

# UNLIMITED NewsJournal

A CHRONICLE OF SPEED

NOVEMBER 2024

## Bayfair is back; the winners are Corey Peabody, Andrew Tate, and the fans.



Chris Denslow

Corey Peabody drives *Beacon Plumbing* on Mission Bay in San Diego on his way to his second Gold Cup victory.

BY MAC CLOUSE

Last year, the Bill Muncey Cup at Bayfair was canceled when the promoters lost their title sponsor. The H1 Unlimited and Bayfair people worked hard to get the event back into the 2024 H1 schedule. When its addition was announced, an added bonus was that the race would be for the Gold Cup. Not since 1989 had the Gold Cup race been in San Diego. Things got

better when on September 10, it was announced that Mercurys Coffee Co, from the Seattle area, would be the title sponsor of the Mercury Coffee presents the APBA Gold Cup at San Diego Bayfair.

On the water, Corey Peabody won the Gold Cup and the Bill Muncey Cup in the *Beacon Plumbing*, and Andrew Tate won the national high-points championship in the *Miss Goodman Real Estate*. The real winners were the fans. The

Unlimiteds were back on Mission Bay, but so were 13 Grand Prix boats, several 1-liter hydros, and many classes of flat-bottoms including three KRR boats, the Unlimiteds of the flat-bottoms. Unlike too many of this year's Unlimited races, there was lots of action on the water and very little downtime. It was a great event for the fans.

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## FRIDAY

The six boats in the pits were U-1 *Beacon Electric* (J. Michael Kelly), U-9 *Beacon Plumbing* (Corey Peabody), U-11 *Miss Mercurys Coffee* (Jamie Nilsen), U-27 *Miss Apollo* (Dave Villwock), U-40 *Flav-R-Pac* (Dustin Echols), and U-91 *Miss Goodman Real Estate* (Andrew Tate). The schedule had testing from 11 o'clock to 11:45, the first round of qualifying from 12:50 p.m. to 1:35 p.m., and the second round of qualifying from 2:35 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. The racing would be a round-robin format as was used in Guntersville. There would be six heats with each boat only in four of the heats and no heat would be the same. Then all six boats would be in the final. Because it was the Gold Cup, the heats would each be four laps with a five-lap final.

Prior to any testing, H1 announced an agreement by the owners regarding what fuel would be used during the weekend. In June, H1 notified all the owners that the normal fuel used, Jet-A, would not be available in San Diego.



Robert Peters

Dustin Echols in Flav-R-Pac side by side with Andrew Tate in Miss Goodman Real Estate

Each team was responsible for ordering and paying for the Jet-A fuel they wanted for the San Diego race. The owners were reminded of this requirement while they were in Tri Cities and while they were in Seattle. Unfortunately, only two of the five teams followed the instructions. When the teams arrived in San Diego, there were only 13 barrels of Jet-A in the pits. They were told that red-dye diesel was available. Red-dye diesel has more additives than Jet-A. It can result in a bit more horsepower, but it is a dirtier fuel,

which can be a problem.

The owners agreed to share the Jet-A fuel. Each team would get two barrels of Jet-A to be used on Friday. None could be saved for later in the weekend. All the boats would use red-dye diesel on Saturday and Sunday. By the end of the day on Friday, the owners were told that they could use whatever fuel they had anytime on Saturday and Sunday, but there was still no more Jet-A available. No one knows what happened to the 13th barrel of Jet-A. Also, no one predicted the



Chris Denslow

From the left, Andrew Tate in *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, Dave Villwock in *Miss Apollo*, and J. Michael Kelly in *Beacon Electric*.

problems that the use of red-dye diesel would cause.

## Testing

The weather all weekend was great for good speeds. Temperatures were in the mid-70s to the mid-80s, with smooth water and only a light breeze. *Goodman* was the first to test and Tate did a lap of 158.755 mph that wasn't matched. *Flav-R-Pac* went out, but Echols did not do a hot lap, only doing starts and checking marks. *Apollo* and *Villwock* did 153 mph and *Mercurys* and *Nilsen* did 150.907 mph. The *Beacon* boats were not close to Tate's speed with a 152.663 mph for Kelly in *Beacon Electric* and a 155.252 mph for Peabody in *Beacon Plumbing*.

## Qualifying

For the Gold Cup, the boat's qualifying speed is the fastest average of two consecutive laps. The first boat out was *Apollo*, but *Villwock's* 156.241 mph was lost due to a fuel-flow violation. Next was *Beacon Electric*, but due to a battery issue, Kelly could not get the engine to start. *Mercurys* and *Nilsen* did a 152.846 mph. *Flav-R-Pac* and *Echols* did a lap of 151.502 mph, slowed to 136.548 mph in lap two, and then came in. Because he did not do three laps, *Echols* did not qualify. *Peabody* and *Beacon Plumbing* did 158.559 mph. The last boat out in the first round was *Tate* in *Goodman*. He blew away the field with an average of 165.116 mph and a fast lap of 165.401 mph.

Before the second round, *Flav-R-Pac* owner Kelly Stocklin said, "Dustin came in because of a fuel leak. We think it is fixed." He was right as *Echols* qualified in round two at 158.254 mph. *Apollo* and *Villwock* qualified at 155.043 mph, and Kelly qualified the *Beacon Electric* at 156.728 mph. Those were the only boats that were in the water for the second round.

"I'm not running again," said *Peabody*. "We are in the show. I want to stay safe and be ready for the show. When asked about having four-lap heats, he



Chris Denslow



Craig Fjarlie



Robert Peters

**TOP:** The drivers sign autographs for the San Diego race fans. **MIDDLE:** Jamie Nilsen drives *Miss Mercurys Coffee* onto Mission Bay. **ABOVE:** J. Michael Kelly in *Beacon Electric* on the outside of Strong Racing teammate Corey Peabody in *Beacon Plumbing* as they make a run to the starting line.



Robert Peters

**ABOVE:** From the left, Dustin Echols in *Flav-R-Pac*, Corey Peabody in *Beacon Plumbing*, and Andrew Tate in *Miss Goodman Real Estate*. **RIGHT:** Andrew Tate in *Miss Goodman Real Estate* leads Dustin Echols in *Flav-R-Pac*.

**“The boat ran well. We did what we wanted to do today. Lane one is the place to be here. It is nice to believe in yourself and your team. It’s like we were at the beginning of the season, especially after my first time in the boat,” said Andrew Tate.**

spoke from his viewpoint as the Strong team manager. “It’s all right. We all have to do it. It’s a lot of salt water, but it’s the same for all of us. I do hope Bayfair paid for the extra laps. It costs a lot to run each lap, and that increases the costs for the owners.”

Kelly was pleased. “We had a good run. The ride was good, and we made some adjustments to get more speed. We can get more, but we know that you don’t always have to have the fastest boat to win. I will try to stay out of trouble to be ready for the final. With more heats, there are more points possible so the national high-points championship may still be in play.”

*Apollo* owner Charlie Wiggins was also pleased. “We are happy to be at the races. Being at the Tri Cities race was good for the *Apollo* employees. We have drawn a lot of attention from the people we have met as we have traveled across the country. I enjoy building things, and it helped to have both Dave Villwock and Danny Walters with us to finish the boat. Dave is smart and talented, but we were questionable for Guntersville until the weekend before the race. We loaded things and drove to Guntersville on Thursday. Then we drove back to our shop to get more things that we needed. It felt good to do 163 mph in our first appearance on the water. We have had a lot of inconsistency with the fuel-flow meters. We have had to spend more time with fuel-flow issues than on other things to improve the boat. But we have enjoyed the support from the fans.”



Robert Peters

## SATURDAY

**T**he schedule for Saturday had testing from 10 o’clock to 10:20 a.m., Heat 1 at 11 a.m., Heat 2 at 12:55 p.m., and Heat 3 at 3:10 p.m. Only *Apollo*, *Goodman*, and *Flav-R-Pac* tested. Going into the first heat, Tate had a 968-point lead for the national high-points championship. Was he ready to go for the championship and the Gold Cup? “I’m as ready as I’ll ever be. Six boats doesn’t seem like a true Gold Cup. I’ll try to be consistent and keep my nose clean. I’ll take calculated risks but be sure to be there for the final.”

### Heat 1

In Heat 1, *Goodman* was in lane one, *Beacon Electric* in lane two, and *Apollo* in lane three. *Mercu-*

# Notes and quotes from the pits.

BY MAC CLOUSE

## **Darrell Strong (before the race, after qualifying):**

“Right now, I would say our grade is a B+. We won the last two races, and winning in Seattle is good for our sponsor who is from Seattle. It will be tough to increase our grade because Andrew looked very good today.”

## **Darrell Strong (after the race):**

“After the Tri-Cities race, I told our sponsor that we wouldn’t lose a race for the rest of the year. We finished with excellent results and a good trend, and we won the Gold Cup. I think our grade is now an A.”

## **Gunnar O’ Farrell:**

“I’m just here as a fan. We had no funding to get the boat here.” Gunnar did have another reason to be in San Diego. Marina Bartels drives the Y-31 *Miss Circus Circus* 1-liter hydro. While at the race, Gunnar and Marina announced that they are now engaged to be married. Congratulations to both of you!

## **Bobby King:**

Bobby was also there without a boat to drive. His dad, Jimmy, was in the pits as the driver of the GP-3 *Pleasure Seekers* Grand Prix hydro. Bobby was working as his dad’s spotter. Unfortunately, the GP-3 had a lot of mechanical issues and much of Bobby’s time was spent spotting his dad and the GP-3 at the end of a tow rope. When asked about the *Graham* Unlimited boat, he said, “Rob wants to focus on 2025 and put more effort into the boat. Tom Anderson and the crew want a fast and safe boat. The plan is for me to be back with them again.”

## **Dylan Runne:**

Another person in the *Pleasure Seekers* pits was Dylan Runne, last year’s driver of *Miss HomeStreet*. Before driving the *HomeStreet*, Dylan drove the *Pleasure Seekers* Pro Lite boat. Dylan also spent time in the Goodman hospitality tent. “This summer I have been working with the F1 tunnel hull series. No driving this year. Maybe next year. I sold my business and now have a Venture capital firm, focusing on seed capital and start-up financing for technology firms. I still live in New Jersey.”

## **Kelly Stocklin:**

On Friday afternoon, after all the boat activity was done, Kelly interrupted an interview to develop a new fan. Kelly was at the end of his truck in the pits when he saw a couple walking by with their about three-years-old son. The boy was crying very loud, obviously not happy. Kelly got the parents to bring their boy to the end of Kelly’s truck where Kelly was sitting on the steps so he would be at the boy’s level. He started talking to the boy and showed him one of the *Flav-R-Pac* hydro buttons. He then put the button on the boy’s shirt. Then he showed the boy a poster of the boat and gave him a rolled-up copy of the poster. By then, the boy’s tears changed to a big smile. Kelly got him to give Kelly a high five. The little boy then moved on showing people his button and his poster. The little boy had an experience that changed his day, and Kelly developed a new fan for the sport.

rys could not get out of ground idle and never entered the course. Kelly was first to the start and to turn one. He and Tate were side-by-side down the backstretch. In turn two, Tate used the inside to have a narrow lead at the end of the lap. Villwock was in third.

Kelly closed to within three boat lengths in turn one of lap two, but Tate used the inside to lead by one roostertail at the end of the lap. In lap three, Kelly moved out to avoid *Goodman’s* spray and Tate won by about two roostertails. Villwock finished third.

“It’s been a good way to start the

weekend, getting the maximum points available in qualifying and in this heat. Some boats may just be waiting for the final, but we are staying focused and taking what we can get. We are competing hard for the good of the sport,” said Tate.

## **Heat 2**

In Heat 2, *Goodman* was in lane one, *Beacon Plumbing* was in lane two, and *Flav-R-Pac* was in lane three. *Mercurys* never left its trailer as the crew was changing an engine. Echols was first to the start, but Tate was first to turn one. By the end of lap one, Tate had a roost-

ertail lead over Peabody with Echols in third. Tate stretched his lead to finish two roostertails ahead of Peabody with Echols finishing third.

“The boat ran well. We did what we wanted to do today. Lane one is the place to be here. It is nice to believe in yourself and your team. It’s like we were at the beginning of the season, especially after my first time in the boat,” said Tate.

## **Heat 3**

In Heat 3, *Beacon Plumbing* was in lane one, *Beacon Electric* was in lane two, and *Apollo* was in lane three. *Flav-R-Pac* died



Robert Peters

Andrew Tate clinched the national championship for himself and his race team during the first heat of racing on Sunday.

during the milling period. Echols restarted the boat, but he trailed badly at the start. Peabody and Kelly were close in lap one with Peabody ahead by about a boat length at the end of the lap. Villwock was in third, with Echols trailing in fourth.

Kelly pulled even in the backstretch of lap two and then led Peabody by about a boat length at the end of the lap. In lap three, Kelly was able to increase his lead to a roostertail. In lap four, he moved out a couple lanes on the course and won by two roostertails over Peabody. Villwock finished third, and Echols was fourth. Unfortunately, Kelly's boat did not pass the tech truck. He got a DSQ for a fuel-flow violation. That moved Peabody to first, Villwock to second, and Echols to third.

"Most of my run was OK," said Kelly. "I was over during the time I left the pits to get on a plane. It is a fuel-control issue with the new red-dye diesel fuel. We will make adjustments and test tomorrow. The boat is running good. I moved out in lap four to get better water and less spray from the other boats."

Echols explained what happened to his start. "I was in lane one in turn one before the start. As we left the turn to go to the start, I got in some water from another boat. It doesn't take much to put out the engine. I restarted, but everyone was gone by then."

## SUNDAY

The schedule for Sunday was testing from 10 o'clock to 10:20 a.m., Heat 4 at 11:05 a.m., Heat 5 at 12:40 p.m., Heat 6 at 2:20 p.m., and the final at 4:05 p.m.

Prior to the testing, *Mercurys* owner Scott Raney said, "Yesterday we had a multitude of challenges, including fuel-control issues. We were here until 12:30 in the morning working on the boat. It was raining lightly, and we had lots of help. We think we have things resolved." Nilsen took the boat out. It got on a plane right away, and he did two laps. Co-owner Shannon Raney was hap-

py. "Things are good. Now we have two heats and the final to show what we can do."

As expected, Kelly took the *Beacon Electric* out to see if their fuel-flow adjustments were good. Echols in the *Flav-R-Pac* was the only other boat that tested.

## Heat 4

Because of his top qualifying speed and his two heat wins on Saturday, all Tate had to do to clinch the high-points championship was to finish fourth in the day's first heat. Tate said, "I'll take it easy and take care of business. But I won't finish fourth!"

In Heat 4, *Mercurys* was in lane one, *Beacon Plumbing* was in lane two, *Goodman* was in lane three, and *Apollo* was in lane four. Peabody was the first to turn one, and Peabody and Tate were close down the backstretch. Peabody used the inside lane in turn two to have almost a roostertail lead at the end of lap one. Villwock was in third with Nilsen close behind in fourth. In lap two, Peabody stretched his lead to one-and-a-half roostertails over Tate. Nilsen used the inside to pass Villwock to move into third. In lap three, Peabody stretched his lead to two roostertails over Tate, and Villwock passed Nilsen to retake third.

## Final 2024 Points Standings

Last month's issue of the *Unlimited NewsJournal* included an error in the listing of the final 2024 points standings. The correct numbers are below:

1. Andrew Tate (Miss Goodman Real Estate).....7,419
2. Corey Peabody (Beacon Plumbing).....6,050
3. Dustin Echols (Flav-R-Pac).....5,151
4. J. Michael Kelly (Beacon Electric).....5,080
5. Jamie Nilsen (Miss Mercurys Coffee).....4,377
6. Dave Villwock (Miss Apollo).....3,132
7. Gunnar O'Farrell (Boitano Homes).....1,693
8. Bobby King (Graham Trucking).....746

Things stayed the same in lap five.

As long as *Goodman* passed the tech truck, Tate's second place finish would clinch the national championship. *Goodman* Crew Chief Mike Hanson said, "We should be clean. We turned the motor down to be sure." *Goodman* did pass, but *Beacon Plumbing* and *Mercurys* did not. They had fuel-flow violations, giving them both a DSQ. This moved Tate to first and Villwock to second.

Miss Madison Racing Team Manager Charlie Grooms was pleased. "We achieved our Objective Number 1. This is a new year with our new main sponsor. We are grateful to President Kelli Jo Norris, CEO George Petrie, and John Goodman for all they have done for us, and we are happy that we could win the championship for them. They want us to win the Gold Cup so the Goodman name can be on the trophy."

Both *Mercurys* and *Beacon Plumbing* switched to the red-dye fuel for Heat 4, and both had flagrant fuel-flow violations. "This was our first run with the red-dye fuel. We'll see what we need to adjust. We made some other changes last night that we needed," said Peabody.

## Heat 5

In Heat 5, *Mercurys* was in lane one, *Beacon Electric* was in lane two, and *Beacon Plumbing* was in lane three. *Flav-R-Pac* died in turn one before the start. Once again, Echols could restart but he was well behind the other boats at the start. Kelly was first in and out of turn one, but he and Peabody were side by side in the backstretch. Kelly had half a boat length lead at the end of lap one. Nilsen was in third with Echols in fourth.

In lap two, Kelly and Peabody were again side-by-side in the backstretch. This time, Peabody had the narrow lead at the end of the lap. Nilsen was in third and Echols in fourth. In lap three, Peabody pulled away in the backstretch as Kelly slowed. Peabody went on to win by a straightaway over Kelly. Nilsen was third and Echols was fourth. However,

# STATBOX

## Mercurys Coffee presents the APBA Gold Cup at San Diego Bayfair

APBA Gold Cup and Bill Muncey Cup  
San Diego, California; September 14-15, 2024  
2.5-mile course on Mission Bay; 52.5-mile race

**QUALIFYING:** (1) U-91 *Miss Goodman Real Estate* (#1801), Andrew Tate, 165.116, 100 points; (2) U-9 *Beacon Plumbing* (#92102), Corey Peabody, 158.560, 80; (3) U-40 *Flav-R-Pac* (#0721), Dustin Echols, 158.254, 70; (4) U-1 *Beacon Electric* (#1496), J. Michael Kelly, 156.729, 60; (5) U-27 *Miss Apollo* (#2427), Dave Villwock, 155.044, 50; (6) U-11 *Miss Mercurys Coffee* (#0925), Jamie Nilsen, 152.847, 40.

**HEAT 1:** (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 154.546, 400 points, 500 cumulative points; (2) *Beacon Electric* 152.796, 300, 360; (3) *Miss Apollo* 151.541, 225, 275; *Miss Mercurys Coffee* DNS ( ), 0, 40. Fast lap: (2) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 157.111.

**HEAT 2:** (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 151.542, 400, 900; (2) *Beacon Plumbing* 149.665, 300, 380; (3) *Flav-R-Pac* 140.063, 225, 295; *Miss Mercurys Coffee* DNS - , 0, 40. Fast lap: (3) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 154.421.

**HEAT 3:** (1): *Beacon Plumbing* 147.635, 400, 780; (2) *Miss Apollo* 142.758, 300, 575; (3) *Flav-R-Pac* 128.476, 225, 520; *Beacon Electric* DSQ - *Flagrant Fuel Violation*, 0, 360. Fast lap: (2) *Beacon Plumbing* 152.423.

**HEAT 4:** (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 153.070, 400, 1300; (2) *Miss Apollo* 143.174; *Beacon Plumbing* DSQ - *Flagrant Fuel Violation*, 0, 780; *Miss Mercurys Coffee* DSQ - *Flagrant Fuel Violation*, 0, 40. Fast lap: (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 155.628.

**HEAT 5:** (1) *Beacon Electric* 135.817, 400, 760; (2) *Miss Mercurys Coffee* 132.841, 300, 340; (3) *Flav-R-Pac* 127.702, 225, 745; *Beacon Plumbing* DSQ - *Flagrant Fuel Violation*, 0, 780. Fast lap: (2) *Beacon Electric* 154.756.

**HEAT 6:** (1) *Flav-R-Pac* 136.315, 400, 1145; (2) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 122.441 (one-minute penalty for jumping the gun), 300, 1600; (3) *Beacon Electric* 115.015 (one-minute penalty for jumping the gun), 225, 985; (4) *Miss Apollo* 101.479 (one-minute penalty for jumping the gun), 169, 1044. Fast lap: (2) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 156.769.

**FINAL:** (1) *Beacon Plumbing* 150.044, 400 1180; (2) *Beacon Electric* 146.739, 300, 1285; (3) *Miss Mercurys Coffee* 130.218, 225, 565; (4) *Flav-R-Pac* 120.141 (one-minute penalty for encroachment on U-91), 169, 1314; *Miss Apollo* DNF - save equipment, 0, 1044; *Miss Goodman Real Estate* DSQ - entered safety zone prior to the start, 0, 1600. Fast lap: (3) *Beacon Plumbing* 152.299.

COMPILED BY ALLEN STILES

for the second heat in a row, *Beacon Plumbing* had a flagrant fuel violation and got a DSQ. The other three boats each moved up one position.

*Mercurys* was still not where they wanted to be. Nilsen said, "We still have some issues. We're working on them. We are not in Heat 6, so we have more time to get ready for the final."

## Heat 6

In Heat 6, *Beacon Electric* was in lane one, *Apollo* in lane two, and *Flav-R-Pac* in lane three. *Goodman* was late in the scoring and ended up in lane four. All but *Flav-R-Pac* were early to the start. Echols backed off, and the other three boats jumped the gun. The jump was announced early in the heat, so the jumpers knew they were racing for second place. From

Robert Peters



Chris Denslow



**TOP:** The run for the starting line of the final heat. From the inside lane (far right) is *Miss Mercurys Coffee* in lane one, *Beacon Electric* in lane two, *Beacon Plumbing* in lane three, *Miss Apollo* behind them in the spray and in lane four, *Flav-R-Pac* in lane five, and *Miss Goodman Real Estate* on the outside. **ABOVE:** Corey Peabody drives *Beacon Plumbing* to victory in the winner-take-all final heat.

the outside, Tate took the lead early with Villwock in second and Kelly in third. Echols was behind but cruising for a win.

The finish on the water was *Goodman*, *Apollo*, *Beacon Electric*, and *Flav-R-Pac*. The jumpers' penalty was one minute added to their time to complete the heat. Villwock received a second one-minute penalty for an encroachment infraction, so the final order of finish was Echols first, Tate second, Kelly third, and Villwock fourth.

## Final Heat

The final would be the first time in the race that there were more than four boats, and more importantly, it was the first heat that would have *Goodman* and the two Beacon boats in the same heat. There were high expectations for a very competitive final. Unfortunately, those

expectations were squashed early in the milling period. At about the four-minute mark in the milling, *Goodman* exited turn one and was slowly going down the backstretch with another boat on its right. The two boats were not close to each other.

As the boats neared the buoy that marked the inside of the course, Tate went inside the buoy and went away inside the Safety Zone before he turned right and got back on the course. This caused Tate to be late to the score-up buoy, and he ended up in lane six. It also caused him to get a DSQ for entering the Safety Zone, but that was not announced until later.

In the heat, *Mercurys* was in lane one, *Beacon Electric* was in lane two, *Beacon Plumbing* was in lane three, *Apollo* was in lane four, *Flav-R-Pac* was

in lane five, and *Goodman* was in lane six. Tate was first to turn one, but Peabody led Kelly down the backstretch with Villwock, Echols, and Nilsen still on Tate's inside. In lap two, Peabody led Kelly by about a roostertail, and *Apollo* died exiting turn two. Tate was in third, Echols in fourth, and Nilsen in fifth.

The order stayed the same in lap three. In lap four, Peabody increased his lead to two roostertails over Kelly, and Tate passed Echols to move into third. Nilsen was in fifth. Peabody went on to win by about a straightaway over Kelly. Tate was third, Echols was fourth, and Nilsen was fifth.

While Peabody and Kelly did officially finish first and second, penalties did change the other results. Tate did get the expected DSQ. Echols got a one-minute penalty for forcing Tate to go outside the course early in the heat when they were in lanes 5 and 6. The final order of finish for the Final was Peabody first, Kelly second, Nilsen third, and Echols fourth, with a DSQ for Tate and a DNF for Villwock.

Peabody was pleased with his second Gold Cup win. His other win was in 2022 at Guntersville. "It took us two heats with two DSQs to get our fuel-control settled with the red-dye diesel. We should have tested this morning, but we got the win. I needed to be inside Andrew. With all the boats, it was rough, but my boat handled it and when I got in front enough, I could determine the course."

This was the first time in Gold Cup history that a race team had the first and



second place finishers. Kelly said, “It was a good team day for us. I had some rudder flutter, so I had to back off in the last laps.”

Mercurys owner Scott Raney was pleased. “In turn one of lap one, Jamie thought he would lose the boat when he got in some skid fin water. After the struggles we had yesterday, we are glad to take third.” Nilsen said, “We had challenges, but the crew gave me a competitive boat for the final. Thanks to Shannon and Scott and the Mercurys Coffee people.”

Echols said, “We had trouble keeping the boat going straight. Thanks to all the people who helped us.”

At the awards ceremony, Tate said, “It is an honor and a privilege to drive for the Goodman team. I am sorry. I hope there are brighter days ahead.”

At the ceremony, Charlie Grooms thanked John Goodman and the people who work with him. He thanked all the teams and people who brought Bayfair back.

Mercurys Coffee Co. Founder Morgan Harris was at the event, and he spoke at the ceremony. “Shannon and Scott are a good alignment with our company. We want to see the sport grow and do what can to help. We love it.”

While there were only five races this year, there was good competition with three different winners. There is still work for H1 to do this winter, but there were some highlights: Mercurys and Apollo joined the series as boat sponsors and race sponsors. Beacon, Goodman, and Flav-R-Pac continued their sponsorships. Graham and Boitano sponsored boats for the Washington races. We fans appreciate everything that the sponsors do to make the sport possible.

We wish good luck to H1 in their efforts to bring in more sponsors, more boats, and more races. It will be an interesting off-season. ❖



Chris Denstlow



Chris Denstlow



Chris Denstlow

**TOP:** The two Strong Racing Team boats return to the San Diego pits after the final heat. **MIDDLE:** Corey Peabody is met by a celebration among his crew members when *Beacon Plumbing* reaches the dock. **ABOVE:** The three podium finishers for the APBA Gold Cup From the left, Jamie Nilsen, Corey Peabody, and J. Michael Kelly.



Chris Denslow

# A weekend of classic hydros

BY CRAIG FJARLIE

**T**he Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum held its annual Mahogany and Merlot event on Lake Chelan, the weekend of October 4–6. In recent years, vintage inboard hydroplanes and flatbottoms were on the bill with vintage Unlimited hydroplanes. The 2024 renewal only featured Unlimiteds on the water, although a few vintage inboards were on static display in the upper parking lot. As many as a dozen Unlimiteds were expected, and with rides owed to numerous people, there was no time to include inboards on the program.

As boats moved into the pit area, it became apparent that some of the boats that had been expected would be in the “no show” category. The restored *Miss U.S. I* had a blown engine; a search is underway for a replacement. The restored *Miss U.S. IV* sustained damage to its bottom when it ran earlier in the year. Repairs would be a winter project. The restored *Tahoe Miss* was missing in action without explanation. Boats on hand were the restored *Miss Bardahl* of 1958; the replica *Miss Thriftway* of 1955; the replica *Miss Wahoo*; the restored *Miss Lumberville* painted as the 1962 *Notre Dame*; the restored *Blue Chip*; the restored *Hurricane*



Chris Denslow



Chris Denslow

**TOP:** Reproductions of two of the most popular boats of the mid-1950s: The *Miss Wahoo* and the first *Miss Thriftway*. **MIDDLE:** The restored “Winged Wonder” *Pay ‘n Pak* of 1973. **ABOVE:** This boat saw action in the early ‘60s as *Miss Lumberville* and *Savair’s Mist*, but has been restored to look like the 1962 *Notre Dame*.

IV; the restored *The Squire Shop*; and the restored 1973 *Pay 'N Pak*.

Weather conditions were good on Friday, but clouds began rolling in shortly after noon. A number of boats ran when conditions were favorable, but by mid-afternoon the wind was blowing hard, producing white caps on the water. At three o'clock, the course was closed, and things were quickly buttoned up and tied down.

Saturday dawned cloudy but the wind was calm. The course opened at nine o'clock and boats were on the water within a few minutes. The engine in *Notre Dame* was obviously having problems. *Pay 'N Pak* was moved out of the pits to the upper parking lot, and *The Squire Shop* was moved into the place it had vacated. There was only one crane on hand, and there was insufficient space to have them close enough in the pits so the crane could lift them both.

Shortly before noon, *Hurricane IV* went down the ramp to the water. The boat can be launched from its trailer. The boat was moved into position along the dock, but at noon the Classic and Antique Boat Society had the water for an hour so their historic boats could be pa-



Chris Denslow



Crig Fjarlie



Chris Denslow

**TOP:** The restored 1979 *The Squire Shop* making a run on Lake Chelan. **MIDDLE:** Ken Muscatel drives his restored *Hurricane IV* onto Lake Chelan. The boat is a veteran of racing in the late 1940s and early '50s. **ABOVE:** The restored *Miss Bardahl* returns to the waters where it won the Apple Cup in 1958.

rated on the lake. While the classic boats ran, Ken Muscatel relayed stories about *Hurricane IV*.

“There’s no boat like it,” he said. “It has never been flipped, and it’s the most original vintage wooden hydroplane.” *Hurricane IV* is just over 27 feet in length and 11 feet wide. “It was the first prop-riding three-point hydroplane,” Muscatel continued. “The engine is a 113 Allison, which has right-hand rotation. When it was launched in 1948, it had a vee-drive, and the engine sat lower in the hull.”

“At the Gold Cup that year, it was a wild hare,” Muscatel said. At the start of the event’s first heat, it got in the way of *Tempo VI* and Guy Lombardo, who had to swerve to avoid a collision. That caused *Tempo VI* to roll over and Lombardo was injured. *Hurricane IV* appeared in the opening scene of the 1954 movie *Magnificent Obsession*, which starred Jane Wyman and Rock Hudson. Bill Cantrell was in the cockpit for that filming.

Shortly after one o’clock, Muscatel took the boat for a few laps around the course, but its engine wasn’t running right. It went back on the trailer and was returned to the upper parking lot.

Sunday brought nicer weather and calm water. *Notre Dame* was on tilt, done for the weekend, possibly with a kinked valve in the engine. Mitch Evans let his brother, Mark, take *Blue Chip*

for three laps around the course. More people received rides in *Thriftway*, *Wahoo*, and *Bardahl*. At 2 p.m., those three boats ran an exhibition heat at modest speed, which brought Mahogany and Merlot to a conclusion for another year. Museum officials announced later that they had given a total of 52 rides during the weekend. ❖

**RIGHT:** Local resident and veteran Unlimited driver Mitch Evans waves to the crowd as he drives his restored *Blue Chip* onto Lake Chelan. **BELOW:** The spectators watched the action from a grassy hillside that overlooked the lake and a marina filled with old classic speedboats.



Chris Denslow



Chris Denslow

**UNJ INTERVIEW:**

# A conversation with **JEAN THEORET**



H1 Unlimited

Jean Theoret was born in Valleyfield, Quebec, on January 29, 1962. French is the official language of Quebec, and while French is Theoret's native language, he speaks fluent English. He was surrounded with boat racing at an early age. His uncle, Robert Theoret, raced in the 145 class. "We would go as a family and watch him race," Theoret recalls. "I think that's how we got involved in racing ourselves." The following interview was conducted in Madison, Indiana, on July 5 of this year, by Craig Fjarlie. Theoret recaps his success in the Grand Prix class and in the Unlimiteds.

**UNJ: Did your father drive race boats?**

Theoret: My dad never drove, he always was an owner. I think it was 1976 or '77, he bought my uncle Robert's 145 and my cousin, Stanley Theoret, would drive my dad's boat at the time. He drove for us for a couple of years and then my older brother decided that he wanted to drive, so he got in the seat, I think it was about 1980. We won a couple of championships with my brother in 145.

**Your family moved up to the Grand Prix class.**

In 1981 we decided we'd step up to Grand Prix. We bought Roger Reynolds's *Miss Danash*, which was GP-855. My brother (Pierre) drove for a couple weekends and sadly, he passed away in August of 1981, of a crash. He blew over and he broke his neck.

**Was that an open cockpit boat?**

That was open cockpits in those days.

**He was in front of the engine?**

Yeah, it was a cabover. It was a Staudacher hydroplane.

**Pickle-fork or round bow?**

It was a pickle-fork cabover. We had bought that from Roger Reynolds and he crashed on August 23, 1981. So, he passed away and after that, you know, we're all Christians. We believe that God gives life, God takes life. My father asked me if I wanted to continue racing, knowing that our life's in the hands of God. I thought that was a big trial for him and my mom to keep on racing after losing a son in racing. We decided to go on.

We had the boat rebuilt. Bruno Brossoit drove for us at that time. Then I started driving in 1983 in 2.5-litre. The 145 was now the 2.5-litre. I did one year of that and then I jumped into the Grand Prix boat in 1984.

**The first boat you drove...**

It was a Sooy boat, a Sooy cabover that my brother had driven before.

**The class name was just changed.**

Yeah, exactly. So, in 1984 I stepped up to Grand Prix. We did the 2.5-litre for one year because you could not drive Grand Prix without having driven a smaller class before...

**Sure.**

...which is normal. Makes sense, so we did that. I won Rookie of the Year in 1984 in Grand Prix. It was a bit laborious; we had lots of mechanical problems

and things like that. In 1991 we had a brand, new boat built. It was a Jamie Auld boat. It was one of the first totally enclosed cockpits, with the F-16 canopy. We won a couple races before that with the older boat, won a couple races with the newer boat.

**Were you racing them on alternate weekends, or something?**

Alternate weekends, yeah. We raced all across Canada and a bit in the States, also. Then, in 1994, we had a very good sponsor which was Casino Montreal, Super 7. We brought Ken Sperry on board also, as a mechanic. That changed a lot, the reliability of the team and of the engine itself. So, from 1994 to 2001 we won, like, 40 races. We are the winningest drivers and team in Grand Prix history, so far.



Jean Theoret celebrates his first Unlimited victory, which came at the 2005 Chevrolet Cup in Seattle



Larry Dong

**Did your dad do mechanical work, too?**

Well, my dad was more like a crew chief. He overlooked everything, every aspect of the boat and things like that. I used to build engines with my friend Serge Blanchette. He's part of many Grand Prix teams now.

**The Casino Montreal sponsorship ended in 2001?**

The end of 2001. We decided to quit Grand Prix racing at the same time. So, from 2001 to 2005, I was looking at the races. [Laughs]

**One thing you did before you stopped Grand Prix racing is, you went to New Zealand to race.**

Yes, in 2000, went over there.

**How did you get the boat over there?**

Well, the organization from New Zealand paid for bringing the boat over there. It was put in a container and put on a large ship, with a truck, you know, trailer, boat, and everything. It was shipped, like, many, many months before. We went to New Zealand in 2000, it was February 2000, for the world championship.

**Their seasons are reversed.**

Exactly. They race in the wintertime, their summertime. We won the world championship there. It's a bit different because it's accumulation of wins. That makes the winner. So, we won five out of six races, and the sixth race we didn't win because we broke.

**Did any other Grand Prix boats from Canada or the United States go over there?**

No, I was the only one invited. Of course, it

cost the Kiwis a lot of money to bring the boat there and bring it back home. One of them actually bought it a couple of years after.

**So, you took the boat home and then had to ship it back?**

Exactly. So, that was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, to go to New Zealand and beat everybody there, too.

**Is there any major difference in the way they race compared to what we do?**

Yeah, they don't have clock starts, they have flag starts. So, you get, all run together. You line up, and then there's a boat that follows you inside the track, and when everybody's pretty much lined up, then he drops the flag and then you go. So, it's quite different from here. It kind of takes the ability...if you're a good starter, well, it takes that ability away from you, that advantage away from you. But thank God, it went well anyway, and that boat was a fantastic boat, a very, very fast boat and we were able to pull it off anyway.

**When you had the break after the 2001 season, were you following the races?**

Well, yeah, I was following the races a bit. I built a house. So, I got a house, got a home, and then at the end of 2004, during the wintertime, I got a call from Scott Raney, who was the crew chief of the Lumar boat, owned by Bill Wurster. He wanted me to drive the boat. He had seen me race with the Casino boat in Detroit many, many years, and he thought that I could do a good job with it. So, we agreed on it, made an agreement,

The race team greets Jean Theoret after he had driven Lumar Window Film to victory in the 2005 Chevrolet Cup on Lake Washington.

**"At the end of 2004, during the wintertime, I got a call from Scott Raney, who was the crew chief of the Lumar boat, owned by Bill Wurster. He wanted me to drive the boat."**



**TOP:** Theoret tests *Miss Beacon Plumbing* on Lake Washington before the 2007 season. **MIDDLE:** Theoret and *Miss Beacon Plumbing* racing beside Jimmy King aboard U-3 Hoss Mortgage Investors at the 2007 Lamb Weston Columbia Cup in the Tri-Cities. **ABOVE:** The *Miss Beacon Plumbing* at the dock along the shore of the Columbia River in 2007.

and I started racing with Bill Wurster and Scott, and we won two races that first year. We won Seattle and Nashville in my rookie year.

**Okay.**

We won two races in 2005 and won three races in 2006, and then we won another one in Evansville in 2008, with Schumachers. Now, sadly, Bill sold the boat after one season with him. Sold to the Schumachers. Maybe not the right way to say it, it wasn't sad, but it was Bill's time to stop. Bill was not a youngster at that time.

**He'd been in it for many years.**

Yeah, yeah, for a long, long time. He had a very successful...

**He started in, kind of, junk boats but he got more successful as he went along.**

Yeah, exactly. I think he got a *Tide* sponsorship at a certain time and that's when he started being successful. And then, like I said, that boat was sold to the Schumachers at the end of 2005, for 2006. We were very successful in 2006, we won three races, triple crown. That was very, very good.

**That was with Beacon Plumbing.**

That was with *Beacon Plumbing*.

**Beacon Plumbing has an ad on television in Seattle and they show the boat, "...and Miss Beacon Plumbing wins..." and it's you in the cockpit.**

Yeah, that's pretty neat. I know Bill (Cahill) today is still involved with the sport with two boats now. Bill loves the sport very much. I have a lot of respect for Bill Cahill and what he does for the sport. So, he was sponsor for 2006, 2007, and '08 with *Beacon Plumbing* and then, unfortunately, that sponsorship stopped because of problems for Bill Cahill. Then in '09 we were racing with no sponsor. So, you know, racing with no money is very, very hard.

**You had a serious accident, too.**

I had an accident in Madison. Actually, I drowned there.

**Billy Schumacher told us in an interview that when they brought you in, they couldn't find a pulse.**



No.

**They pulled you through.**

Yeah, they pulled me out of the boat and, you know, once I got into the ambulance, finally some man decided it was not gonna happen and he punched me in the chest and the heart started pumping again. So, I truly believe, as a Christian, it's a miracle that I'm here and that I have no sequels, 'cause I was drowned for maybe five or 10 minutes. Usually, after that time, the sequels come along. My wife would tell you the opposite. [Laughs] I came back after that. I raced again that year in Doha...

**Yeah.**

...Cause it was November in Doha, in the autumn of 2009. After that, I decided I didn't want to do that anymore, especially with no sponsorship and all that. It didn't work out. The quality of the equipment was going away, and I think we weren't, you know, being very competitive anymore. So, I took another break from 2009 to 2014, where I raced for Erick Ellstrom in the *Qatar* boat in Doha. We did a couple races the year after, in 2015, we raced in Tri-Cities, and we raced in Seattle.

We had won the Gold Cup again in Tri-Cities, but it was taken away for a

DMZ zone, which was pretty sad because they could have fined me or disqualified me. The DMZ zone didn't give me an advantage. So, that's kind of the sad part of what I've done so far, to get the second Gold Cup taken away from me. Then we went to Seattle, had some kind of success, and Erick, well, he didn't want to do the whole season.

**He didn't have his father's interest in it.**

No, exactly, exactly, so it was kind of on and off, and so forth. We were figuring in 2016...we did two races again. We did Tri-Cities and Seattle and that was it. So, as far as my career is concerned, it pretty much ended there.

**When you went to Doha, what was racing like there? It was the same format.**

It's the same format, same race procedure, same start. Of course, it's a different country with different values and different ways of seeing things. The water, it was always rough in Doha. It was very rough. But, you know, it's an experience, to race in another part of the world that's so different.

**The race was on salt water.**

It was salt water, sort of in a harbor. Harbor racing is always hard because

the waves bounce on the walls and come back. It just makes the racing so much tougher, and the salt water was an issue with the turbines. The turbines don't like salt water.

**That's why they run the longer scoop.**

Exactly, and then you still have... swallow the fumes of the salt water and it sticks on the blades, and it starts back-burning and so forth.

**Takes a lot to clean it out.**

Yeah, it's a lot. But, you know, the thing that was sad about it is that in 2015, the Qatari people got out of it, and that's when it stopped, after that. I thought that really helped the sport in making it a world-wide sport.

**An international sport.**

International sport, yeah, because right now it's just an American sport. Nothing against it being an American sport, but I think it should be more than that.

**Well, to go back to your early years, did you know much about other great Canadian drivers?**

Not really.

**Bob Hayward or...**

No, that's before my time.

# Jean Theoret's Career Driving Stats

YEAR	BOAT	HULL#	RACE RESULTS					HEAT RESULTS						
			RACES	1st	2nd	3rd	DNQ	START	DNS	FINISH	1st	Pct.	Top 3	Pct.
2005	Lumar Window Film	9401	7	2	1	0	0	27	2	23	12	0.522	23	1.000
2006	Miss Seattle	9401	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0.000	3	1.000
	Miss Beacon Plumbing	9401	6	3	0	1	0	23	0	21	10	0.476	21	1.000
2007	Miss Beacon Plumbing	9401	6	0	1	1	0	21	1	18	8	0.444	18	1.000
2008	Miss Beacon Plumbing	9401	5	1	1	0	0	19	0	18	7	0.389	18	1.000
2009	Miss Bello's Pizza	9401	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0.000	0	0.000
	Hoss Mortgage Investors	9401	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0.000	1	1.000
	Renton Coil Springs	9401	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0.000	3	1.000
	Peters & May	9401	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	4	1	0.250	4	1.000
2014	Spirit of Qatar	1496	1	0	0	0	0	4	1	3	1	0.333	3	1.000
2015	Ellstrom E-Lam Plus	1496	4	0	1	0	1	11	0	9	2	0.222	9	1.000
2016	Oh Boy! Oberto	1496	2	0	0	1	0	9	0	8	1	0.125	8	1.000
<b>TOTALS:</b>			<b>36</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>0.378</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>1.000</b>



Chris Denslow



Chris Denslow



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

**TOP:** Theoret driving *Miss Beacon Plumbing* through a rough Ohio River while on his way to victory in the 2008 Thunder on the Ohio race at Evansville, Indiana. **MIDDLE:** Theoret celebrates with his teammates after his Evansville victory in 2008. **ABOVE:** Jean Theoret driving *Miss Bello's Pizza* during the Indiana Governor's Cup in Madison, Indiana, in 2009.

### Art Asbury?

Well, Art Asbury was racing when I started, when I was a kid. [Laughs] So, I know a bit about *Miss Canadiana*, so I knew a bit of that. I've known some like Tom D'Eath, I've seen these guys race. I didn't race against them, but, you know, Jim Kropfeld, and so forth. All these fantastic drivers I've seen, but I haven't really raced against them. I raced against my uncle, Robert Theoret, and Jules LeBoeuf and Larry Lauterbach. So, being a Lauterbach, he's...it was kind of fun doing that. It was very different, so much more different than it is nowadays. So much more unsafe, though, than it is today. People were getting killed every year in those days. Thank God that some people decided to move forward to invent those cockpits.

**If they hadn't done that, they may have killed off the sport by now.**

Most probably, yes, because except in the Unlimiteds, in those days, even two or three guys were losing their lives a year, so it was really bad. But, those are my fondest memories. I think my fondest races are most probably in Valleyfield, with the Grand Prix boat. You know, we won it five times, in Valleyfield. The only other guy that's won as much as I have, I think, is the Steeler, Bert Henderson. It's the only other one that did win five times in Valleyfield. But, you know, nobody's close to the total wins, which is 43. Nobody comes close to that. I'm very proud, as a Canadian also, to have won so many Grand Prix races, but also to have won races in Unlimiteds, you know, to have won the Gold Cup. There are very, very few Canadians—I think there's only one other person—who has his name on the Gold Cup that's Canadian. I feel privileged, I feel blessed, and I thank God for that.

**When you were racing the Unlimited, did you offer much input on things like propellers, set-up, or...**

Absolutely. I say that's what makes a good driver. A good driver that can help the team change some things on the

boat, change the gears, the gear ratios, propeller set-ups, the way you want the skid fin, you know, the longer or shorter bullnoses, also the set-up on the rear wing. So yeah, I had a lot of input on that, and I think that's probably what makes part of my success.

**When you come to a race, like this one in Madison, do you ever wish you could get into a boat?**

Yes, I'd still like to drive, but, you know, I'm 62 years old, so the mind still wants me to drive, but my body, sometimes, doesn't want to anymore. [Laughs] So, I might like to go out there and probably test a boat, but there's a big difference between testing and racing. So, I'm thinking, I'll always love the sport. It was a passion for me, and I did so many things, you know, with my family in the sport. My father, when he became the owner of the GP boat. I raced with my father, I worked with my father, and my father was my neighbor. I did things with my father that most kids don't do with their fathers, and I feel very blessed that I've done that.

**Now, we see Jimmy King and Bobby King.**

Exactly, exactly, same type of relationship except my father never drove. That's the difference between Jimmy and my dad. But, talking about Jimmy King, he's a friend of mine and we've raced against each other so many, many times.

**And the new H1 referee, too.**

Yeah, Jonathan Abbott. His dad is my friend. I was Bob Abbott's best man. In fact, Bob drove for quite a while, and I've known Jonathan since he was a baby. I think Jonathan will do a fine job as a referee.

**He seems like he knows what he's doing.**

Yeah, he's got a good head on and he's honest, and a lot of good integrity in him. I think it's good.

**Well, we've covered quite a bit.**

Been my pleasure.

**Thanks for your time. ❖**



Chris Denslow



Chris Denslow

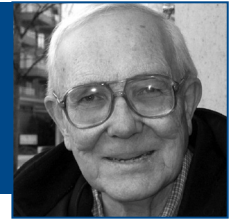


Chris Denslow

**TOP:** Theoret driving *Spirit of Qatar* at the 2014 UIM World Championship Oryx Cup in Doha, Qatar. **MIDDLE:** Theoret in the cockpit of *Spirit of Qatar*. **ABOVE:** Theoret's last Unlimited ride came aboard *Oh Boy! Oberto* in 2016.

# \$ENIOR \$AYS

## Feeding Your Hydro Habit by Bob Senior



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# MY \$0.02 WORTH

## Editorial Comment by Andy Muntz



**P**leasant memories came flooding back recently as I spent a weekend with my family at the annual Mahogany and Merlot event in Chelan, Washington. The weekend also caused me to ponder the reaction of today's young people to this sport.

Many years ago, when our two boys were in grade school, we'd join two other families for a long weekend playing in the sun at Chelan—getting one last touch of summer before winter set in.

To people who don't know the pe-

culiarities of Washington's geography, Chelan is located at the south end of a narrow lake that stretches some 55 miles long. At its north end, Lake Chelan falls within North Cascades National Park where sheer mountain cliffs line both sides—much like a Norwegian fjord. At the south end, the town of Chelan sits in the rain shadow of the Cascades and has a desert-like climate. Summer weather lingers there much longer into autumn than it does west of the mountains.

When we'd visit Chelan on the first

weekend of October, we could almost be assured that the skies would be clear and that temperatures would be flirting with 80 degrees. The drive home would always be accompanied with a tone of melancholy. Gray clouds would greet us as soon as we crossed the summit of Stevens Pass heading west, raindrops would often splatter onto the windshield as summer literally faded from the car's rear-view mirrors.

The officials at the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum have also discovered

the joy of being in Chelan in the early fall. The town, in the heart of the state's famous apple-farming region, also has a strong hydroplane heritage. From 1957 to 1960, Chelan hosted the thunderboats each May with the Apple Cup race. That tradition was revived in 1992 when hydro drivers and local residents Mitch and Mark Evans convinced Ron Jones, Jr., to take his new *Coor's Dry* hydro to Lake Chelan for some exhibition runs.

One thing led to another, and the next thing you know, the hydro museum started taking its restored boats to the lake each year in early October to give generous donors and dedicated volunteers rides in the boats. Before long, a collection of classic speedboats joined the fun.

Chelan's economy soon expanded beyond apples to the production of wine. Lake Chelan-area wineries, which produce varieties ranging from traditional reds, whites, and roses, have earned many awards for their quality in recent years. It therefore made sense that the gathering of old hydroplanes and classic speedboats on the lake would become known as Mahogany and Merlot.

For my birthday this year, my family had given me a ride in one of the museum's hydroplanes. Unfortunately,

I suffered a medical incident that put me in the hospital Labor Day weekend, and caused my ride to be postponed. Hotel reservations had been made, however, which led to our visit to this year's Mahogany and Merlot event, anyway—it became a sort of trial run for October 2025 when the grandkids get to return to Chelan to watch grandpa finally cash-in his rain check.

Watching and hearing the hydros on Lake Chelan was a new experience for my 15-year-old grandson and his 9-year-old sister. Both had a good time watching the spectacle.

I've often read comments on Facebook that the kids of today are too busy with video games and such to fully appreciate this sport. I'll admit, my grandkids didn't seem to have the same reaction to the hydroplanes as I had when I first saw the boats. The fact that the passion we once had for hydros is missing among young people doesn't mean there's something wrong with them. Nor does it mean they'd come flocking if only the boats made more noise.

Perhaps there's a lesson within the experience of my grandson for those who are trying to attract a new audience to the sport?

As I thought about it, I realized that my grandson, like most of today's teenagers, has grown up in a world where sports fans enjoy a huge universe of possibilities. With the Internet and today's streaming services, he can watch just about any sporting event taking place anywhere on the planet. If he wants to watch a live broadcast of the Gold Coast Titans of the Australian National Rugby League playing the Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks, he likely can. And, if he wants to enjoy the virtual sensation of driving a Formula 1 race car through the streets of Monaco, he has the video game that can do that, too. Both are opportunities that would have been far beyond my wildest fantasy when I was his age.

Back then, hydros were the only game in town. The sight of them racing across Lake Washington was enough to completely captivate me. I'm not sure if today's kids, with their expanded world of experiences, can be as easily impressed as I was.

Don't get me wrong, my grandson very much enjoyed watching the hydroplanes. But, let's be honest, I'd probably be expecting too much if I thought that he'd found a passion that will remain with him for the next 60 years. ❖

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