



SEASON PREVIEW EDITION:

Reshuffling the deck for 2025.

The Swami looks toward the season ahead.

BY BRIAN ANDERSON

The silly season of dry-land racing brought all kinds of great promises and expectations. A couple of new teams were announced, and a couple of new owners were poised to enter the sport with another set to return. But as the off season went on, it became apparent not everything expected came to fruition but at least one big deal (actually two) was made.

Those deals were made by Bruce W. Ratchford, who acquired the two top hulls of Miss Madison Inc. These two boats were the defending champion hull that campaigned as *Miss Goodman Real Estate* and the hull that last appeared as *Miss HomeStreet* and that would serve this newly formed BWR Racing team as its back up.

Oh, and just for good measure, he also purchased the Wiggins Racing hull that his company, Apollo Mechanical, had sponsored in 2024. These two deals suddenly made this team the talk of the sport and the odds-on favorite for the 2025 championship.

Two other teams were announced and were expected to improve the boat count, but both never fully materialized. Jane Schumacher announced that her, along with partner Crystal Weiding,

were going to get the U-37 ready to race the circuit and had tapped Brent Hall to drive. Hall left the team in January and as of March the team was still saying they would make the West Coast races. The hull has not been in the water since 2014.

Another announcement was made by Eric Christensen who stated he had purchased the Madison display hull and would be bringing it back to his shop with the intention of having it ready for the season. Artwork was released of his project with a predominantly yellow hull bearing the U-2 number and the Fraternal Order of Eagles as sponsor. If anything does happen it will be only the West Coast races.

All of this left the Miss Madison team without a hull to race for the 2025 season, so they stepped up and acquired from Dave Bartush the T-3 *Budweiser* hull



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The Swami's gaze into the future reveals another title for *Miss Goodman Real Estate* in 2025.

that last raced as *Degree Men*. The team is preparing it to race the two eastern races as *Miss Madison* with rookie Brandon Kennedy driving.

Then bad news was dropped on March 21 when Bucket List Racing announced it would not be racing in 2025. No specific reason was offered, other than a comment alluding to a rule about being subject to disciplinary action for making any statement tending to distract from the integrity or reputation of H1. Their sponsor, Flav-R-Pac, was therefore free to find another team and signed with the U-11's Unlimited Racing Group, whose

fan-favorite sponsor Mercury's Coffee made the decision to focus on expanding their growing business.

With all the shuffling around of equipment and sponsors, what does that do for competition? The short answer is: After all is said and done it will look a lot like 2024 where the preliminary heats were decent but the finals were excellent.

The most likely scenario, barring of course things like crashes and blow overs, will be a battle between the three top dogs of Andrew Tate, in *Miss Goodman Real Estate*; J Michael Kelly in *Beacon Electric*; and Corey Peabody

driving *Beacon Plumbing*. Of the five races the victories will be split between these three and the season point battle will be decided in San Diego.

However, there could be some surprises and maybe an upset, but the odds of that aren't particularly good. Of the remaining fleet, the best chance to break through has to be Dave Villwock in *Miss Apollo* whose vast experience in driving and hull set up give him an edge. The true dark horse would have to be Jeff Bernard and the *Graham Trucking*. If they get the hull reworked after last year's crash and add a few updates they could pull off the upset of the season.

The season starts in Guntersville, Alabama, with the Guntersville Southern Cup Hydrofest June 6–8. From there the teams make their traditional return to the Indiana town of Madison for the Governor's Cup July 4–6. From there it's the Northwest swing in Washington state with stops in Tri-Cities for the APBA Gold Cup July 25–27, then the Apollo Mechanical Cup returns to Seattle August 1–3. After a few weeks off, the final race will be the Bill Muncey Cup in San Diego September 12–14.

All in all, after all the reshuffling, rebuilding, and repainting it appears to be a season not to be missed.



Corey Peabody guides *Beacon Plumbing* back to the dock during last year's race in Seattle.

The Swami wisdom goes like this:

It will be between these three.

1) U-91 *Miss Goodman Real Estate*

DRIVER: Andrew Tate, 11 career wins
OWNER: Bruce Ratchford, 0 career wins

HOME: Tukwila, Wash.

SWAMI SEZ: Fastest boat, a top driver and a great crew will have this team out front right from the beginning. Expect them to be in every final and will score at least two victories and the championship. Should be number one or two in qualifying at every race.

2) U-9 *Beacon Plumbing*

DRIVER: Corey Peabody, seven career wins
OWNER: Darrell Strong, 13 career wins

HOME: Auburn, Wash.

SWAMI SEZ: This strong, consistent performer could win it all. Peabody has a way of stacking up points and being there when the race is on the line. Will score at least one win and be in every final. As with every other team the key will be avoiding trouble.



J. Michael Kelly, the driver of *Beacon Electric*, talks with crewmember Jason Theuret before heading onto the Seattle racecourse last summer.

3) U-8 *Beacon Electric*

DRIVER: J Michael Kelly, 17 career wins
OWNER: Darrell Strong, 13 career wins

HOME: Auburn, Wash.

SWAMI SEZ: This driver/boat combination is good enough to win it all and may in fact win the whole thing. Will be in every final with excellent qualifying speeds.

Next in line

4) U-11 *FLAV-R-PAC*

DRIVER: Jamie Nilsen, 0 career wins.
OWNERS: Shannon and Scott Raney, 0 career wins

HOME: Cle Elum, Wash.

SWAMI SEZ: A consistent ride, but always seems to be just a tick behind the top three. Will be in all finals with solid qualifying speeds.

5) U-27 *Miss Apollo*

DRIVER: Dave Villwock, 67 career wins.

OWNER: Bruce Ratchford, 0 career wins

HOME: Tukwila, Wash.

SWAMI SEZ: Winningest driver in the sport should not be overlooked. Just when you may count this guy out, it should not be a big surprise if he pulls off a victory for his new owner. Will be a solid performer all season.

Part timers

6) U-12 *Graham Trucking*

DRIVER: Jeff Bernard, 3 career wins
OWNER: Rob Graham, four career wins

HOME: Milton, Wash.



Dave Villwock pilots *Miss Apollo* during preseason testing in the Tri-Cities in May.



Jamie Nilsen takes *FLAV-R-PAC* around the turn during testing on the Columbia River. It should make all the final heats, the Swami says.

SWAMI SEZ: Undergoing updates and modifications to pick up some speed. Could finish higher if it attends more races. Bernard will give it some quick qualification times and show well. A dark horse that could really surprise.

7) U-21 Lakeridge Paving

DRIVER: Gunnar O'Farrell, 0 career wins

OWNER: Greg O'Farrell, 0 career wins

HOME: Maple Valley, Wash.

SWAMI SEZ: Will run consistently at the two Northwest races. Will probably

sneak into the final of at least one of the Washington races. Would love to see them in San Diego.

8) U-6 Miss Madison

DRIVER: Brandon Kennedy (R), 0 career wins

OWNER: Miss Madison, Inc., 42 career wins

HOME: Madison, Indiana

SWAMI SEZ: Return of the T-3 *Miss Budweiser* now sporting the colors of *Miss Madison*. Two-race schedule of Guntersville and Madison unless funding can be found. Will be consistent

but not overly fast unless they get in a lot of practice laps at the Guntersville opener.

We Need You Back

U-40 Bucket List Racing

OWNERS: Sharon and Kelly Stocklin, 0 career wins

HOME: Snohomish, WA.

SWAMI SEZ: Will be sitting this year out. Would rather see them on the water.

Would love to see these

U-37 Legacy Motorsports

OWNERS: Jane Suzick and Crystal Weiding, 0 career wins

HOME: Seattle

SWAMI SEZ: Announced plans to race in the off season but no news lately.

U-2 Christensen Motorsports

OWNER: Eric Christensen, 0 career wins

HOME: Buckley, Wash.

SWAMI SEZ: Plenty of work needed to get this one ready as announced.



The Swami thinks *Graham Trucking* could surprise people this summer.

A wild day at spring testing.

BY CHRIS TRACY

Six Unlimited boats gathered in Tri-Cities, Wash., on Saturday, May 17 to test on the Columbia River. This year things were a little different. The testing date was a little earlier than usual, since the first race of the season, in Guntersville, Alabama, is earlier this year. And the 2.5-mile course was changed a bit, to make sure the river depth was safe for running. The east turn was wider and the west turn was narrower than in the past.

All Unlimiteds arrived on Friday and all teams worked to set their boats up to be ready to test the next morning. Several boats were test firing engines in the late afternoon. It was clear that all boats were serious and ready to test.

Early Saturday morning the weather was problematic, with a fair amount of rain as teams made final preparations to run. Although cooler than usual, by the time the test window opened at 9 a.m., the rain had stopped, and the weather was nice—and it stayed that way for most of the day. And, the river water was completely flat. The weather stayed that way until about 4 p.m., when thunder and lightning ended testing.

The U-21, *Lakeridge Paving*, was the first boat on river and it looked good. (But its second run—shortly before noon—was ill fated, more about that later.) And throughout the day, all the boats ran. Here's the run-down:

Beacon Electric, U-8. It ran many laps. Of the boats that tested, I noticed it appeared not to handle quite as well as others in the turns. Its fastest lap was 159.325 mph. Quite a few of J. Michael Kelly's laps had N2 violations. That's not uncommon at testing to have N2 violations, as drivers are trying to go as fast as they can without a violation, and this is the time to figure out exactly what the limit is. Boat colors look like last year.

Beacon Plumbing, U-9. The boat was clearly fast and handled well, but all of its



Chris Denslow



Chris Denslow

TOP: The *Beacon Electric* arrives for its test runs on the Columbia River.
ABOVE: Getting together before the action begins are, from the left, Corey Peabody, Andrew Tate, Shannon Raney, Jamie Nilsen, and Darrell Strong.

fast laps had N2 violations. While Corey Peabody posted only a 114.582 mph completely legal lap, one of the N2 violation laps was 165.782 mph. The blue on the boat this year seems just a tad darker.

FLAV-R-PAC, U-11. This is a new sponsor for owners Scott and Shannon Raney. Scott told me that the sponsorship came together two weeks before testing. Sponsor hunter Steve Lamson was instrumental in bringing on the FLAV-R-PAC sponsorship. FLAV-R-PAC sponsored the U-40 for part of the season last year and the U-11 colors are almost

identical, but the yellow and blue hues appear crisper and brighter than those on last year's U-40. It's a really nice paint job, complete with a matching wrap on the hauler and trailer. The boat ran well and the ride looked good for driver Jamie Nilsen. Fastest lap was 159.155 mph.

Lakeridge Paving, U-21. The U number was changed back to 21 for 2025. It was the first boat out on the racecourse in the morning and ran well, but with N2 violations. Shortly before noon, Gunnar O'Farrell took the boat out again. The first two laps were uneventful, and the

"After further inspection, the team found a broken key way in the prop shaft and a broken output shaft in the motor. Unfortunately, we have no way to determine the order of events. Either failure could be the cause of going over."

RIGHT: The two boats from the Strong Racing Team prepare for the spring test session on the Columbia River. **BELOW:** Andrew Tate turned in the day's fastest time with a run of over 163 mph in *Miss Goodman Real Estate*.

boat looked good; the second lap was 156.983 mph. But disaster struck in the third lap. The boat blew over near the end of the straightaway near the entrance to the west turn. It hung in the air quite awhile, which likely softened the impact a little for the boat and driver.

I talked to Gunnar after the accident and he explained, "The motor malfunctioned and there was a domino effect that led to the blow over." Later, Gunnar explained on Facebook, "After further inspection, the team found a broken keyway in the prop shaft and a broken output shaft in the motor. Unfortunately, we have no way to determine the

order of events. Either failure could be the cause of going over." The good news is that Gunnar is fine, and it does not appear that boat damage is extensive. The team had not planned on going east, and they should be ready to race for the Gold Cup in Tri-Cities the last weekend in July.

Miss Apollo, U-27. The team test fired an engine at about 5 p.m. on Friday. I saw a fair amount of smoke during the test firing. When Dave Villwock took the boat out on Saturday morning, the boat had hardly any power and Villwock brought it back to the dock. It went out later and turned its fastest lap at 160.972 mph. The boat



Chris Denslow



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TOP THREE PHOTOS: This sequence shows the *Lakeridge Paving* during its double flip heading into the second turn on the Columbia River course.
ABOVE: The damaged transom after the boat was towed back to the pit area.



Also on hand to run a few laps during the Tri-Cities test session was the recently restored *The Squire Shop* from the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum. The boat won the 1981 Columbia Cup on this racecourse with Chip Hanauer in the cockpit.

Chris Denslow

looked solid on the water. Villwock took the boat out again close to 4 p.m.

Early in the run the thunderstorm erupted. From the east end (near the pits) I could barely make out the boat at the west turn, as the rain was so hard that it looked like fog. Wisely, Villwock slowed way down and nursed the boat back to the pits. The boat has the same paint colors as last year, with the addition of BWR Racing decals.

Miss Goodman Real Estate, U-91. Although the boat ran smooth and well, I understand that the crew worked hard to resolve some engine gremlins. Andrew Tate piloted the boat to the fastest legal lap of the day, 163.342 mph, and it looked effortless. The thunderstorm that hit around 4 p.m. prevented the boat from going out one more time. The boat boasts the same rich color scheme as last year.

The vintage *Squire Shop* boat from the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum also tested. It ran well in its first run, but in its second run it went dead in the water and was brought back on a tow rope. Electrical issues were suspected as the problem. A few limited boats tested, too. I was at testing all day, so I did not listen to the live-stream coverage, but I have been told it was a work in progress and had lots of hiccups.

It was a full day with lots of boat action on the water, a wild blow over, and uncharacteristically strange weather. ❖

Photos by Chris Denslow

Craig Fjarlie

Vintage hydros on Lake Washington.

BY CRAIG FJARLIE

Four vintage Unlimiteds ran on Lake Washington on Tuesday, May 20. Three of the boats were part of the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum's fleet, and one was the 1962 *Miss Bardahl* owned by Dixon Smith. The three museum boats were the 1958 *Miss Bardahl*, the replica *Miss Wahoo* in its 1957 configuration, and a boat painted to look like the 1962 *Notre Dame*. The hull under the paint began its career as *Miss Lumberville* in 1961.

The day was cool and cloudy. Dixon Smith took his boat out first. He made two laps but was forced to slow down in the north turn. A breeze from the south caused water to roll back from the Interstate-90 floating bridge, which resulted in rough conditions. "It was like the Detroit River," Smith said.

The three museum boats were used to give rides to people who had either paid for the ride, or who had done significant work on museum projects. Among those who had rides in the 1958 *Miss Bardahl* were Doug Hall, Randy Hall, and Chris Tracy, all long-time members of Unlimiteds Unanimous. Museum director David Williams did the driving for the Hall brothers, Glenn Raymond drove

when Chris Tracy had his ride.

Kip Brown took *Notre Dame* out; he went alone the first time. *Miss Wahoo* was used to give rides, and alternated turns with *Miss Bardahl*. When *Bardahl* was taking its last rider, the engine was balky and a spectacular stack fire caught everyone's attention. The fire went out when the engine finally started. The last ride was given to museum staff member Teri Fornwalt in *Miss Wahoo*. David Williams

did the driving. When she was back on shore and removing her life jacket, her excitement was obvious. "It was outstanding!" she exclaimed.

The event concluded shortly before 1 p.m., and boats went on their trailers for the drive home. For the crowd of spectators on hand, even though the rough water kept speeds down, it was fun to hear the historic sounds of Unlimited hydroplane engines. ❖



Stephen Shepperd



Craig Fjarlie for GleasonRacing Photography

TOP: Some of the action in Seattle's busy Stan Sayres Memorial Pits during the museum test session.
ABOVE: Glenn Raymond gives a ride to Chris Tracy aboard the restored 1958 *Miss Bardahl*.

The race programs that you'll find this coming season will be fun to collect, but rarely contain the detailed information about the boats and drivers that the serious hydro fan desires. With that need in mind, we offer:

The 2025 Handbook for Hard-core Hydro Fans

2025 H1 Unlimited Racing Series

June 6-8.....	Guntersville, Alabama	Southern Cup
July 4-6.....	Madison, Indiana	Madison Regatta
July 25-27.....	Tri-Cities, Washington	APBA Gold Cup
August 1-3	Seattle, Washington	Apollo Mechanical Cup
September 12-14	San Diego, California	San Diego Bayfair

THE HYDROPLANES

U-2 Fraternal Order of Eagles

OWNER: Eric Christensen

DRIVER: Unknown

RACE TEAM: Christensen Motorsports

BOAT SHOP: Buckley, Wash.

BUILT: 1997 (Hull #9701)

BUILDER: Fred Leland

POWER: Lycoming T-55/L-7 turbine

PREVIOUS NAMES: *PICO American*

Dream (1997), *Miss Crazy Tomato*

(1997), *Miss R.S. Eastin* (1997),

Stihl (1997), *Miss Graham Trucking*

(1997), *Miss Von's* (1998), *New Kid*

in Town (2000), *Leland Unlimited*

(2011), *Colony Marine Gears* (2011), *Miss Beacon Plumbing* (2011), *U-99* (2012), and *Fox Plumbing and Heating Too* (2012).

PREVIOUS DRIVERS: Mark Evans (1997), Mark Weber (1997), Jerry Hopp (1997), Mike Weber (1998), Jack Barrie (2000), Jerry Hale (2000), Greg Hopp (2011), and Ryan Mallow (2012)

RACE VICTORIES: None

NATIONAL TITLES: None

LAST SEASON: Did not appear.

COMMENTS: The boat was originally nicknamed “Dustbuster” because when it first appeared, because its bow was a snorkel that fed air to the turbine. The boat later became known by hydro fans as “Casper” because it appeared at an exhibition event painted completely white. The boat had spent the past several seasons as the display boat for the Miss Madison Race Team. Christensen purchased it during the off-season with the intent of racing it in 2025.



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

U-6 Miss Madison

OWNER: Miss Madison, Inc.

DRIVER: Brandon Kennedy

CREW CHIEF: Trey Holt

RACE TEAM: Miss Madison Racing

BOAT SHOP: Madison, Indiana

BUILT: 1989 (Hull #8901, T-3) Rebuilt in 1995 (Redesignated Hull #9501)

BUILDER: Hydroplanes, Inc.

POWER: Lycoming T-55/L-7 turbine

PREVIOUS NAMES: *Miss Budweiser*

(1989–2000), *EMCOR* (2006), *Al*

Deeby Dodge (2006), *Solutions*

Plus (2006), *Todd Hoss presents*

Fairweather Masonry (2006), *Designer Glass and Shower* (2006), *Ahern Rentals* (2007–08), *Hoss Mortgage Investors* (2007–08), *Miss Dover Environmental* (2008), and *Degree Men* (2012).

PREVIOUS DRIVERS: Jim Kropfeld (1989), Tom D'Eath (1989–91), Scott Pierce (1991), Chip Hanauer (1992–96), Mike Hanson (1994), Mark Evans (1995–97), Dave Villwock (1997–2000), Nate Brown (2006), J.W. Myers (2006), David Bryant (2007–08), and Scott Liddycoat (2012).

RACE VICTORIES: 18 (including 1995, 1997, and 1998 Gold Cups)



Billy Noonan

NATIONAL TITLES: 3 (1995, 1997, and 1998)

LAST SEASON: Did not appear.

COMMENTS: After the sale of the Miss Madison boats (Goodman Real Estate and Hull #0706) to Bruce Ratchford last winter, it appeared that the citizens of Madison, Indiana, would not have a hydro in the sport for the first time since 1961. Not wanting to break the tradition, a group of Madison citizens then got together and arranged to lease this boat from Dave Bartush for the 2025 season. The team plans to appear only in Guntersville and Madison.

U-7 Spirit of Detroit

OWNER: Dave Bartush

DRIVER: Unknown

RACE TEAM: Detroit Unlimited

BOAT SHOP: Detroit

BUILT: 1996 (Hull #9601, T-5), Rebuilt in 1997 (Redesignated Hull #9712)

BUILDER: Hydroplanes, Inc.

POWER: Lycoming T-55/L-7 turbine

PREVIOUS NAMES: *Miss Budweiser* (1996–2004), *Formula II* (2006–08), *Graham Trucking* (2009–11, 2016), *Air Guard* (2010), *Graham Trucking II* (2014–16), *Spirit of Detroit* (2017–19), *Spirit of Detroit/Boitano Homes* (2019), and *Spirit of Detroit presented by Boitano Homes* (2019).

PREVIOUS DRIVERS: Mark Evans (1996), Dave Villwock (1997–2004), Mike Allen (2006–08), Jeff Bernard (2007, 2011, 2016, 2018), J. Michael Kelly (2009–10, 2016), Cal Phipps (2014), Jesse Robertson (2015), and Bert Henderson (2017–19)

RACE VICTORIES: 24 (including 2000 Gold Cup)

NATIONAL TITLES: 5 (1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2006).

LAST SEASON: Did not appear.

COMMENTS: It's highly unlikely that we'll see this hydro in 2025.



U-8 Beacon Electric

OWNER: Vanessa and Darrell Strong

DRIVER: J. Michael Kelly

CREW CHIEF: Jeff Campbell

RACE TEAM: Strong Racing

BOAT SHOP: Auburn, Wash.

BUILT: 2014 (Hull #1496)

BUILDER: Ron Jones, Jr. and Mike Hanson

POWER: Lycoming T-55/L-7 turbine

PREVIOUS NAMES: *Qatar* (2014), *Ellstrom E-Lam Plus* (2015), *Oh Boy! Oberto* (2016–17), *Miss Tri-Cities* (2021–22), *Lynx Healthcare/ Miss Tri-Cities* (2022), *Boitano Homes* (2022), and *Beacon Electric* (2023–24).

PREVIOUS DRIVERS: Kip Brown (2014), Jean Theoret (2014–16), J.W. Myers (2017), and J. Michael Kelly (2021–24).

RACE VICTORIES: 6 (including 2023 Gold Cup)

NATIONAL TITLES: 1 (2023)

LAST SEASON: First in Seattle, second at San Diego and Madison, and third in Guntersville. It was withdrawn from the Tri-



Cities race after flipping in the first heat. Finished fourth in the national standings.

COMMENTS: The boat was built for Erick Ellstrom and purchased by Vanessa and Darrell Strong when they formed the Strong Racing Team in 2020.

U-9 Beacon Plumbing

OWNER: Vanessa and Darrell Strong

DRIVER: Corey Peabody

CREW CHIEF: Jeff Campbell

RACE TEAM: Strong Racing

BOAT SHOP: Auburn, Wash.

BUILT: 1992 (Hull #92102)

BUILDER: Ron Jones, Jr.

POWER: Lycoming T-55/L-7 turbine

PREVIOUS NAMES: Coors Dry (1992),

Miss Circus Circus (1993), *Miss Exide 2* (1994, 1996), *Miss Cost Less*

Carpets (1998), *Miss Sammamish*

Lake Watch (1998), *Jones Racing*

(2000), *Miss WABX* (2001–03), *Carpenter Communications* (2000), *Miss Go Bowling* (2000), *Sun Harbor Mortgage* (2000–03), *Miss Bello's Pizza* (2001–03, 2012), *Tubby's Grilled Submarines* (2001–02), *Fiesta Bowl & Casino* (2001), *Skyway Park Bowl & Casino* (2001–03), *Miss Jack-Sons Sports Bar* (2002), *Al Deeby Dodge* (2003), *Jack-Son's Kennewick* (2006), *Miss Car Pros Kia* (2006), *Conover Insurance* (2007), *Miss Tri Arc Electric* (2007), *U-9* (2009, 2012–13), *Oh Boy! Oberto* (2011), *Miss VisitTriCities.com* (2011), *Corporate Fleet Services* (2012), *Miss Sound Propeller Services* (2012), *Red Dot* (2013), *Qatar* (2014), *Les Schwab/Red Dot* (2014–15), *Red Dot/811 Call B4 You Dig* (2015), *Call 811/Les Schwab/Red Dot* (2015), *Bello's Realtrac Performance* (2016), *Les Schwab* (2016), *Delta Research/Realtrac* (2016), *Delta Realtrac* (2017–19), *Les Schwab Tires* (2017–18), *Auxier Marketing presents Delta Realtrac* (2019), *Pinnacle Peak Consulting* (2021), *Lynx Healthcare* (2022), and *Beacon Plumbing* (2023–24).

PREVIOUS DRIVERS: Dave Villwock (1992–93), Jimmy King (1994), Mark Weber (1996), Mike Jones (1996), Lindsey Emmons (1998), Mike Hanson (2000–03), Chris Bertram (2006–07), David Williams (2009), Jon Zimmerman (2011–14), Scott Liddycoat (2015), Andrew Tate (2016–19), and Corey Peabody (2021–24).

RACE VICTORIES: 19 (including 2001, 2018, 2022, and 2024 Gold Cups)

NATIONAL TITLES: 1 (2018)

LAST SEASON: First in the Tri-Cities and San Diego and third in Madison. It finished the 2024 season second in the national points standings.

COMMENTS: At 33 years old, this is the oldest boat in the fleet. In fact, it holds the record for being the oldest boat to win a race in the sport's history. It also ranks fourth for having the greatest number of heats finished. The boat was extensively rebuilt before the 2023 season after being damaged in an end-over-end flip at Madison in 2022. The boat returned to action with plenty of speed, despite its age. In 2023, Corey Peabody set an all-time record for the fastest average speed in a competition heat, a mark of nearly 163 mph.



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U-11 FLAV-R-PAC

OWNER: Shannon and Scott Raney

DRIVER: Jamie Nilsen

CREW CHIEF: Scott Raney

RACE TEAM: Unlimited Racing Group

BOAT SHOP: Cle Elum, Wash.

BUILT: 1993 (Hull #9302), Rebuilt in 2009 (Redesignated Hull #0925)

BUILDER: Dale Van Wieringen

POWER: Lycoming T-55/L-7 turbine

PREVIOUS NAMES: *Miss T-Plus* (1993–95), *Miss D.O.C./Acuvue* (1996), *Harvey Motorsports* (1996), *ARC Construction* (1996–99), *Trendwest Resorts* (1996), *KISS 106/Trendwest* (1996), *Molson's Jack Hammer* (1996), *The Dole Cannery* (1996), *Miss Detroit Ford Dealers* (1997), *PrimeStar* (1997), *Gargoyles* (1997), *Pit Stop* (1997), *U-2* (1997–99), *Déjà vu* (1997–98), *Miss Chrysler Jeep* (1998–2001, 2004), *Miss Molson* (1998), *Freddie's Club* (1998–2000),

Gaylord's (1998), *Trendwest* (2001–02), *Miss APBA* (2004), *Graham Trucking* (2004), *Graham Trucking/Sinbad's Roostertail* (2004), *Superior Racing* (2007), *Jarvis Construction* (2007), *Procraft Windows* (2008), *Buffalo Federal Savings Bank* (2009), *Mister Home Loan* (2009), *U-25* (2009–10), *Boyland Nissan* (2010), *Miss Car Pros* (2010), *Peters & May* (2010–12), *Miss J&D's* (2017), *Miss DiJulio presents J&D's* (2017), *Reliable Diamond Tool presents J&D's* (2017–18), *J&D's presents Reliable Diamond Tools* (2019), *Legend Yacht Transport* (2023), *Legend Yacht Transport presented by The Truss Company* (2023), *Legend Yacht Transport presented by The Old Cannery Furniture Warehouse* (2023), and *Miss Mercurys Coffee* (2024).

PREVIOUS DRIVERS: Steve David (1993–99), Mark Tate (1999–2000, 2004), Scott Pierce (2001), Greg Hopp (2004, 2007), J. Michael Kelly (2004), Ken Muscatel (2007–10), Jon Zimmerman (2010), J.W. Myers (2011–12), Tom Thompson (2012–19), and Jamie Nilsen (2019, 2023–24).

RACE VICTORIES: 2

NATIONAL TITLES: None

LAST SEASON: Finished second in Guntersville and in Seattle, third in San Diego, and fourth in Madison. It was fifth in the final standings.

COMMENTS: After a successful career as a crew chief, Scott Raney became a team owner with his wife, Shannon, in 2011.

While they have yet to win a first-place trophy, their boats always seem to be in the thick of things. Heat victories are not uncommon, and they usually qualify for the final heat.

U-12 Graham Trucking

OWNER: Rob Graham

DRIVER: Jeff Bernard

RACE TEAM: Graham Racing

BOAT SHOP: Milton, Wash.

BUILT: 2001 (Hull #0001, T-6)

BUILDER: Hydroplanes, Inc.

POWER: Lycoming T-55/L-7 turbine

PREVIOUS NAMES: *Miss Budweiser* (2000–04), *Formula* (2006–10), *Valken.com* (2011), and *Graham Trucking* (2012–21, 2023–24).

PREVIOUS DRIVERS: Dave Villwock

(2000–04), Mike Weber (2006),

Mike Allen (2006), Jeff Bernard (2006–10), Scott Liddycoat (2011), Jimmy Shane (2012–13), J. Michael Kelly (2014–19), Andrew Tate (2021), and Bobby King (2023–24).

RACE VICTORIES: 26 (including 2003 and 2016 Gold Cups)

NATIONAL TITLES: 3 (2003, 2004, and 2013)

LAST SEASON: Appeared only in the Northwest and did not make the final heat at either the Tri-Cities or Seattle. Eighth in national points.



Chris Denslow



Chris Denslow

COMMENTS: Only one boat has won more races during its career. Rob Graham began sponsoring the boat in 2012, then purchased it in 2016, and with that combination can claim credit for a total of 16 of the boat's career victories. Like last year, the boat likely will appear only in the west.

U-21 Miss Lakeridge Paving

OWNER: Greg and Brian O'Farrell

DRIVER: Gunnar O'Farrell

CREW CHIEF: Brian O'Farrell

RACE TEAM: Go Fast Turn Left Racing

BOAT SHOP: Maple Valley, Wash.

BUILT: 2019 (Hull #1999)

BUILDER: Go Fast Turn Left Racing Team

POWER: Lycoming T-55/L-7 turbine

PREVIOUS NAMES: *Darrell Strong presents*

PayneWest Insurance (2019),

CARSTAR powers Miss Rock (2019),

and *The Beast Unleashed presents*

Miss Thriftway (2023), and *Gutters by Keith presents Boitano Homes* (2024).

PREVIOUS DRIVERS: Brian Perkins (2019), and Gunnar O'Farrell (2023–24).

RACE VICTORIES: None

NATIONAL TITLES: None

LAST SEASON: Appeared only in the Northwest races. Finished fourth in the Tri-Cities and seventh in the national points standings.

COMMENTS: While the boat has been around for six years, it has seen action in only five events during that time. Owner Greg O'Farrell became hooked on hydroplane racing as a youth when Bill Muncey gave him a ride aboard the famous *Thriftway Too* in the late-1950s. Driver Gunnar O'Farrell is his grandson. The boat flipped end over end during a preseason test run in the Tri-Cities in May, and will likely see action only in the Pacific Northwest.



Chris Denslow

U-27 Miss Apollo

OWNER: Bruce Ratchford

DRIVER: Dave Villwock

CREW CHIEF: Dave Villwock

RACE TEAM: BWR Racing

BOAT SHOP: Tukwila, Wash.

BUILT: 2007 (Hull #0717), Extensively rebuilt after a 2018 accident in Seattle (Redesignated Hull #2427)

BUILDER: Nate Brown

POWER: Lycoming T-55/L-7 turbine

PREVIOUS NAMES: *Red Dot* (2007, 2010–12), *Our Gang Racing* (2008, 2014), *U-17* (2009), *West Pasco Family*

Dental (2009), *USNW Express* (2009), *Seal Shield* (2009), *O'Brien Law* (2010), *Qatar* (2013), *Fox Plumbing and Heating* (2014), *Dalton Industries* (2015–16), *Wiggins Racing* (2017), *Chase Building Group* (2018), *Oberto* (2018), and *Miss Apollo* (2024).

PREVIOUS DRIVERS: Nate Brown (2007, 2009–10, 2012), Kip Brown (2008–13), Cal Phipps (2011, 2015–16, 2018), Jeff Bernard (2014), J.W. Myers (2017), and Dave Villwock (2024).

RACE VICTORIES: 1 (2013 Gold Cup)



Chris Denslow

NATIONAL TITLES: None

LAST SEASON: Third in Seattle and fourth at Guntersville. Finished the season sixth in the national standings.

COMMENTS: The boat was badly damaged in an accident at the 2018 Seattle race, was completely rebuilt by owner Charley Wiggins, and appeared at four race last season under the sponsorship of Bruce Ratchford's Apollo Mechanical Company. After Ratchford became an owner with the purchase of the Miss Madison Race Team last winter, he added this boat to his team.

U-40 Bucket List Racing

OWNER: Sharon and Kelly Stocklin

DRIVER: Dustin Echols

CREW CHIEF: Taylor Evans

RACE TEAM: Bucket List Racing

BOAT SHOP: Snohomish, Wash.

BUILT: 2007 (Hull #0721)

BUILDER: Ron Jones, Jr.

POWER: Lycoming T-55/L-7 turbine

PREVIOUS NAMES: *Meyer's Auto Tech* (2007), *The Plumbing Joint* (2007), *All Access Rentals* (2007, 2015), *Albert Lee Appliance* (2010–13, 2015–17), *Go Fast Turn Left Racing*

(2010, 2014), *Lakeridge Paving* (2011, 2014), *TapouT* (2011), *Miss HAPO* (2012), *Snoqualmie Casino* (2012–13), *Miss Al Deeby Dodge* (2014–15), *Fasteners* (2015), *PayneWest Insurance* (2016–17), *Miss Al Deeby* (2016), *All Access Equipment* (2016), *Darrell Strong presents PayneWest Insurance* (2018), *Miss Beacon Plumbing* (2021–22), *Bucket List Racing* (2023–24), and *FLAV-R-PAC* (2023–24).

PREVIOUS DRIVERS: Brian Perkins (2007, 2010–13, 2015–18), Jamie Nilsen (2013–14), Dave Villwock (2021–22), Dustin Echols (2022–24).

RACE VICTORIES: None

NATIONAL TITLES: None

LAST SEASON: Third in Tri-Cities, finished third in the national standings.

COMMENTS: In 2023, the boat proved itself as one of the fastest in the sport when Dustin Echols drove it to a qualifying run of over 171 mph in Guntersville, putting the boat among a very select group in history that has ever exceeded 170 mph. Owner Kelly Stocklin announced early this year that the boat will not race in 2025.



Chris Denslow

U-91 Miss Goodman Real Estate

OWNER: Bruce Ratchford

DRIVER: Andrew Tate

CREW CHIEF: Mike Hanson

RACE TEAM: BWR Racing

BOAT SHOPS: Tukwila, Wash.

BUILT: 2018 (Hull #1801)

BUILDER: Miss Madison Racing Team

POWER: Lycoming T-55/L-7 turbine

PREVIOUS NAMES: *Miss HomeStreet* (2018–23) and *Miss Goodman Real Estate* (2024).

PREVIOUS DRIVERS: Jimmy Shane (2018–22), Dylan Runne (2023), and Andrew Tate (2024).



Chris Denslow

RACE VICTORIES: 9 (including 2019 Gold Cup)

NATIONAL TITLES: 4 (2019, 2021, 2022, and 2024)

LAST SEASON: Winner at Guntersville and Madison, and second in the Tri-Cities. It finished the season first in the national standings.

COMMENTS: Bruce Ratchford, the CEO and founder of Apollo Mechanical, purchased the Miss Madison Race Team last winter. Included in the package was the defending national champion, which will continue to wear the colors of Goodman Real Estate, a privately-held real estate investment company in Seattle that specializes in multifamily and commercial real estate.

BWR Racing

OWNER: Bruce Ratchford

DRIVER: To be determined

CREW CHIEF: Mike Hanson

RACE TEAM: BWR Racing

BOAT SHOPS: Tukwila, Wash.

BUILT: 2007 (Hull #0706)

BUILDER: Miss Madison Racing Team

POWER: Lycoming T-55/L-7 turbine

PREVIOUS NAMES: *Oh Boy! Oberto*

(2007–13), *Oberto* (2014–15), *Miss*

HomeStreet (2016–18), *Oberto*

Super Salami (2019), *Goodman Real*

Estate presents Miss HomeStreet

(2021), and *Miss Goodman Real Estate* (2022–23).

PREVIOUS DRIVERS: Steve David (2007–13), Jimmy Shane (2014–18, 2021), Jeff Bernard (2019–22), and Andrew Tate (2023).

RACE VICTORIES: 25 (including 2014, 2015, 2017, and 2021 Gold Cups)

NATIONAL TITLES: 8 (2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017)

LAST SEASON: Did not appear.

COMMENTS: Among the most successful boats in history—currently third on the list of boats with the most race victories, in second place for most career heat victories, and has won more national titles than any other boat in history. The boat was included in the sale of the Miss Madison Race Team to Bruce Ratchford last winter and will likely spend the season in a reserve role.



Chris Denslow

THE DRIVERS

Jeff Bernard

HOME: Kent, Wash.

AGE: 40

BOAT IN 2025: U-12 *Graham Trucking*

BOATS DRIVEN: Hull #9399: *Lakeridge Paving* (2005) ... Hull #9610: *Lakeridge Paving* (2006) ... Hull #0001: *Formula* (2006–10) ... Hull #9712: *Formula II* (2007), *Graham Trucking* (2011), *Graham Trucking II* (2016), and *Spirit of Detroit* (2018) ... Hull #0717: *Red Dot* (2012), *Our Gang* (2014), and *Fox Plumbing and Heating* (2014) ... Hull #9010: *Graham Trucking II* (2016) ... Hull #0706: *Oberto Super Salami* (2019), *Goodman Real Estate presents Miss HomeStreet* (2021), and *Miss Goodman Real Estate* (2022).

RACE VICTORIES: 3 ... 2008 Indiana Governor's Cup, Madison, Ind.; 2008 San Diego Thunderboat Regatta, San Diego; and 2009 Thunder on the Ohio, Evansville, Ind.

NATIONAL TITLES IN UNLIMITEDS: None

LAST SEASON: Did not appear.

COMMENTS: Bernard comes from a boat-racing family. His stepfather was Gold Cup champion Terry Troxell and he is the nephew of former unlimited drivers Mark and Mike Weber. While he is available to drive an unlimited, he will most likely spend the 2024 season driving in Grand Prix competition, where he has seen considerable success.



H1 Unlimited

Brent Hall

HOME: Seattle

AGE: 55

BOAT IN 2025: To be determined

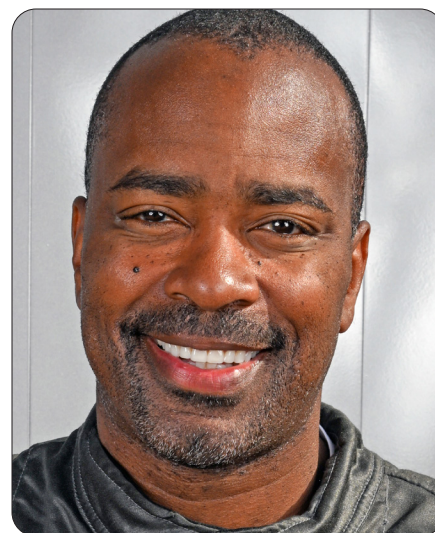
BOATS DRIVEN: Hull #1218: *Boitano Homes* (2023-DNQ).

RACE VICTORIES: None

NATIONAL TITLES IN UNLIMITEDS: None

LAST SEASON: Did not appear.

COMMENTS: With extensive experience driving limited-class hydros, Hall made his Unlimited debut in 2023 as the driver of the U-440 *Boitano Homes*. To become a qualified driver, however, he was required to complete 15 test laps in the boat with 10 of those over 130 mph. He came one lap short of that standard because the boat went dead during his final qualifying attempt in Seattle. If he had qualified, he would have become the first African-American to qualify for the sport's fastest boats.



Vic Wright

J. Michael Kelly

HOME: Bonney Lake, Wash.

AGE: 46

BOAT IN 2025: U-8 *Beacon Electric*

BOATS DRIVEN: Hull #0302: *Miss APBA* (2004), *Graham Trucking* (2004–05), *Graham Trucking/Sinbad's Roostertail* (2004), and *Dick Scott Automotive Group* (2005) ... Hull #8700: *Acura of Bellevue* (2006), *Spirit of Detroit* (2007), *Car Pros* (2007), *Graham Trucking* (2008), and *Miss DYC* (2008) ... Hull #9712: *Graham Trucking* (2008, 2016), and *Air Guard* (2010) ... Hull #1188: *Degree Men* (2011), *Miss Beacon Plumbing* (2012–13), and *Performance Chevrolet* (2013) ... Hull #0001:

Graham Trucking (2014–19) ... Hull #1496: *Miss Tri-Cities* (2021–22), *Lynx Healthcare/Miss Tri-Cities* (2022), *Boitano Homes* (2022), and *Beacon Electric* (2023–24).

RACE VICTORIES: 17 ... 2009 Oryx Cup UIM World Championship, Doha, Qatar; 2014 Indiana Governor's Cup, Madison, Ind.; 2014 Albert Lee Appliance Seafair Cup, Seattle; 2014 San Diego Bayfair, San Diego; 2014 Oryx Cup UIM World Championship, Doha, Qatar; 2015 Albert Lee Appliance Seafair Cup, Seattle; 2016 APBA Gold Cup, Detroit; 2017 HAPO Columbia Cup, Tri-Cities, Wash.; 2019 HAPO Columbia Cup, Tri-Cities, Wash.; 2019 HomeStreet Bank Cup, Seattle; 2019 HomeStreet Bank Bayfair, San Diego; 2021 Guntersville Lake Hydrofest, Guntersville, Ala.; 2021 HomeStreet Bank San Diego Bayfair, San Diego; 2022 HomeStreet Bank Cup, Seattle; 2023 Indiana Governor's Cup, Madison, Ind.; 2023 APBA Gold Cup, Seattle; and 2024 Apollo Mechanical Cup, Seattle.

NATIONAL TITLES IN UNLIMITEDS: 2 (2021 and 2023)

LAST SEASON: First at Seattle, second at Madison and San Diego, and third in Guntersville. Fourth in national point standings.

COMMENTS: Kelly currently stands in a three-way tie with Danny Foster and Billy Schumacher for having the ninth most race victories in Unlimited racing history. A fourth-generation boat racer, he has set numerous world speed records and national championships in both inboard and outboard classes. And, the family tradition is continuing. He made history 2023 when both he and his son, Carson, were inducted together into the APBA Hall of Champions, the first father-son pair to be inducted together since 1974. Carson is an accomplished driver in several outboard classes. When he's not driving a race boat, Kelly is employed in the construction industry. He has also been a friend since grade school with his teammate on the Strong Racing Team, Corey Peabody.



Strong Racing

Brandon Kennedy

HOME: Bear, Delaware

AGE: 32

BOAT IN 2025: U-6 *Miss Madison*

BOATS DRIVEN: None

RACE VICTORIES: None

NATIONAL TITLES IN UNLIMITEDS: None

LAST SEASON: Did not appear.

COMMENTS: A veteran of hydroplane racing since 2006, he has driven the past few seasons in the Grand Prix class. Last year he drove Ron and Sandy Thompson's GP-35 *TM Special* in the Hydroplane Racing League and Grand Prix America circuits. Kennedy works at HAGE Tool and Machine, Inc. and is president of H8eraide, LLC, a company that sells products for detailing cars.



HRL

Jamie Nilsen

HOME: Gig Harbor, Wash.

AGE: 40

BOAT IN 2025: U-11 *Flav-R-Pac*

BOATS DRIVEN: Hull #0721: *Albert Lee* (2013), *Go Fast Turn Left Racing* (2014), *Miss Al Deeby Dodge* (2014), and *Lakeridge Paving* (2014) ... Hull #9610: *Snoqualmie Casino* (2013) ... Hull #0925: *J&D's presented by Reliable Diamond Tool* (2019), *Legend Yacht Transport* (2023), *Legend Yacht Transport presented by The Truss Company* (2023), *Legend Yacht Transport presented by The Old Cannery Furniture Warehouse* (2023, and *Miss Mercurys Coffee* (2024). ... Hull #2111: *J&D's* (2021), *Miss Colleen* (2022), *Miss Joker's Casino* (2022), *Miss The Old Cannery Furniture Warehouse* (2022), *Legend Yacht Transport* (2022).

RACE VICTORIES: None

NATIONAL TITLES IN UNLIMITEDS: None

LAST SEASON: Finished second at Guntersville and Seattle, third in San Diego, and fourth in Madison. He finished the season fifth in the final standings.

COMMENTS: Nilsen has driven a race boat to victory in nearly every category of closed-course competition within the APBA. Among the few classes where he has yet to win is the Unlimiteds. He started racing outboards when he was 12 years old, has won a total of 15 national championships in outboards, and has also won national titles in both 5-litre and Grand Prix inboards. He was inducted into the APBA Hall of Champions in both 2000 and 2002. Nilsen also played baseball in college, was drafted by the Kansas City Royals, and played one season of professional baseball in the minor leagues. He holds a degree in finance and, when he's not racing, is a financial analyst for the U.S. Navy.



Chris Denslow

Gunnar O'Farrell

HOME: Maple Valley, Wash.

AGE: 27

BOAT IN 2025: U-21 *Miss Lakeridge Paving*

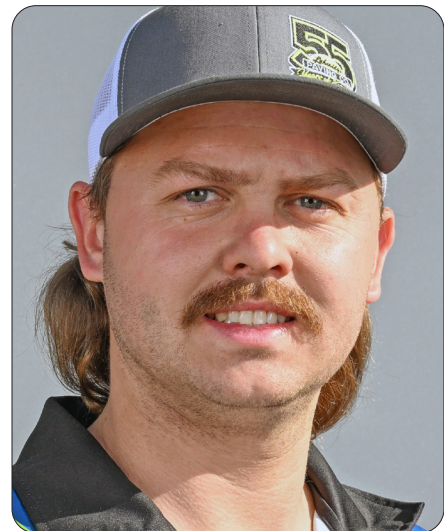
BOATS DRIVEN: Hull #1999: *The Beast Unleashed presents Miss Thriftway* (2023) and *Gutters by Keith presents Boitano Homes* (2024).

RACE VICTORIES: None

NATIONAL TITLES IN UNLIMITEDS: None

LAST SEASON: Appeared only in the Northwest races last season. Finished fourth at the Tri-Cities and seventh in the national points standings.

COMMENTS: O'Farrell started racing stock outboards when he was nine years old and moved into the inboards 11 years later. In 2021, he won the Western Nationals in the 2.5-litre modified class. The grandson of team owner Greg O'Farrell, he became qualified as an Unlimited driver in 2022 but didn't enter competition for the first time until the 2023 Seattle race. Outside of racing, he works as a CDL truck driver.



Vic Wright

Corey Peabody

HOME: Covington, Wash.

AGE: 46

BOAT IN 2025: U-9 *Beacon Plumbing*

BOATS DRIVEN: Hull #9210: *Spirit of Detroit* (2016), *Pinnacle Peak Consulting* (2021), *Lynx Healthcare* (2022), and *Beacon Plumbing* (2023–24) ... Hull #9899: *Graham Trucking American Dream* (2019).

RACE VICTORIES: 7 ... 2021 HAPO Columbia Cup, Tri-Cities, Wash.; 2022 APBA Gold Cup, Guntersville, Ala.; 2022 Madison Showdown, Madison, Ind.; 2023 Southern Cup, Guntersville, Ala.; 2023 Columbia Cup, Tri-Cities, Wash.; 2024 Columbia Cup, Tri-Cities, Wash.; and 2024 APBA Gold Cup, San Diego.

NATIONAL TITLES IN UNLIMITEDS: None

LAST SEASON: First at Tri-Cities, won his second Gold Cup at San Diego, and was third in Madison. Finished second in the national standings.

COMMENTS: Peabody started racing outboards in 1998 alongside his grade-school friend, J. Michael Kelly, now his teammate on the Strong Racing Team. After spending three years as a crew member for the boat that Kelly was driving, he got into the cockpit himself and became qualified as an Unlimited driver



Strong Racing

in 2016. He now drives the oldest boat in the hydro fleet, yet despite his boat's age, he set a record in 2023 in Guntersville for the fastest competition heat average speed in history, a mark of nearly 163 mph, and a course record with a competition lap of over 164 mph. In addition to driving the Beacon Plumbing, Peabody is also the general manager of the entire Strong Racing Team.

Andrew Tate

HOME: Canton, Mich.

AGE: 35

BOAT IN 2025: U-91 *Miss Goodman Real Estate*

BOATS DRIVEN: Hull #9210: *Bello's Realtrac Performance* (2016), *Les Schwab* (2016), *Delta Research/Realtrac* (2016), *Delta Realtrac* (2017–19), *Les Schwab Tires* (2017–18), and *Auxier Marketing presents Delta Realtrac* (2019) ... Hull #0001: *Graham Trucking* (2021). ... Hull #0706: *Miss Goodman Real Estate* (2023–24).

RACE VICTORIES: 11 ... 2016 Albert Lee Appliance Seafair Cup, Seattle; 2017 Indiana Governor's Cup, Madison; 2017 President's Cup, Detroit; 2017 Home-Street Bank Bayfair, San Diego; 2018 Guntersville Lake Hydrofest, Guntersville, Ala.; 2018 HAPO Columbia Cup, Tri-Cities, Wash.; 2018 Albert Lee Appliance Seafair Cup, Seattle; 2018 APBA Gold Cup, Detroit; 2018 Home-Street Bank Bayfair, San Diego; 2024 Southern Cup, Guntersville, Ala.; and 2024 Indiana Governor's Cup, Madison, Ind.

NATIONAL TITLES IN UNLIMITEDS: 2 (2018 and 2024)

LAST SEASON: Winner of the national championship. First at Guntersville and Madison, second in the Tri-Cities, and fourth in Seattle.

COMMENTS: Another fourth-generation boat racer, Tate's father is Mark Tate, who won the sport's national championship four times and is a two-time winner of the Gold Cup. When Andrew won the Gold Cup in 2018, he and his father became the first father-son pair to ever have both of their names etched on that prestigious trophy. Andrew started racing stock outboards when he was nine years old and has collected more than 100 race victories in various outboard and inboard classes, as well as nine national titles. He's been inducted into the APBA Hall of Champions three times. When he's not racing, he does sales and marketing for Sun Coating Co.



Vic Wright

Dave Villwock

HOME: Monroe, Wash.

AGE: 71

BOAT IN 2025: U-27 *Miss Apollo*

BOATS DRIVEN: Hull #9031: *Miss Circus Circus* (1990) ... Hull #92102: *Coors Dry* (1992), and *Miss Circus Circus* (1993) ... Hull #8401: *Miss Circus Circus* (1993) ... Hull #9399: *American Dream* (1994), *U-100* (1994), and *PICO American Dream* (1995–96) ... Hull #9610: *PICO American Dream* (1996) ... Hull #9501: *Miss Budweiser* (1997–2000) ... Hull #9712: *Miss Budweiser* (1997–2004) ... Hull #0001: *Miss Budweiser* (2000–04) ... Hull #0116: *Ellstrom* (2005–09), *Amos W. Hoss* (2008), and *Spirit of Qatar* (2010–12) ... Hull #1188: *Cost Less Carpets* (2014), *Miss Beacon Plumbing* (2014), and *Miss Seattle* (2014) ... Hull #0721: *Miss Beacon Plumbing* (2021–22) ... and Hull #2427: *Miss Apollo* (2024).

RACE VICTORIES: 67 ... 1992 Budweiser Cup, San Diego; 1994 Texaco Cup, Seattle; 1994 Bayfair, San Diego; 1996 Gila River Casino Unlimited Regatta, Phoenix; 1996 APBA Gold Cup, Detroit; 1996 Pontiac Thunder on the Ohio, Evansville, IN; 1996 Budweiser Columbia Cup, Tri-Cities; 1996 Texaco Cup, Seattle; 1996 Canadian Cup, Kelowna, BC; 1997



H1 Unlimited

Chrysler Jeep APBA Gold Cup, Detroit; 1997 Pontiac Thunder On The Ohio, Evansville, Ind.; 1997 Budweiser Indiana Governor's Cup, Madison, Ind.; 1997 Virginia is for Lovers Cup, Norfolk, Va.; 1998 Pontiac Grand Am Thunder, Evansville, Ind.; 1998 Chrysler Jeep APBA Gold Cup, Detroit; 1998 Virginia is for Lovers Cup, Norfolk, Va.; 1998 Budweiser Columbia Cup, Tri-Cities; 1998 Texaco Cup, Seattle; 1998 Budweiser Indiana Governor's Cup, Madison, Ind.; 1998 Bayfair Bill Muncey Cup, San Diego; 1998 Las Vegas Cup, Las Vegas; 1999 Budweiser Thunderfest at Barrie, Barrie, Ont.; 1999 Budweiser Thunder on the Ohio, Evansville, Ind.; 1999 Virginia is for Lovers Cup, Norfolk, Va.; 1999 Budweiser Columbia Cup, Tri-Cities; 1999 General Motors Cup, Seattle; 1999 Budweiser Thunderfest, Kelowna, BC; 1999 Bayfair Bill Muncey Cup, San Diego; 1999 JN Chevrolet Hydrofest, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; 2000 Mojave Unlimited Hydrofest, Lake Havasu City, Az.; 2000 Budweiser Thunder on the Ohio, Evansville, Ind.; 2000 Indiana Governor's Cup, Madison, Ind.; 2000 Chrysler Jeep APBA Gold Cup, Detroit; 2000 General Motors Cup, Seattle; 2000 Bayfair Bill Muncey Cup, San Diego; 2001 Budweiser Thunder on the Ohio, Evansville, Ind.; 2002 Thunder on the Ohio, Evansville, Ind.; 2002 APBA Gold Cup, Detroit; 2002 General Motors Cup, Seattle; 2003 Budweiser Madison Regatta, Madison, Ind.; 2003 General Motors Cup, Seattle; 2004 Thunder on the Ohio, Evansville, Ind.; 2004 UIM World Championship, Madison, Ind.; 2004 Budweiser Columbia Cup, Tri-Cities; 2004 General Motors Cup, Seattle; 2004 Washington Mutual Bill Muncey Cup, San Diego; 2005 Budweiser Columbia Cup, Tri-Cities; 2005 Thunderboat Regatta, San Diego; 2006 Thunder on the Ohio, Evansville, Ind.; 2006 Madison Regatta, Madison, Ind.; 2006 Atomic Cup, Tri-Cities; 2007 Thunder on the Ohio, Evansville, Ind.; 2007 Indiana Governor's Cup, Madison, Ind.; 2007 Chrysler Jeep APBA Gold Cup, Detroit; 2007 Lamb Weston Columbia Cup, Tri-Cities; 2008 Chevrolet Cup, Seattle; 2009 Indiana Governor's Cup, Madison, Ind.; 2009 Chrysler Jeep APBA Gold Cup, Detroit; 2009 Chevrolet Cup, Seattle; 2010 Jarvis Restoration APBA Gold Cup, Detroit; 2010 Air National Guard Championship, San Diego; 2010 Oryx Cup UIM World Championship, Doha, Qatar; 2011 APBA Gold Cup, Detroit; 2011 Lamb Weston Columbia Cup, Tri-Cities, 2011 Air National Guard Championship, San Diego; 2012 Lucas Oil Indiana Governor's Cup, Madison, Ind.; and 2012 DYC presents APBA Gold Cup, Detroit.

NATIONAL TITLES IN UNLIMITEDS: 10 (1996, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007, and 2011)

LAST SEASON: Third in Seattle and fourth in Guntersville.

COMMENTS: Villwock is among the greatest champions the sport has ever known and is the oldest person to ever drive an Unlimited hydroplane. He has won a total of 67 races, making him the most successful driver in the sport's 122-year history. In addition, his 10 national titles are the most by any driver in history. He won seven of those titles in a row (the longest streak in history), won nearly half of the races that he entered (again, the best), and has won a total of 345 heats (the most).

COURSE RECORDS

GUNTERSVILLE, ALABAMA:

2.5-mile course:	SPEED	DRIVER	BOAT	YEAR
Qualifying.....	171.294 mph	Dustin Echols.....	Bucket List Racing.....	2023
Competition lap.....	164.928 mph	Andrew Tate.....	Miss Goodman Real Estate.....	2024
7.5-mile heat (3 laps).....	162.910 mph	Corey Peabody.....	Beacon Plumbing.....	2023
10-mile heat (4 laps).....	161.534 mph	J. Michael Kelly.....	Beacon Electric.....	2024
12.5-mile heat (5 laps).....	156.177 mph	Andrew Tate.....	Miss Goodman Real Estate.....	2024
15-mile heat (6 laps).....	106.719 mph	Ron Musson.....	Miss Bardahl.....	1964
Race avg. (35 miles).....	151.379 mph	J. Michael Kelly.....	Miss Tri-Cities.....	2021
Race avg. (42.5 miles).....	141.553 mph	Corey Peabody.....	Lynx Healthcare.....	2022

MADISON, INDIANA:

2-mile course:				
Qualifying (2-lap avg.).....	148.885 mph	Jimmy Shane.....	Miss HomeStreet.....	2019
Competition lap.....	150.933 mph	Dave Villwock.....	Spirit of Qatar.....	2012
6-mile heat (3 laps).....	137.608 mph	Dave Villwock.....	Spirit of Qatar.....	2012
8-mile heat (4 laps).....	135.605 mph	Andrew Tate.....	Delta Realtrac.....	2019
10-mile heat (5 laps).....	136.106 mph	Dave Villwock.....	Spirit of Qatar.....	2012
Race avg. (28 miles).....	134.684 mph	Dave Villwock.....	Spirit of Qatar.....	2012
Race avg. (42 miles).....	129.734 mph	Jimmy Shane.....	Miss HomeStreet.....	2019

TRI-CITIES, WASHINGTON:

2.5 mile course:				
Qualifying.....	170.471 mph	Dave Villwock.....	Miss Budweiser.....	1999
Qualifying (2-lap avg.).....	160.212 mph	Jean Theoret.....	Ellstrom E-Lam Plus.....	2015
Competition lap.....	162.666 mph	Dave Villwock.....	Spirit of Qatar.....	2011
7.5-mile heat (3 laps).....	156.957 mph	Chip Hanauer.....	Miss Budweiser.....	1994
10-mile heat (4 laps).....	151.412 mph	Andrew Tate.....	Les Schwab Tires.....	2017
12.5-mile heat (5 laps).....	150.422 mph	Dave Villwock.....	Spirit of Qatar.....	2011
Race avg. (35 miles).....	152.157 mph	Chip Hanauer.....	Miss Budweiser.....	1994
Race avg. (42.5 miles).....	151.240 mph	Jimmy Shane.....	Miss HomeStreet.....	2022
Race avg. (47.5 miles).....	146.280 mph	J. Michael Kelly.....	Graham Trucking.....	2016
Race avg. (52.5 miles).....	146.729 mph	Jimmy Shane.....	Miss HomeStreet.....	2019

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON:

2-mile course:				
Qualifying (1 lap).....	163.451 mph	Dave Villwock.....	Miss Budweiser.....	1999
Qualifying (2-lap avg.).....	154.462 mph	Andrew Tate.....	Goodman Real Estate.....	2023
Competition lap.....	155.256 mph	Kip Brown.....	Spirit of Qatar.....	2013
6-mile heat (3 laps).....	150.880 mph	Mark Tate.....	Winston Eagle.....	1993
10-mile heat (5 laps).....	141.880 mph	Jean Theoret.....	Miss Beacon Plumbing.....	2006
Race avg. (22 miles).....	135.612 mph	J. Michael Kelly.....	Boitano Homes.....	2022
Race avg. (28 miles).....	140.011 mph	Mike Hanson.....	Kellogg's Frosted Flakes.....	1993
Race avg. (34 miles).....	142.927 mph	Andrew Tate.....	Goodman Real Estate.....	2023

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

2.5-mile course:				
Qualifying.....	173.384 mph	Dave Villwock.....	Miss Budweiser.....	1999
Competition lap.....	164.919 mph	Mark Tate.....	Winston Eagle.....	1993
7.5-mile heat (3 laps).....	161.712 mph	Mark Tate.....	Winston Eagle.....	1993
12.5-mile heat (5 laps).....	155.011 mph	Jimmy Shane.....	Miss HomeStreet.....	2022
Race avg. (27.5 miles).....	152.595 mph	Jimmy Shane.....	Miss HomeStreet.....	2022
Race avg. (35 miles).....	152.631 mph	Dave Villwock.....	Spirit of Qatar.....	2010
Race avg. (52.5 miles).....	150.996 mph	Corey Peabody.....	Beacon Plumbing.....	2024

FUN WITH NUMBERS:

Who had the best eye for driving talent?

Many of the world's most important scientific discoveries came about after somebody thought to themselves: "I wonder what would happen if..."

Jim Sharkey is an official timer for H1 Unlimited and the author of "Hydro Who's Who," a comprehensive reference that tracks the lineage of the hydros and drivers who have participated in this sport over the years. He had such an inspiration recently when he wondered which hydro owners have been the best at recognizing new talent by giving first rides to promising young drivers who would go on to enjoy great success.

Sharkey ran the data from his spreadsheets and compiled a listing that connected each driver in the sport's modern era to the owner who first gave him a chance to sit in an Unlimited cockpit. From that baseline, we were then able to total the number of race victories earned by each of those drivers. The result provided a perspective of the sport's history that we hadn't considered before.

Which owners had the best eye for driving talent?

It turns out, it didn't matter much how many victories an owner earned to achieve this distinction, nor did it matter how many first-time drivers they had hired. It came down to a simple formula: It depended upon who they had hired.

A distinct advantage on this score went to the three owners who first hired the sport's three most successful drivers: Dave Villwock, Bill Muncey, and Chip Hanauer. The race-win totals for each of them is more than twice that of the fourth most successful driver in the sport's history. So, it turned out that William Bennett, Al Fallon, and Tad Dean started with a significant head start.

The results:

1) Al Fallon (79) took the honors on the strength of being the first to hire Bill Muncey (61 wins), Danny Foster (17 wins), and Joe Taggart (1 win) to drive his *Miss Great Lakes* boats in the late 1940s and early '50s.

2) William Bennett (70), the owner of the *Miss Circus Circus* hydros placed second for giving Dave Villwock (67 wins) and Steve Reynolds (3 wins) their first chance to drive an Unlimited.

3) Ted Dean (61) finished third because he hired a rookie named Chip Hanauer (61 wins) to drive his *Barney Armstrong's Machine* in 1976.

4) Ted Porter (33) is credited with giving Jimmy Shane (25 wins), Corey Peabody (7 wins), and Scott Liddycoat (1 win) their first rides in an Unlimited.

5) Jim Harvey (32) was the first to hire J. Michael Kelly (17 wins), Mark Tate (12 wins), and George Woods, Jr. (3 wins).

5) Joe Schoenith (32) gave a first-

time ride to Dean Chenoweth (25 wins) as well as to his son Lee Schoenith (7 wins).

7) Bernie Little (26) was far and away the most successful owner in the sport's history with his *Miss Budweiser* hydros, but most of those victories were accomplished by veteran drivers. His rookie drivers included Jim Kropfeld (22 wins), Howie Benns (3 wins), and Mike Thomas (1 win).

8) Bill Cantrell (22) made the list because he made his debut as a driver in his own boat (22 wins).

9) Jim McCormick (18) was best known as a driver, but was also an owner. During his career in that capacity, he gave a first-time shot to Steve David (18 wins).

10) Bob Miller (17), who campaigned several low-budget hydros in the late 1950s and early '60s, made the list because he was the first to hire Billy Schumacher (17 wins). ❖

Join us for a special Unlimiteds Unanimous meeting.

Unlimiteds Unanimous, the hydro fan club that produces the *Unlimited NewsJournal*, has arranged for a special meeting on Saturday, June 14. The group will gather at the Flying Heritage and Combat Armor Museum at Paine Field in Everett, Washington, and will enjoy a docent-led tour of one of the world's finest collections of rare World War II aircraft and military vehicles. Guests are welcome to join us for this special opportunity.

Known to warbird enthusiasts around the world, the museum features many American, German, British, Japanese, and Soviet aircraft that actually flew in combat during the war and have been meticulously restored. Most are in operational condition. You'll see some aircraft that are the only remaining examples left in the world. You'll also see aircraft types that used engines that would become staples of Unlimited hydroplane racing, such as a P-51D Mustang that is restored to look exactly as it did when it flew missions over Germany in early 1945 and a P-40C Tomahawk. For those who enjoy military tanks, the collection includes a Sherman, a Stuart, a Chaffe, a Pershing, a Soviet T-34, a German Panzer IV, a Japanese Type-95 Ha Go, artillery pieces, and much more.

Admission to the museum is free. Please meet promptly at 10 a.m. as the museum will take several hours to see. For driving directions and more information about the collection, go to flyingheritage.org.

MY \$0.02 WORTH

Editorial Comment by Andy Muntz



A hydroplane road trip.

With the H1 Unlimited season soon getting underway, let's plan a trip across the country to watch the hydroplane races!

It's interesting to note the various locations we'll experience as we make our way from Alabama to California. Every race site is different; no two are alike—each with their own traditions, weather conditions, and racecourse challenges.

The H1 Unlimited Racing Series starts in the Deep South at Guntersville, Alabama, a small town of nearly 9,000 people that is a hotbed of pleasure boating and fishing. Virtually surrounded by water, nestled among large lakes created when the land was flooded with the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority in the 1930s, Guntersville became a part of hydro history in April 1962 when Roy Duby drove *Miss U.S. I* over those waters and became the first to break 200 mph in a straightaway run.

Guntersville can get uncomfortably hot and humid, especially for those who live in the moderate climate of the Pacific Northwest. The race has been scheduled in late June during the past several years, but violent thunderstorms have continually plagued the proceedings. This year's contest was moved to earlier in the month in an effort to avoid the weather problems.

The racecourse itself is set on a large lake with the pit facilities located a fair distance away on the far shore opposite of where the buoys are set and where the spectators view the action. So, each heat begins with the hydroplanes making a long cruise across the lake. When they finally reach the other side, the competitors come to a 2.5-mile racecourse that organizers like to call "The fastest water in the South." They can say that with some justification, as the course features turns that are much wider than usual,

which means speeds that typically fall in the neighborhood of 160 mph.

A six-hour drive north is the next stop on our journey: Madison, Indiana. On the banks of the Ohio River, Madison is the largest community between Cincinnati and Louisville and therefore has a history strongly tied to river commerce. With a population of about 12,000 people, it's a place with Midwestern charm where old downtown buildings have been preserved as a national historic landmark district.

It also has a strong tradition of hydroplane racing. Madison has not only hosted Unlimited races since 1954, it has campaigned its own community-operated boat since Samuel Dupont donated his *Nitrogen* to the citizens in 1961.

The Madison race site is in many respects the opposite of Guntersville—except for the heat and humidity. Restricted by the width of the river, the course has long straightaways and tight turns, and have presented the race teams with several significant challenges in recent years. For example, if heavy rains have fallen upstream in the valleys of West Virginia or Eastern Kentucky during the weeks preceding the race (as often happens), Madison race site can get flooded or the resulting debris floating down the river will present a considerable risk to the speeding hydros.

But, that's not all. The course also passed beneath the Milton-Madison Bridge, which crosses the Ohio River and provides a link from Indiana to the opposite shore in Kentucky. The speeding boats passing under the bridge twice each lap have provided a spectacular scene for race fans, but it also could be unnerving to participants. Also, because the surface of a flowing river can mimic the contour of the river's bottom, a "hole" in the water has typically formed in the



The Madison Regatta is usually scheduled adjacent to the Fourth of July holiday, which means that a parade is necessary. The hydroplanes are always a popular attraction.

Chris Denslow

first turn of the racecourse, which has caused more than one dangerous spin out.

The race organizers have tried to mediate some of these problems this year by moving the course farther down river and by reducing its length to two miles, instead of two and a half. The boats will no longer pass under the bridge and the first turn will be beyond the point where that “hole” typically forms. The changes might mean slower speeds, but it will be safer.

Madison concludes the eastern portion of the H1 Unlimited circuit. For most teams, it means they next head home to Washington. Let’s follow them.

The hydros will next gather on the south bank of the Columbia River in what’s commonly called the Tri-Cities area in the southeastern part of the state. The three closely linked cities of Kennewick, Richland, and Pasco have a desert-like climate where temperatures at the end of July are usually in the three digits. But, it’s a dry heat, the locals are often quick to point out.

The Tri-Cities is a thriving area. Real estate is still relatively inexpensive, which has created a building boom in the area with many Seattle-area people moving there to retire. Agriculture is a staple of the region, but so is nuclear technology. Ever since the U.S. government built facilities nearby that created the Atomic Bomb that ended World War II, the population (which now totals about 314,000 people) has included more than its fair share of scientists and engineers.

Hydroplane races have been held on the Columbia River at this place since 1966 and, originally, were appropriately called the Atomic Cup. The races are organized by a civic group that presents the annual Tri-City Water Follies celebration, one of the area’s biggest community events.

The flow of the massive Columbia River is highly regulated to satisfy the Northwest region’s competing needs for power generation, irrigation, and fish



Chris Denslow

Part of the crowd along the shore of the Columbia River during the sun-drenched Tri-City Water Follies Festival in late July.

migration, so the river passes through the Tri-Cities at a relatively slow pace during the summer, which means the water is typically smooth and allows fast lap speeds. In recent years, however, there have been a few issues. In 2021, an entire day of testing had to be canceled because a large patch of something called Sago pondweed had filled an area the size of a football field at the entrance to the west turn. The depth of the river became a major issue last year, when the area where the pondweed had grown was deemed too shallow for safe racing and the course had to be shifted farther to the east at the last minute.

This year the Tri-Cities will host the prestigious APBA Gold Cup and the organizers have designed a new racecourse that avoids that shallow area. It’s still 2.5 miles around, but in something that is reminiscent of Detroit’s famous racecourse, will have a wide, sweeping turn at the east end in front of the pit area and a tight turn at its west end.

Next, the boats will go on to Seattle, a four-hour drive away through the beautiful Cascade Mountains. Because it is home for nearly all of the race teams and their sponsors, the Seattle race is

considered the biggest for most of those in the sport. It’s another place with a long tradition of hydro racing. The city’s first Unlimited race was the 1951 Gold Cup.

As a contrast to the quiet small town of Guntersville in rural Alabama, Seattle’s race site is set literally at the center of a major metropolitan area that is busy with the activity of over four million people. And, the race comes at an active time of the year when Seattle’s weather has reached its summer best—with sunny skies, little chance of rain, and temperatures usually in the mid-70s or low-80s.

The good weather during the first week in August provides the citizens with an excellent excuse to celebrate. More specifically, it’s the time of year for Seattle’s Seafair Festival, for which the hydro races are a featured event, along with the yearly visit by the U.S. Navy’s Blue Angels, who fly their F-18 fighter jets over the hydro racecourse each day of race weekend. As a result, the place is filled with noise and commotion—honking horns, sirens, the excited voices of thousands of people, aircraft flying overhead, and heavy traffic on the Floating Bridge to the north.

The racecourse itself is placed in a corner of Lake Washington between the

Floating Bridge and Seward Park. It's two miles in length and partly surrounded by a log boom to which large yachts loaded with spectators are tied.

Like the other racecourses on the circuit, Seattle's has its own set of challenges. In a corner of the much larger Lake Washington, the racecourse can be affected by wind and waves that can come from many miles away. The wake from the hydros also bounces off the log boom and reflects back onto the course

to cause tricky wave patterns.

After a long drive down the West Coast, we'll next arrive in San Diego, where the season will end with the boats gathered again on the shore of Mission Bay in mid-September.

What's there not to like about San Diego? The weather is always perfect—like Seattle in the summer, except all year around. Though slightly smaller than the Seattle metropolitan area, San Diego is also a major city, but the racecourse is

not right in the center of all the hubbub.

Here's a tip: When you go to San Diego to watch the hydro races, be sure to find your way to the viewing area on Fiesta Island, where lines of RVs are parked along the shore in highly coveted reserved spots. You'll feel as though you've gone far away from the city to the seashore. Bring a coat; a light fog typically covers Mission Bay each morning. But, by midday, the fog will disappear to reveal ample sunshine. A light breeze will keep the place comfortable. Take your shoes off and dip your toes into the white sandy beach at the shoreline and enjoy the soothing flutter of many colorful kites that will dance above your head.

Mission Bay is another racecourse that offers high speeds, this time because the boats are skittering across salt water, which offers their propeller blades a better bite. Watching the hydros from Fiesta Island, you'll feel so close to the boats that you'd swear you could almost reach out and touch them as they pass by across the start/finish line.

I promise you, there isn't a better way to end the H1 Unlimited season and your summer on the road watching the hydroplanes. ❖



Chris Denslow

The Seafair Clowns are always a favorite during Seattle's Seafair Festival each August.

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PLEASE JOIN US AT THE NEXT MEETING OF UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS

Special Event at 10 a.m. on Saturday, June 14, 2025

See page 23 for details.