Stan Sayres, and Joe Taggart in the cockpit.

Five could get up and clean out faster than *Four*. *Slo-mo IV* had a tendency to stick in the turn. You had to turn *Four* right to break it loose before you could get going. *Five* didn't have this tendency. It had some dihedral in the side that we didn't have in the *Four* until later when we added the bustle.

What caused you to attempt to raise the world record in July 1952? Were there any refinements to the design of *Slo-mo IV* that led you to believe that she was faster than in 1950?

In 1950, Stan felt that we had not held the *Four* to the maximum when we were doing 160 mph. And also, we were getting more horsepower out of the engines. So, we decided to set the record higher because the boat was running well at the time. And we had made some tests. The *Four* could do 185 mph with no strain. It rode like a kiddie car at that speed.

Was there any thought given to running the *Slo-mo V* in the mile trials?

No way! Anything over 165 mph would start the *Five's* bow to start walking. If you drove the *Five* faster than 165 mph, it would really get hairy.

After both boats had failed in Heat 1 of the 1952 Gold Cup, why was the decision made to pool your resources and send *Slo-mo-shun IV* out for Heat 2 rather than *Slo-mo-shun V*?

We figured she was the better competition boat in that particular situation. She was more reliable, and that was the thing that we were most concerned about. The *Four's* engine set-up was much better for the situation.

Was there any particular reason that Stan Dollar declined to continue driving *Slo-mo IV* in 1953?

Stan was very elated that he had won the Gold Cup that he wanted all his life. After this, it was his wife that convinced him not to drive anymore. Also, his father was getting on in years and he wanted Stan to take over the Dollar Steamship Line. He certainly didn't want Stan to get killed in something that was just



Bob Carver Photos

Slo-mo-shun V with Lou Fageol in the cockpit before the Gold Cup in 1953. The boat didn't make it to the race because it threw a prop a few days before and suffered extensive damage to its transom.

his hobby. So, his family sort of slowed him down as far as driving boats was concerned.

What kind of a driver was Stan Dol- lar?

Stan was a stable driver who knew his equipment. Stan never worried where anyone else was on a start. He said, "Let them worry where I am." He was very quiet about the strategy he had in mind.

How was Joe Taggart selected as *Slo-mo IV* driver in 1953?

Joe was a personal friend of Lou Fageol. They used to race against each other in the limiteds. And, we got to meet Joe Taggart through Lou.

Where did you expect your main competition to come from for the 1953 Gold Cup?

We were concerned about the *Miss Great Lakes*. Danny Foster was driving, and it had just won the Detroit Memorial.

Early in the qualifying week for the 1953 Gold Cup, *Slo-mo-shun V* threw a prop and sank. This necessitated around-the-clock repairs. How close did the *Five* come to getting in the race?

If we had eight more hours, we would have been ready to go at full speed. However, if we had been allowed to qualify Sunday morning, we could have gone

but it would have been a patched-up job.

At the time, how many engines did you have on hand for both boats.

We had six Rolls Merlin engines and eight Allison of the various types from -113 up to the G-6. Out of the Allison there were about four that were of racing quality.

How was the decision made to go to a Rolls Merlin engine in 1953 for the *Slo-mo-shun V* and why was the installation made in the *Five* rather than the *Four*?

We figured the *Four* was all set up with the Allison. We weren't going to change that, so we decided to try them in *Five*. Lou Fageol sent out two engines at no cost to Stan. When we compared the two engines, the thing that convinced us was the blower and the manifold system. The Rolls also had a very impressive front end and intake system. At first, we were just going to test them to see what we had, but once we tried the Rolls, there was no life for the Allison as far as we were concerned. Our first Rolls engines were -7s.

After *Slo-mo-shun IV*'s tremendous victory in the 1953 Gold Cup, why was *Slo-mo V* selected to go east, especially in view of the fact that the *Five* was down 400 points to the *Four* in the high-point standings?

Lou Fageol wanted to drive back east in the competition and Lou would sooner drive *Five*. We did not really care about high points at the time.

After having a Rolls Merlin engine for the Gold Cup and the Silver Cup, an Allison engine was installed in the *Five* for the President's Cup. What was the background behind this decision?

We took two engines east—an Allison and a Rolls. We blew the Rolls, so we had to go with an Allison.

In view of the fact that you only had one boat to defend the 1953 Gold Cup, did you consider building a *Slo-mo-shun VI* for 1954 as a hedge against the failure of your second boat?

No.

Were there any boats in the 1954 Gold Cup field that stood out as being tougher to beat than the others?

No. I thought we had them because of the longer 3 3/4 mile-course. *Gale IV* and *Gale V* were new boats and had not really been proven out at the time. ❖

We'll pick up the story again in the October issue. Welsch will discuss the 1955 Gold Cup, the end of the Slo-mo era, and his experience with Edgar Kaiser's Hawaii Kai.

HYDROFILE

Race Team News by Lon Erickson

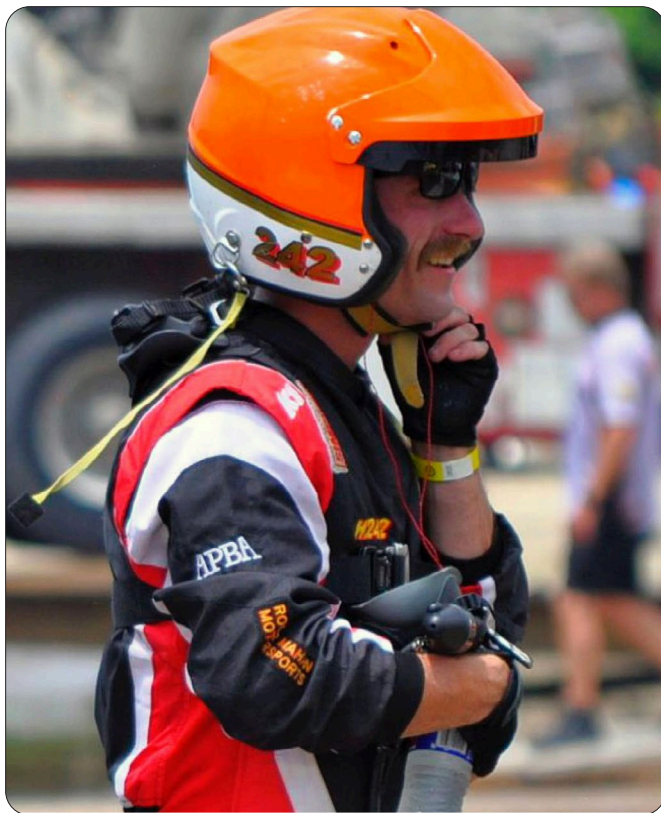


U-12 Graham Trucking

Rob Graham has brought his team together to compete at the last two races of the 2023 season: Tri-Cities and Seattle. He will have a new driver to the Unlimited ranks with 29-year-old Bobby King in the cockpit (bottom photo). Bobby is the son of Jimmy King, Go3 driver, and an accomplished driver in the F2500, 350 class, and HRL racing.



Lon Erickson



Hydro News Photo

U-40 Bucket List Racing

Kelly and Sharon Stocklin recently announced new partnership with Frank Tiegs and Flav-R-Pac Frozen Fruits and Vegetables for the balance of the 2023 H1 Unlimited season. Flav-R-Pac is a recognized national brand that is known for giving customers “seed to fork” varieties of quality potatoes, other vegetables, and fruits. The company also is involved with motorsports at several levels, including the John Force Racing Team, which includes Brittany Force’s top-fuel dragster and Robert Hight’s Camaro funny car, and has the title-event sponsorship at the Pacific Raceways NHRA Northwest Nationals. “This obviously is a big day for our team,” Kelly Stocklin said. “To be partners with such a great brand, not to mention one that values partnerships in the motorsports spectrum, is really special to us. As you can imagine, we are thrilled to join the ranks of teams supported by Flav-R-Pac. Sharon Stocklin also thanked Frank Tiegs, owner of Flav-R-Pac, for his company’s involvement in unlimited racing. “The sport is so exciting and to have another national brand like Flav-R-Pac join the boat racing family as a partner with our team is a really big deal,” she said. “We’re very excited about this new partnership.”



Bucket List Racing

U-60 The Beast Unleashed presents Miss Thriftway

Go Fast Turn Left's U-21 (Hull #1999) will return after two seasons away from the sport as the U-60 at the Gold Cup in Seattle. Newly qualified driver Gunnar O'Farrell will be in the seat at Seafair. The primary sponsor of the boat is NW Beverages, who is promoting a newly released adult beverage called The Beast Unleashed. "We are thrilled to be sponsoring this exciting team and young Gunnar O'Farrell while unleashing The Beast Unleashed at Seafair," said Marcus Degroff, director of field sales for the company. As for the reference to *Miss Thriftway*, that comes because the boat's owner, Greg O'Farrell, once received the surprise of his young life when, at the age of 11 years old, he got to meet the legendary Bill Muncey. He was later gifted an actual ride in *Thriftway Too* while sitting on Muncey's lap. "I will never forget those incredible memories," he says. "When I was presented the opportunity to feature a new *Miss Thriftway* presented by *The Beast Unleashed* at this year's Seattle Seafair Gold Cup, I was thrilled."



Go Fast Turn Left Racing



Nathan Joyce/Seattle Times

U-27 Wiggins Racing

The latest word out of the U-27 camp is the boat has been prepped for primer and painting has begun. The goal is to possibly test at Lake Gunterville this fall and the team is looking towards the 2024 racing season.



Wiggins Racing photos

THE 2023 STANDINGS

(as of July 2)

RACE TEAMS:

1) U-11 Legend Yacht Transport.....	2315
2) U-8 Beacon Electric.....	2314
3) U-9 Beacon Plumbing.....	1780
4) U-40 Bucket List Racing.....	1718
5) U-1 Miss HomeStreet.....	1664
6) U-91 Miss Goodman Real Estate.....	1070
7) U-3 Griggs presents Miss Ace Hardware.....	330
8) U-440 Boitano Homes.....	30

DRIVERS:

1) Jamie Nilsen.....	2315
2) J. Michael Kelly.....	2314
3) Corey Peabody.....	1780
4) Dustin Echols.....	1718
5) Dylan Runne.....	1664
6) Andrew Tate.....	1070
7) Jimmy King.....	330
8) Brent Hall.....	DNQ

MY \$0.02 WORTH

Editorial Comment by Andy Muntz



Carl Riotte was an engine builder. During the 1890s, he and his brother, Eugene, became fascinated by the new internal combustion engines developed during the previous 15 years or so and eventually got the idea of putting one of the contraptions into a boat.

The engine they created for the purpose, named the Standard, was a monster. It stood over four feet tall, was more than six feet long, weighed 3,200 pounds, and within its six cylinders had a total displacement of more than 3,000 cubic inches—the equivalent of 33 car engines of the day. And, from its mass, the engine could produce 110 horsepower.

With the financial help of Lewis Nixon, the owner of a shipyard and a former Tammany Hall politician, the Riotte brothers then installed their engine into a hull that incorporated the latest design innovations for moving through the water at the greatest possible speed. The result was a craft 60 feet long, only seven and a half feet wide, and weighing less

than 1,500 pounds.

The Roittes named their new boat after its engine.

Meanwhile, other wealthy tinkerers were also putting internal-combustion engines into long and narrow boats and began racing each other, to the point that yacht club officials in the New York City area got together in April 1903 to develop some rules. They created the American Power Boat Association and later established a race that would serve as their preeminent event.

They called their race the American Power Boat Open Challenge Cup, but it eventually would take on the name of the gold-plated silver chalice they had commissioned from Tiffany & Company and intended to present to the winner.

The first of these races was held on Thursday, June 23, 1904. Carl and Eugene Riotte were there with *Standard*, as were two others—all lined up on the Hudson River in front of the clubhouse of the Columbia Yacht Club. At exactly 3:05 p.m., an official fired a gun and the

boats were off.

“The *Standard* almost leaped out of the water,” the *New York Times* later reported.

A boat named *Fiat I* soon hit a log and was out, which left *Standard* and a craft named *Water Lily* as the only two in the race, but it wasn’t close. The Riotte’s boat pulled away, circled the picket boat *Queen Bess* anchored 16 miles upstream at Piedmont, New Jersey, and returned to complete the 32-mile race with an average speed of 19.6 mph. It performed similarly the next day, and the next, and became the first to win the trophy we now know as the APBA Gold Cup.

Today, it’s become the oldest trophy in American motorsports and still remains the most prestigious contest for boat racers around the world. So, as Seattle hosts the event for the first time in 38 years, I thought it was appropriate to remember how it started.

Here’s a tip of the hat to Carl and Eugene Riotte, who were the first to call themselves Gold Cup champions. ❖

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PLEASE JOIN US AT THE NEXT MEETING OF UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS

2 p.m. on Sunday, August 13, 2023

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