



# 2013 Swami

*This should be cut and dried, or . . .*

*by Brian Anderson*

The season has already started and points have been scored. A favorite has fallen, another perennial contender looks strong so that should be it right? The defending champion Steve David already has 1825 points while Dave Villwock has zero. This should be a cakewalk for the Oberto team shouldn't it? Could the 96 Qatar team mount one of the greatest comebacks in history or do we watch Steve David go uncontested? If one didn't study what was actually happening in this always strange sport of Unlimited Hydroplane racing you would believe all of the above stated nonsense.

The fact is, that although the Oberto team does look to be the front runner the championship is far from settled. Even though the Qatar team broke its primary boat in the last race of the 2012 season, a backup was found, and quickly. It was in fact found quickly enough in the form of the fast U-17 that it could be considered a favorite. The U-17 you say is now the 96 Qatar? No, the hull has changed to the number 95 and will be piloted by Kip Brown as the ever confusing numbers game and sponsor shifts take hold again. Dave Villwock has left the Ellstrom team and has no plans to drive for 2013. The damaged Ellstrom Qatar 96 hull is a long shot to see the water in 2013.

Further complicating the 2013 title race is that while the Oberto and Qatar teams have been the favorites the team riding a two race win streak in the form of the U-5 Graham Trucking has got to be taken seriously for the top spot. Driver Jimmy Shane who at the beginning of the 2012 season had never won an Unlimited event now has 3 to his credit. This team on hot streak further muddies the typically hazy picture for 2013.

If that weren't enough the true dark horse from 2012 had a strong showing to kick off the season. Jon Zimmerman who most experts didn't think had a chance last season showed they were right there sticking their noses where you did not think possible. The U-9 of Mike and Lori Jones is succeeding with an all white, "sponsor a race" approach. Zimmermans driving and the efficiency of the crew will keep this team near the top.

The outlook for the rest of the field looks just has murky. You've got Schumachers U-37 which last ran as Beacon Plumbing, a new hull in 2011 that has yet to live up to its potential but showed flashes of brilliance particularly in the



'12 Columbia Cup when it missed out on a victory by a scant few feet. Look for a return in '13 with an orange-silver-blue paint scheme instead of the blue & white of last season.

The original U-88 which didn't make the trip to Qatar for the Oryx Cup is a question mark. It lost its high profile sponsor in Degree after the San Diego race and has all but shut down its operation. Brian Perkins returns in the U-21 (U-88 for one race in '12) but after a frightening crash on Doha Bay he is scheduled to compete in only the two Washington state races this season. Expect the teams' backup in the form of the U-48 at the Seattle race with Snoqualmie Casino sponsorship. Rookie Jamie Nilsen, an outboard racer has been named to drive and will get in his required laps in the U-21 in Pasco the weekend before.

Another dark horse is the FEDCO of Mark Evans. After struggling in 2012 the team now has a solid sponsor and a new home port with every effort being made to make it a contender. Look for new graphics on this red boat.

Other teams that should be appearing are the U-11 Peters & May that was involved in that accident with the U-21. Driver Tommy Thompson should return if the hull can be fixed for the first race of the North American leg of the tour. Mike Webster's U-22 out of Pennsylvania should return after a complete rebuild following the blow over crash in the Gold Cup. It's hard to pin down how the boat will run this season.

The Leland Unlimited team returns with a new hull for driver Ryan Mallow and Beaver Lake Yacht Clubs own 'Bucket List Racing' may not be back with its T-53. Kelly Stocklin's colorful boat and effort will be missed.

The only new team for 2013 will be the renumbered U-14, formerly the U-13 of Dave Bartush leased by Jay Leckrone for the season. The team name will be Centurion Racing and we should see them make the entire circuit. Veteran Greg Hopp has been signed to drive.

As for the season itself there are new races in Sacramento, which will kick off the North American leg of the season; followed by traditional stops in Madison, Ind; Detroit, Mi; Tri-Cities, Wash; Seattle, Wash; the a new event in Coeur D' Alene, Idaho over the Labor day weekend; if it happens. The last stop in the states will be on Mission Bay in San Diego which will conclude the 2013 season.

Rule changes are virtually non-existent as far as the way the races will be contested so again look for a lot of action during the score up portion and the ever exciting games of leap frogging on the backstretch.

The big question of who will be champion when all is said and done has already been chiseled out in stone tablets by the Swami himself.

## HERE WE GO . . .

1) *Oh Boy Oberto*, Steve David 16 career wins  
City of Madison, Ind., 17 career wins  
1825 pts (2013 to date)

**Swami Sez:** Even though they have been beat two races in a row the team is fast and reliable enough to pick up some wins and take home the title. The team has a great driver in David and those Championship shields on the cowling didn't get there without a lot of hard work by the crew, led by Mike Hanson. Expect at least two wins with one of them being the Gold Cup. They will be fastest qualifier in at least half the events, win many heats but won't secure the title until San Diego.



2) 5 *Graham Trucking*, Jimmy Shane, 3 career wins.  
Precision Marine, 9 career wins  
1695 pts

**Swami Sez:** Jimmy Shane broke in to the big time in 2012 and continued that success into 2013 by taking the first win of the season. At least one more win is definitely in the cards and could very well end up winning three events. Don't let the garish paint scheme fool you, this team could be number one.



3) 95 *Qatar*, Kip Brown, 0 career wins.  
Nate Brown, 5 career wins (driver), 0 career wins (owner)  
1274 pts

**Swami Sez:** This team really comes to play this year with both Qatar and Ellstrom backing. The hull continues to be refined to go faster and it's hard to overlook this team with its deep resources. Driver Kip Brown continues to improve but has not yet broken through for a victory. This season that will change as Brown will win one race, most likely one of the northwest events.



4) U-9 *Red Dot*, Jon Zimmerman, 0 career wins  
Mike & Lori Jones, 2 career wins.  
1610 pts

**Swami Sez:** This surprise team of '12 will stay that way the rest of '13. Jon Zimmerman will keep this team in contention most of the year. The crew will keep the boat reliable and look for good things from this team. It will show fast qualifying speeds and score some heat wins but a race victory is not on the horizon this season.



5) 57 *FEDCO*, Mark Evans 10 career win  
Evans Brothers Racing, 0 career wins  
1050 pts

**Swami Sez:** This team is the 2013 dark horse that could surprise. A new enthusiastic season sponsor and the forever charismatic Mark Evans will put this team in the spotlight on the water as well as in the media. See it in the finals finishing as high as third.



6) U-37 *Performance Chevrolet*, J Michael Kelly, 1 career win

Billy & Jane Schumacher, 4 career wins

950 pts

**Swami Sez:** This will be the season that it will all come to together for at least one race and will pull through for a win. J. Michael Kelly is just too good to be not in the winner's circle this year. If they can avoid problems at the wrong time they can finish higher but a good east coast swing is needed.



7) U-100 Leland Racing, Ryan Mallow, 0 career wins.

Leland Racing team, 20 career wins

338 pts

**Swami Sez:** A team with a long storied history that has struggled of late. If they can get a fast start with the new, but in actuality "old" Leland hull, this team has a shot at moving up. Won't see great qualifying speeds and will probably be finished after the prelims. Driver Mallow is gaining confidence each time he hits the water. (The last time #0010 ran was as the U-37 in 2010 -Ed.)



8) U-11 *Peters & May*, Tommy Thompson, 0 career wins.

Scott Raney, 0 career wins

30 pts

**Swami Sez:** Seems like many a gremlin struck this team in 2012 at the exact wrong time and then to top it off was the crash at the '13 season opener. In a surprise move the team has repaired the previously thought unreparable former T-4 that crashed in Detroit in 2010. This effort while certainly spectacular still has a long way to go to getting back to being highly competitive.



9) U-14 *Toyota*, Greg Hopp, 0 career wins.

Jay Leckrone, 0 career wins

0 pts

**Swami Sez:** A new team thrown together at the last minute is always a crapshoot. This team could surprise or fade quickly. The new driver signed is quite possibly the best Unlimited class driver who has not won a race. (This was formally Dave Bartush's U-13 *Spirit of Detroit* ~Ed.)



**10)** U-22 *Rocky Mountain Tint*, Webster Racing,  
Mike Webster, 0 career wins  
Webster Family, 0 career wins  
0 pts

**Swami Sez:** Crash at Gold Cup took this team out early last season. The hull looked much improved in its few heats of 2012. If they can match last years' speeds with the rebuilt boat they have a chance to make a final or two. If not, it's going to be a long season running through sloppy waters at the rear.



**11)** U-21 *Albert Lee Appliances*, Brian Perkins, 0 career wins.

Greg O'Farrell, 0 career wins

265 pts

**Swami Sez:** The short three race season will show good results in the two Washington State events as driver Perkins excels in Seattle. May make final heat there but not a shot at victory. More sponsorship would make more races possible.



**12)** 96 *Spirit of Qatar*, driver undetermined

Ellstrom Family owners, 28 career wins

0 pts

**Swami Sez:** A long shot if the teams one-off plans to possibly compete at the Gold Cup come to fruition. The team still has to get everything repaired though.



**13)** U-48 *Snoqualmie Casino*, Jamie Nilsen,

Rookie

Greg O'Farrell, 0 career wins

0 pts

**Swami Sez:** Good to see a new face move up to the Unlimteds. Expect a solid qualifying effort and some back of the pack heat finishes. The new paint scheme looks good too.



## NO NEWS IS BAD NEWS . . .

?) 88 USA Racing, no driver.

Matt Gregory, 0 career wins

0 pts

**Swami Sez:** Plans here are unclear, the team probably won't return. Scott Liddycoat has moved to the Madison team. (The former T3 is at Hydros Inc., and as far as we know, no work has been started on repairing to the damaged hull -Ed)



?) 18 Bucket List Racing, Kelly Stocklin, 0 career wins

Kelly Stocklin, 0 career wins

0 pts

**Swami Sez:** Please, bring back the Beaver Lake Yacht Club entry (Oh yes, I do love that name). In a sport now of carbon copy hulls and ubiquitous motors was nice to see something different, even if it would not play in to the championship picture. It looks like will not be racing this year, but the great experiment of the T53 turbine will continue to develop.



The last set of photos from Craig Fjarlie's "California Connection" are, from left to right, the 1969 U-29 *Golden Komotion*, powered by twin T-40 Turboshaft engines (It spectacularly blew up and burned during trailer firing), the 1981 U-14 *Miss O'Neil Knudsen*, and the 1987 U-86 *Arcaidian*.



(From page 16)

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# Mira Slovak

## A Daring Pilot

## In the Right Place

## At the Right Time

by Steve Nelson

Hydroplane racing in the 1950's seemed bigger than life. Engines were loud and crowds were enormous, as speed records fell by the wayside. Some of the sport's most engaging personalities emerged from that era, including flamboyant Czechoslovakian refugee Mira Slovak. On the unlimited hydroplane circuit, a sport from which he 'retired' three different times, Slovak was a two-time national driving champion, Unlimited Hall of Fame inductee, air show daredevil pilot, and survivor of several serious accidents. And that's only part of the reason that 'Mira Slovak' became a household name.

In this series of articles, *Unlimited NewsJournal* writer Steve Nelson sits down with Mira Slovak to look back at the events that shaped his life, including his experiences as a pilot and as an unlimited hydroplane driver. He talks about the people and the teams, as well as the wins and the losses, and provides some colorful details to the significant chapters of his public life. He also talks about another ambitious 'project' that he recently put on hold.

Much has been written about Mira Slovak's dramatic escape from communism in 1953. His thrilling flight to freedom was calculated and daring, and produced bold headlines around the world. But as years of time have peeled back the iron curtain, Slovak himself has discovered new details about the famous escape. It appears that not only was the communist government quietly aware of his 'secret' plan . . . but Slovak now realizes how close he came to being caught.

### **I have a Dream**

When Mira Slovak was a boy, his native Czechoslovakia was invaded by German troops and later controlled by communist forces. The German occupation placed Czechoslovakia in the crosshairs of Allied forces. Unfortunately, Slovak's home was directly under the flight path of American bombers who were targeting a fuel refinery 40 miles away. Overnight, Slovak's world became a very dangerous place.

"The Germans had been tough, especially on the Czechoslovakian people. The Americans had been bombing us because they were bombing the Germans, but our people died too. It's a war. We were between a rock and a hard spot."



Young Mira Slovak peered skyward from the bottom of a bomb shelter as Boeing B-17's rumbled by overhead. He marveled at the enormous flying machines, and his lifelong desire to be a pilot took off.

"We saw airplanes in the air all the time, fighting. After the war, the drive was there. At that time, to control machinery was something very exciting. And so, I said I would like to become a pilot like one of them."

At age 17, Slovak and about three thousand other young men applied to join the Czech Air Force. Only 105 of the applicants, including Slovak, were selected. The new hires cut their teeth on gliders and then worked their way into open cockpit warplanes.

During flight training, Slovak became close friends with another young pilot. Both of the young men shared a heartfelt desire to get out from under the communists. Together, Slovak and Jan Doleřal hatched a secret plan to escape. But the dream quickly evaporated the day his flying partner was arrested.

"After we graduated and got our pilot wings, we were assigned to different squadrons. He did something wrong. He was flying... buzzing his girlfriends house... and took the lightning rod through his wing and damaged the engine. He brought the airplane back, and they put him in a working camp. He got into deep trouble."

### **Luck and Pluck**

While his best friend sat jail, Slovak continued to stretch his wings while flying for the Czech Air Force. Less than two years later, he and several thousand other young Czech pilots applied for a chance to fly for the national airlines. Again, Slovak was among the few selected.

"It was luck. Everybody wanted to go to Czech Airlines. But out of that group, only 50 or 60 of us went to the transport school. Then they took ten people for the Czech Airlines, as captains. I'd never flown as a captain

on an airline. So... they put me in the left seat as a captain, and put a senior captain supervising me. After two months he signed me up. I was on my own. At that time, I was 19."

Six months later, Slovak's old buddy from Air Force flight school was released from jail. Oddly enough, Doleřal was reassigned to fly as co-captain to Slovak. The old friends picked right up where they left off, flying together and secretly hatching an ambitious plan to escape.

The plan was simple, but daring. They would fill their DC-3 passenger plane with two dozen freedom-sympathizers in Prague, and then fly like crazy over the West German border. Time was on their side. It wasn't difficult to find two dozen people to join the plan. The hard part was keeping a secret. One day a total stranger stopped Slovak on the street and inquired about the covert plan. Slovak knew that someone in the party had let the word out. He made an instant decision that it was now or never. The escape must occur on March 23, 1953, the very next day.

### **And Now You Know the Rest of the Story**

Slovak had prepared for this moment for two years. But for others in his circle of friends, the decision came too fast, and only five sympathizers were among the passengers on board that night. Oddly enough, Slovak's co-pilot on the freedom flight - the man who helped mastermind the escape - backed out as well. Although Doleřal was present on the flight, he and Slovak traded a few punches to give the appearance of a struggle, and then he allowed Slovak to lock him into a baggage area. Slovak then took the controls, pointed the plane toward Frankfurt, and the rest is history.

Decades later, Slovak now knows the real reason his co-pilot stayed behind.



Czechoslovakian Airlines DC-3 aircraft similar to what Mira Slovak flew.



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“Now, after so many years after the communism went down the drain, I have found out in the archives that the co-pilot, my good friend, was a member of the secret police! They had been planning it. He didn’t go for the punishment for buzzing his girlfriend. He went to the mental rehab, and they ‘re-do’ him, and he worked for the police. And he came to Czech Airlines, assigned to [spy on] me! All the time we flew together, I talked to him like an idiot!”

Slovak says his co-pilot had been waiting for a certain “big shot” to join the defectors. Had that conspirator also been on board, Slovak is now certain his co-pilot would have blown the whistle to stop the escape. To Captain Slovak, the penalty was unthinkable.

“You always scared if you do something illegal. It was very simple. We gonna make it, or we gonna die. Because if they caught us, they shoot us. I have been court-martialed and sentenced to death in absentia . . . because I was amilitary pilot.”

### **The Czech - Boeing Connection**

Within hours of his bold dash over the iron curtain, headlines proclaimed his story around the world, and Captain Slovak became famous. But in spite of the fame, life in the USA was challenging. Now that his lifelong dream of freedom had been realized, Slovak had to figure out what to do with it. He was cut off from family, and his life was ‘controlled’ by the CIA. Then Slovak flunked a big English test, which meant that the U.S. Air Force and airlines could not hire him. So he took a job as a crop dusting pilot in Yakima, Washington. The air time was nice, but Slovak was not yet ready to settle for the small potatoes of central Washington.

Aware of his discontent, Slovak’s CIA agent introduced him to Bill Boeing Jr., who needed a pilot for his growing commercial helicopter business. This time Slovak’s Czech roots served him well. He not only got the job, he got a new family too.

“It just happened that Mr. Boeing’s mother-in-law was a Czech. Her last name was Czech, and she spoke perfect Czech! Czechoslovakian. So I went from being unknown, to a family. I became a part of all their activities, like Christmas; like a member of the family.”

Slovak was hired to be a pilot for Bill Boeing Jr. He liked his new boss a lot, but wasn’t too crazy about Mr. Boeing’s helicopter.

“Mr. Boeing asked me to learn to fly a helicopter, which I did, because he said he gonna go fish and hunt in places that nobody had been before. To be honest with you, I hate helicopters to start with. But I took the lessons, and I still didn’t like them. I told him ‘Mr. Boeing, probably if I going to take you places that nobody ever been before, we never gonna come back, because I hate the damn things.’ So he said, ‘OK Mira, stop flying helicopters’. So I did.”

### **A Date with Hydroplane Destiny**

One day in 1956 while flying his boss on a business trip, Slovak overheard a conversation between Bill Boeing Jr. and a partner. Boeing described an Allison powered race boat he was having built; a gorgeous Ted Jones designed hydroplane named for his home town of Wahoo, Nebraska.

“I just stayed there and heard about it, but I didn’t have any interest in boats. Later on he said ‘How would you like to drive a boat? Do you have any experience?’ I said ‘Yah, I never drove a big boat . . . but I drove a kayak.’ ‘Well’, Mr. Boeing said, ‘it’s a little bit faster than a kayak.’ So I said ‘Well, a kayak goes pretty fast downstream’.”

But Boeing persisted. He knew Slovak’s God-given talents, and he knew his young pilot could fly anything except a helicopter. Boeing says he had a lot of confidence in Slovak. “He was very good at handling an airplane. I thought he would do vewry well at driving a hydroplane. After all, it is close as you can get to something that flies,” Boenig says. Slovak said his status as a single man was also a plus.

“He wouldn’t have a married man drive, because there were guys that got killed and hurt, and he said he just couldn’t see it on his conscience to see kids without a father. He was a very emotional man.”

On May 11, 1956, Boeing announced to the press in Seattle that Mira Slovak would drive his brand new mahogany and red speedboat. It was a bold decision; Slovak had never seen a hydroplane before, let alone drive one. But then, Boeing had never owned one, new crew chief June ‘Frank’ Czech had never worked on one, and *Miss Wahoo* wasn’t even finished yet. So, what did he have to lose?

## ***Miss Wahoo: First Impressions***

Two months later, on July 19, 1956, Mira Slovak got his first opportunity to drive *Miss Wahoo*. With the Seattle Seafair Trophy Race only three weeks away, there was no time to waste. Truth was, Slovak was in unfamiliar waters. As the 26 year old strapped on his helmet and punched the accelerator for the first time, he quickly discovered that a 5,200 pound hydroplane was nothing like flying a crop duster.

“There was terrific vibration. You move the [steering] wheel, and nothing happened. You move too much, and it happens all at once, so you have to kind of play with it, and get the feeling.”

After that first trip out, Slovak said “Forget it!”

“I wanted to go home.” (laughs). “I said ‘I don’t want to get killed; I don’t think I can cut the mustard. I better go and quit.’ But he asked again, ‘What do you think?’ I said, ‘I don’t know if I can do it.’ ‘Do you want to try again?’ ‘Yea, I try again.’ I was very fortunate, because everybody was an amateur. We were learning all at the same time.”

Amateur or not, Slovak got lots of driving advice. And who wouldn’t want to help the friendly Czechoslovakian celebrity? Slovak says Lou Fageol and other racing legends were happy to assist.

“Fageol was an expert on starts. And a big, big help, was Ted Jones. Bill Cantrell gave me some tips. And Muncy. I called him Muncley. He said ‘Don’t call me Muncley, slim’. He called me slim. He said ‘I’m not gonna help these young punks, because next thing you know, they get better than you, and they beat you. So, I don’t help anybody.’ I said, ‘You lying again, so forget about it’. He was helpful, yes. Everybody was helpful.”

While driving *Miss Wahoo* in competition, Slovak wore a ‘hand me down’ driving suit from crew chief June Czech, who wore it as a decorated fighter pilot in the Korean War. Czech called it his ‘lucky suit’.

“It was a kaki flying suit. He said, ‘it was good to me, because the Russians had been shooting at me and somehow it got me out of trouble’. So I drove all the time in that suit.”

### **Slovak’s First Race Win**

Slovak and *Miss Wahoo* entered only two races in 1956, finishing fifth at Seafair, and sixth at the Sahara Cup in Nevada. But in its second year on the circuit, *Miss Wahoo* lived up to its name. Slovak finished a strong second at the 1957 season opener in Chelan, and then won his first race ever at Tahoe City, capturing the Mapes Mile High Cup. He finished the year in third place overall.

Owner Bill Boeing Jr. says Slovak was a fast learner. “He was really raring to go. My only problem with Mira was to try and get him to take it easy on the throttle once in awhile.”

During those early years of competition, friendships with other drivers blossomed. Slovak grins broadly when he talks about his friend Bill Muncy. Because of their huge personalities, great quotes, and fierce rivalry, both men became favorites of the press.

That rivalry was briefly put on hold during the Indiana Governor’s Cup on the Ohio River, in September of 1957. In a wild start to heat 2A, 50,000 fans witnessed a huge blast of spray near the judge’s stand when Muncy’s *Miss*



H&RM Collection photo

Mira Slovak, Les Staduacher, *Miss Wahoo* designer and builder, Bill Boeings, at his right, with another executive at Seattle in 1956.



The U-77 *Miss Wahoo* on a crane heading for the pits after a run on Lake Tahoe for the 1957 Mapes-Mile-High Gold Cup.

*Thriftway* shot out of the water and burst apart on impact. Slovak says the accident occurred as speeds reached 160 mph.

“It was a good start and we were side by side. He (Muncey) was inside as usual, and I was pushing pretty hard. In the turns I was eating his rough water . . . and then I just saw a big spray of water. Of course I slowed down and made a 180 and came back, and there was nothing but a bunch of pieces of wood.”

When Slovak spotted Muncey, he dove into the river to help the injured driver.

“They designed the life jackets so that your face is in the water and drinking the water. I came there, and when I was holding on him . . . they came by with the boats and took him.”

A few days later, Muncey was airlifted home to Seattle. At Muncey’s request, Slovak stayed by his side. Slovak downplays the significance of Muncey’s request, saying it may have been the drugs!

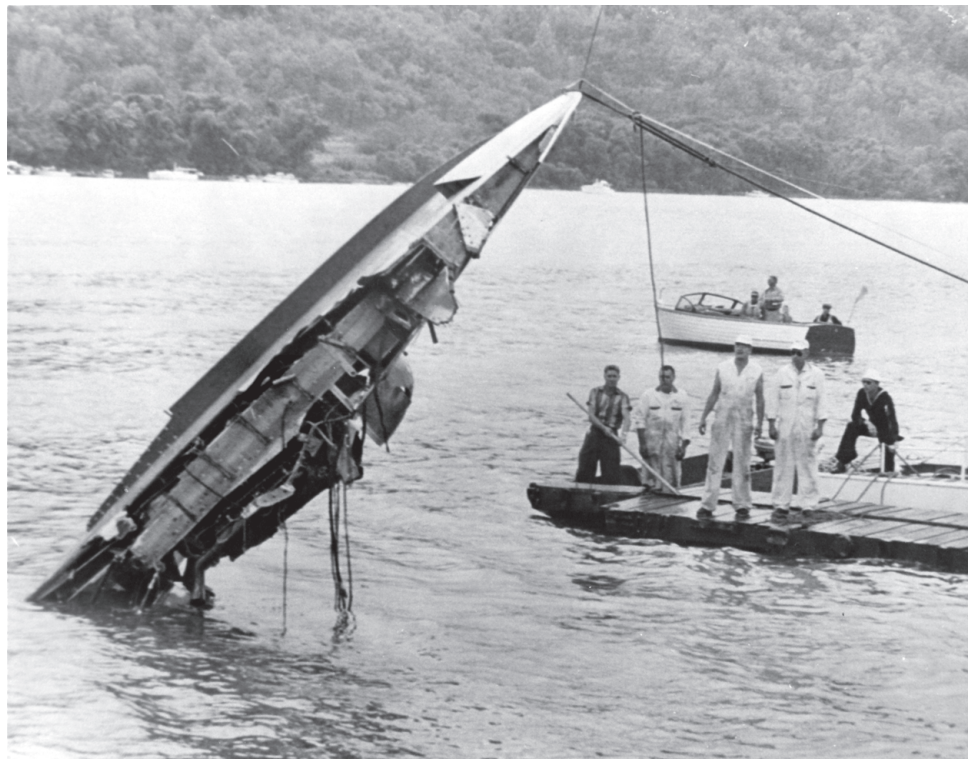
“He insisted for me to fly him. He was drugged, you know. They had pain killers and anything available, and they say they gonna fly you on an airplane. He said, ‘No, I’m only gonna fly with Mira’.

Muncey was adamant, even in pain. So Slovak flew him to Chicago in a small Piper Apache, landing the tiny aircraft on the giant runways of the growing O’Hare Airport.

“Today, it would be impossible to even think of that. But in those days, Billy was an important man, and they let me park the airplane right under the Strata Cruiser, which is a four engine prop driven Boeing airplane.

Muncey was carried by stretcher into First Class of a Northwest Airlines flight, where Slovak accompanied him to Seattle. It was a painful homecoming trip for Muncey, who Slovak says “groaned all the way home.”

Looking back today at their unique friendship and rivalry, Slovak pays tribute to Muncey as a top competitor who hated second place.



H&RM Collection

The crew lifting out the wreck of Bill Muncey’s U-60 *Miss Thriftway* at Madison. The boat damage was so bad it would have to be replaced in 1958.

“Bill Muncey could not lose . . . and that’s what made him really great. He was so determined to win, that he was successful. Because he could not lose, he became the greatest of the greats.

“I was an amateur until I quit, because for me having a good time was more important than a Gold Cup! For me (and) Mr. Boeing, if you won, that’s great. If you lose, let’s have fun. Let’s go talk, and have a beer. I’ve never been under pressure from nobody in all these years.”

In photo at right, a smiling Mira Slovak shows off the trophies he won at Lake Tahoe’s Mile-High Gold Cup driving the U-77 *Miss Wahoo*. ~ File 10 photo



**In the next part . . . Mira Slovak talks about driving *Miss Wahoo*, the 1958 *Miss Bardahl*, and the short-lived *Miss Exide* of 1963.**



**HydroFile  
Lon Erickson**

### **1. Oh Boy! Oberto/Miss Madison**

Off-season maintenance and a re-refresh of the “Shark” theme colors to the *Oberto* hull were the major emphasis during the short off-season. **Steve David** and the Oberto team look to defend their National Championship during the balance of the season here in the U.S.

### **5. Graham Trucking/Precision Performance Engineering**

The Graham Trucking sponsorship was renewed and an updated new vinyl wrap with more black color, in addition to the red/yellow/blue theme to the hull will bring a little different look to the U-5, with **Jimmy Shane** back behind the wheel. **Cal Phipps** will be in Sacramento

as a back-up driver if needed for Jimmy Shane, as Jimmy is an expectant father-to-be and may need to leave on short notice.

### **9. Red Dot/Team Red Dot**

Jones Racing has picked up the title sponsorship of the Red Dot Corporation for the season and they have added some color to the former, all white scheme ran the past couple years. **Jon Zimmerman** will be back in the Team Red Dot for 2013.

### **11. Peters & May/Unlimited Racing Group**

After a crash in the Doha event, the ownership group made the decision that there was not enough time to properly rebuild the damaged U-11 hull. They were able to acquire a hull that owner/crew chief **Scott Raney** was very familiar with, the former Bud T-4 (hull #9401 *Beacon Plumbing*) which he ran for the Schumacher Racing team before he started his own team. They spent the winter, behind closed doors, rebuilding the T-4 and it is now the “new” U-11 *Peters & May* which will debut in Sacramento. **Tom Thompson** returns as driver to the U-11 after getting his debut in the latter half of the 2012 season. Plans are for the former U-11 (hull #0925) that was damaged in Doha to eventually be a back-up hull for the URG team.

#### **14. Toyota/Centurian Unlimited Racing**

The “new kids on the block”, so to speak, long time crew chief **Jay Leckrone** has secured the former U-13 hull from **Dave Bartush** and put together a crew of many of the former **Ken Muscatel** team to compete this year on the circuit. Dr. Ken Muscatel is helping to consult on this team, providing some equipment, and a race shop to work out of. Long time unlimited and inboard driver **Greg Hopp** will be in the seat for this new team.

#### **21. Go Fast Turn Left Racing**

The Go Fast Turn Left team will not be racing in Sacramento or going on the eastern swing to Madison or Detroit. Currently their plans for the 2013 season involve Tri-Cities and Seattle only. The team will take the 21 hull to Tri-Cities and attempt to get **Jamie Nilsen** qualified as a H1 driver so he can compete in their second hull up, the U-48 **Snoqualmie Casino** boat (#9610) at Seafair. **Brian Perkins** will race the 21 hull at both Tri-Cities and Seattle with the Albert Lee Appliance sponsorship.

#### **22. Rocky Mountian Tint/Webster Racing**

After a complete rebuild of the U-22 *Matrix Systems* hull damaged in a flip at the Gold Cup, **Mike Webster** and the Webster Racing team will debut their repaired race boat in Sacramento with a similar look and a couple new sponsors, Hampton Inn & Suites Folsom and Rocky Mountain Window Tint.

#### **37. Performance Chevrolet/Schumacher Racing**

The Schumacher Racing team hull will debut yet another new look at Sacramento, after running a white and light blue scheme last year, this year they go to a predominately orange look with silver/blue accent streaks. **J. Michael Kelly** teams up with his former crew member in the acquisition of **Bob Catipovic** to the team during the off-season. And looking to solve some of their handling/balance issues, the team have hired recently retired **Dave Villwock** as a consultant to find more overall speed. He will start the process working with the team to bring out the potential in the newest hull on the circuit (2011) that has not performed up to the expectation most thought possible.

#### **57. FEDCO/Evans Brothers Racing**

FEDCO (Fluid Equipment Development Company) out of Monroe, MI has been the new off-season home for the Evans Bros. hydroplane. FEDCO has supplied the team with technical support and resources to improve the performance of the boat. Look for a new re-freshed paint scheme when the boat hits the first race.

#### **95. Qatar/Our Gang Racing**

Our Gang Racing's hull (former U-17 *Red Dot*) will carry the Qatar colors all of the 2013 season, replacing the damaged 96 Ellstrom hull. **Nate Brown**'s group combined with a couple key players from the 96 team, along with Erick Ellstrom's support, round out the 95 team, with **Kip Brown** behind the wheel.

#### **100. Leland Unlimited**

**Stacy Briseno**'s team has been updated, along with the decision to run the most recent hull in the Leland camp, hull # 0010, with **Ryan Mallow** behind the wheel. A new striking blue, silver, and orange color scheme debuts in Sacramento.

# May Shop Shot



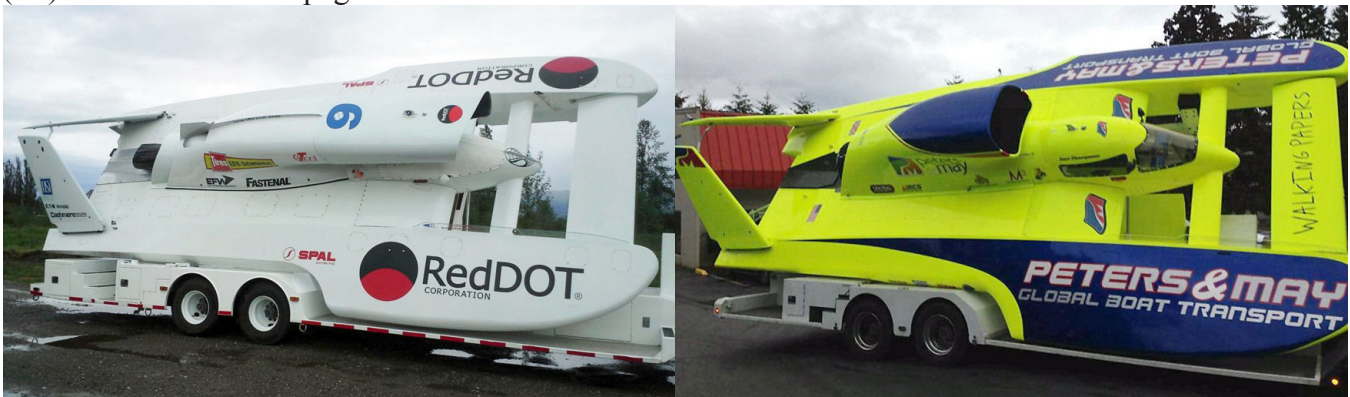
The new 37 *Beacon Plumbing* orange and blue paint scheme for the rest of 2013. ~Jerry Bowers facebook page



The 96 *Spirit of Qatar* in the Ellstrom shop. Not much going on with this boat now that Erick Ellstrom has leased Nate Brown's U-17; which will now run as the 95 *Spirit of Qatar*. ~Karl Pearson photos



Below left is Mike & Lori Jones 9 *Red Dot* ~ Jones facebook page. At right is the repaired U-11 *Peter's & May* (T4) ~ URG's facebook page





While the 2013 season races are pretty much set, some associated details are not settled. The Hydroplane & Raceboat Museum held a season preview event on May 11. The well-attended event, that included a panel of drivers, was pretty much a fan oriented, rather than a media conference, but a fair amount of news was presented.

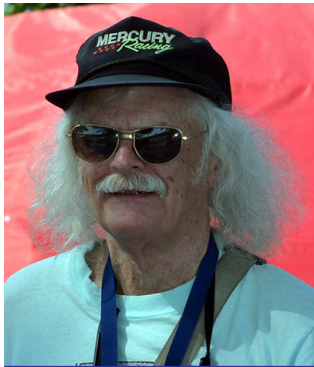
Steve Montgomery represented H1 at the museum sponsored season preview. While Tri-Cities and Seattle have local TV packages, no series TV package has been inked, nor has H1 signed an Internet streaming deal. Montgomery mentioned that some deals are close. No title sponsor for the series was mentioned.

Rumors continue to fly that money is tight for H1, especially with the Air National Guard title sponsorship being torpedoed by the government sequester. Some sources indicate that some H1 administration may not attend all the races as part of cost-cutting measures. H1 seems to be slow to communicate some details, like crew and media credential procedures.

And since the Mauer contract was not continued—they had handled much of the behind the scenes details like H1 credentials and insurance compliance, etc.—some dots are still not connected.

Drivers attending the preview were asked if there would be any changes in the starting procedure this season. There was a conference call that addressed changes in the starting procedure, but owners rejected changes. It was clear from the drivers in attendance that they preferred the current “fight for lanes” practice, too. Any rule changes had not been finalized before the preview event, but there was some interesting conversation about the technical rules. Audience members asked if GPS style devices would be installed in the boats. Montgomery mentioned that technology was tested, similar to what is used in motorcycle racing, but half the test equipment was damaged when put to the bumpy test of hydro racing or just didn’t work in hydroplane racing due to things like roostertail interference. Larry Oberto represented their team, as driver Steve David was in Europe, and noted that the rules must be something that non-fans attending a race can understand. Oberto indicated that the rules should help promote a good show and voiced the opinion that the show needs to attract younger people. Drivers were pretty clear that they did not want more rules that called for referees to make additional “judgment calls.” Oberto said that each driver chooses their fate and all generally works out and balances with the calls.

The season opener is Big Wake Weekend in **Sacramento** is May 31-June 2. No title sponsor for the event but the race is definitely on. Steve Montgomery noted that this is likely the best-organized first time event that he could recall. Lucas Oil recently renewed their title sponsorship for the **Madison**, Indiana race July 5-7. The Gold Cup in **Detroit** will be a two-day event this year, July 13-14. The Detroit Yacht Club has recently been named the title sponsor and Jarvis Restoration signed on as the presenting sponsor. A well-attended Gold Cup fundraiser was recently held at the DYC. Bill Rands continues to be an important supporter of the race. The City of Detroit is in well-publicized financial trouble, so DRRA volunteers are pitching in to do some traditional city services projects, like landscaping, mowing and related preparation work. French Fry maker Lamb Weston renewed their title sponsorship for the **Tri-City** race, July 26-28. Charter Business College will sponsor the Dash For Cash late Friday afternoon. The Grand Prix boats will return, sponsored the local plumbers and steamfitters union, UA Local 598 and Signatory Contractors. The 1-liter inboards will race. HARM’s vintage *Atlas Van Lines* and *Miss Budweiser* will make exhibition runs, thanks to the sponsorship of Legends Casino. Although the F-22 air show demonstration was a victim of the sequester, the HAPO Community Credit Union sponsored air-show has added a historic aircraft demonstration that includes the Grumman F7F Tigercat and F8F Bearcat. Albert Lee Appliance signed a new 3-year deal to be the title sponsor for **Seattle’s** race. The Blue Angels are grounded by the Sequester, but Seafair was able to book the Patriot’s Jet Team to headline the Boeing sponsored air show. Graham Trucking will again sponsor the tunnel boats in the F-1 Prop Tour race. The round-nosed vintage hydros from HARM will make exhibition runs, too. This may be the year where fans need to attend the race (instead of watching it at home on TV), to demonstrate that hydro fans --- and not just Blue Angel fans --- attend the Seattle race! Some hydro insiders view the final two races on the season schedule as a bit more tentative. First, is the return of the Diamond Cup to **Coeur d’alene**, Idaho over Labor Day weekend, Aug. 30-Sept. 1. Steve Montgomery said that the Idaho promoter is confident that a title sponsor will be announced very soon. Watch their website as more details become available. The season should conclude with the **San Diego** race, Sept. 13-15. No title sponsor has been announced and the race has a history of being touch ‘n go, but the City of San Diego will provide some support from the recently renewed Tourism Marketing District (TMD) fund, which has helped fund the event the past couple of years.



**Heritage  
Craig Fjarlie**

## California Connections

The book *This is Hydroplaning* has a headline in it that reads, “From New York to California, the Hydros Are Racing.” New York’s unlimited hydroplane history began early and faded. California, by comparison, has a long and deep involvement with hydroplanes. In fact, the state’s contributions are more significant and numerous than one might suspect. As I started researching this article, I was surprised how long and varied the list became.

The Pacific Motorboat Perpetual Trophy was founded in 1923. Rules were patterned after those used in the APBA Gold Cup. Officials in California hoped Gold Cup boats would travel west to challenge for their trophy. Unfortunately, travel was all in the opposite direction. In 1937, a young Dan Arena traveled to Detroit to watch the Gold Cup. The next year, he and Danny Foster went to Detroit with *Miss Golden Gate* and finished second to *Alagi*.

Racing resumed following World War II and Arena and Foster went to the 1946 Gold Cup with *Miss Golden Gate III*. Their Allison-powered boat didn’t win, but garnered a great deal of attention. Soon other boats from California were entering races in the eastern part of the country. Stan Dollar’s *Skip-A-Long* won four races in 1949 including the Harmsworth. Dollar’s partner in the boat was Ollie Meek. Henry Kaiser’s *Hot Metal* and *Aluminum First* were less successful, but participated in late ‘40s regattas. Morlan Visel brought *Hurricane IV* to the 1948 Gold Cup.

When *Slo-mo-shun IV* went for the mile straightaway record on Lake Washington, two Californians played prominent roles. The propeller was made by Hi Johnson, and timing equipment was prepared by Otto Crocker.

Throughout the 1950s, races were held on Lake Tahoe. Although the lake straddles the border between Nevada and California, the races were held in Tahoe City, on the California shore. A number of boats were based in California in those days. The list is lengthy, but includes *Breathless*, *Breathless II*, *Muvalong*, *Hawaii Ka’i*, *Scooter*, *Scooter Too*, *Zephyr-Fury*, *Short Snoorter*, and *Honey Moon*. *Zephyr-Fury* made an unsuccessful straightaway run on the Salton Sea in 1955.

Boat builder Fred Wickens, a transplanted Canadian, built the first \$ *Bill* for Lawrence “Bill” Schuyler, of Lompoc. Visel made a last attempt with *Hurricane VI*, the former *Movalong*, in 1962.

The first unlimited race was held on Mission Bay in 1964. The next year Bob Fendler started racing unlimiteds with *Miss San Diego*. In the late ‘60s, Bernie Little had a junior partner in ownership of *Miss Budweiser*. Tom Friedkin has been nearly forgotten, but he lived in Southern California. Ken Murphy, of Sacramento, was a co-owner of *Berryessa Belle*. Ron Casper and Ken Murphy owned and Casper drove *The Wanderer*. It attended two events in 1969 before being destroyed at Seattle.

In the 1960s and ‘70s, a number of new boats were produced in California. Bob Patterson built *Parco’s O-Ring Miss* in 1966. Patterson later became owner of the boat and won the San Diego race in 1986. Wickens built the “skateboard” *Atlas Van Lines* in 1968. Ron Jones relocated to Costa Mesa and several boats were built there, including the winged *Pay ‘n Pak*, the U-95, and the Gold Cup winning *Miss U.S. (3)*. An unsuccessful California boat from that era was *Golden Komotion*. Another famous failure was the auto-powered *Miss O’Neil & Knudsen*.

Races were held on Folsom Lake near Sacramento in 1966 and 1967. An attempt was made in 1976 to have a race near San Francisco, but the effort came to naught.

In the early 1970s Bill Muncey moved to San Diego. When races on Mission Bay were suspended following the 1970 season, Muncey was instrumental in reviving the regatta in 1974.

Chuck King campaigned the former U-95, as U-96 for two seasons in the late ‘70s. The boat had a number of names including *Hawaiian Tropic*.

Fran Muncey lived near San Diego when she was owner of *Atlas Van Lines* and *Miller American*. Among the last California boat owners were Clay Stiles with *Miss Ginger Honey*, and Jim Hauenstein with *Arcadian*.

A number of drivers have called California home. The list is long, but includes such famous names as Lou Fageol, Jack Regas, Kenny St. Oegger, Red Loomis, Jay and Roger Murphy, Tommy Fults, Jack Schafer, Jr., Mickey

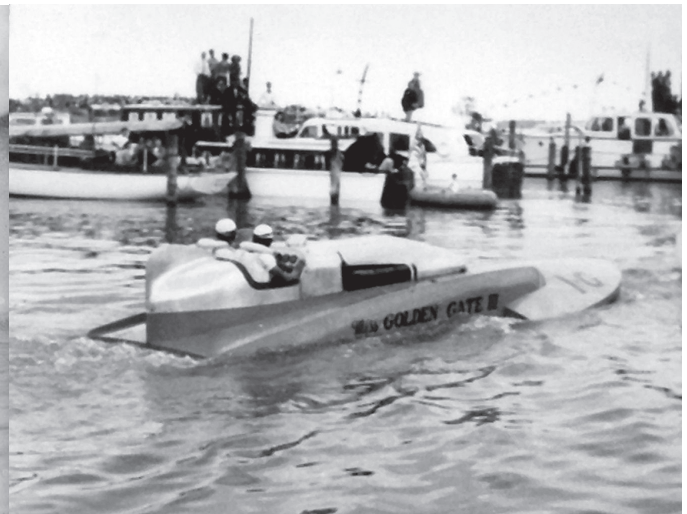
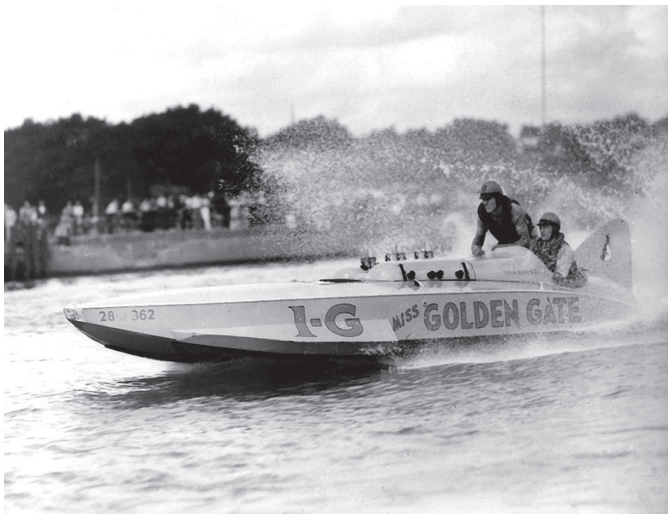


Remund, Ron Armstrong, Ron Larsen, and Russ Schlee. Mira Slovak was living in California when he drove *Tahoe Miss*.

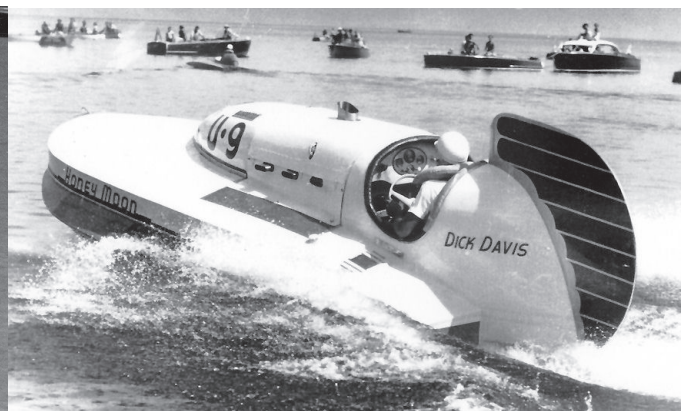
Unlimited racing's administrative offices have been located in California on a couple of occasions. When Phil Cole was Executive Secretary, his company, Lion Enterprises, was located in Sacramento. Now, his son, Sam, oversees H1 Unlimited from Sacramento.

The first U.S. race of 2013 will be at Granite Bay on Folsom Lake near Sacramento, marking a return to the site where the unlimiteds raced in the 1960s. An exhibition there in 2011 helped inspire local interest.

Unlimited racing has a long and diverse history of California connections. The return to racing on Folsom Lake is just the latest in that list. Let's hope the connection stays secure into the future.



Above is the 1937 1-G Miss Golden Gate; at right 1946 1G Miss Golden Gate III ~ Sandy Ross Collection. Below the 1948 G-25 Skip-A-Long (which is now on display at the Sacramento race); at right the 1953 U-9 Hony Moon. ~HARM Collection. Bottom the 1955 U-44 Zephyr Fury ~Jerry King photo; at right the 1969 U-45 The Wanderer ~Jim Dunn photo



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Editor, *Unlimited NewsJournal*, 16418 192nd Ave. S.E. Renton, Washington 98058  
or E-mail to: [USA1st@msn.com](mailto:USA1st@msn.com)  
Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

## Next Meeting of Unlimiteds Unanimous

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**-everyone welcome!**

**Sunday June 16th**

**UNJ 2 pm -- 4:30pm**

## Silver Lake Dental Arts

Michael C. Johnson, DDS, PS

Brent N. Kellogg, DDS, PS

1809 100th PL SE

Everett, WA 98208

425-337-3922

[sldarts@verizon.net](mailto:sldarts@verizon.net)

[www.sldarts.com](http://www.sldarts.com)