

Corey Peabody wins again on his "home" course.

BY MAC CLOUSE

Since Darrell and Vanessa Strong live in the Tri Cities, Corey Peabody considers the Tri-Cities course to be his home course. He won there last year and repeated this year, holding off Andrew Tate to win the Apollo Columbia Cup in his U-9 *Beacon Plumbing*.

Hydro fans were looking forward to this race because it would have a field of eight boats, which would allow the traditional format for the heats. The surprise for everyone was a low water issue that changed the schedule, changed the course, and contributed to two accidents that reduced the field to five boats.

FRIDAY

Friday's schedule called for testing at 9 a.m. and qualifying at 11:40 a.m. However, the boats were not allowed to go out on the water at testing time. The H1 race officials were concerned about the depth of the river, especially at the west end of the racecourse at the entrance to turn two. Because of a sand bar under the surface, the water there was only about four feet deep. The rules require that the boats compete on water at least eight feet deep to prevent a boat from hitting the bottom if there is an accident.

Initially, people blamed the Army Corp of Engineers, the agency tasked with regulating the flow of the Columbia River, for releasing too much water from a downstream dam. But the reality is, the needs of a boat race are way down the list of priorities for water flow as compared with regional concerns



Beacon Electric flies through the roostertail of Beacon Plumbing.

Chris Denslow

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Chris Denslow

TOP: Hydro fans check out *Miss Apollo* after it arrives in the Tri-Cities after its long journey from Alabama. **MIDDLE:** Bobb King drives *Graham Trucking* onto the Columbia River. **ABOVE:** Dustin Echols at the controls of the U-40, which transformed again this year from its Tennessee-orange look earlier in the season and instead sported the colors of Flav-R-Pac.

for such things as fish passage, irrigation, and power generation.

As for the result of too little water, the worries expressed along pit row and within the boat camps had to do with a recent incident.

A couple weeks earlier, an E-350 boat flipped at the races in Valleyfield, Canada. When the rescue people arrived, the boat was upside down and there was difficulty getting the driver out through the escape hatch on the boat's bottom. The divers then attempted to get him out by opening the hatch to the cockpit. Unfortunately, the boat was in shallow water, which prevented the hatch from fully opening. When the rescuers finally could get the driver out of the boat, he was unconscious and had been underwater without his air mask on for too long. He passed away a few days later.

The H1 race officials did not want to risk having another incident like that if a boat flipped in a shallow-water area. They said no Unlimiteds could run on the course until the shallow-water problem in turn two could be solved. The decision was to shorten the Unlimited course by using the turn two used by the 2.5 liters, E-350s, and the GPs for their course. That would keep the Unlimiteds out of the shallow water, but also shortened the course to about two miles instead of the normal 2.5 miles.

The smaller classes raced on Friday, and after the course decision was announced, most of the Unlimited teams spent the rest of Friday changing their gearboxes and set ups to be ready for the two-mile course. The buoys were adjusted on Friday night.

SATURDAY

The eight 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-12 *Graham Trucking* (Bobby King), U-27 *Miss Apollo* (Dave Villwock), U-35 *Boitano Homes* (Gunnar O'Farrell), U-40 *Flav-R-Pac* (Dustin Echols), and

Notes and quotes from the pits.

BY MAC CLOUSE

Scott Raney:

"It is fun to represent a sponsor who is active about showing off what they do well. They are excited about what they are doing. It is an active sponsorship. It is strange for me not to look for a chartreuse and blue boat. Our first race was good; the second not as good. We had some hull repairs to do after Madison. We dug deep into the boat, and it was exactly what we thought. We opened the deck and strengthened some things. We also finished a new engine, and we finished a display boat for the Seafair parade. It is an old *Atlas* that Mike and Lori Jones had."

J. Michael Kelly:

"This boat has been running well. It did hurt to lose points in Madison when the orange box didn't work. We are trying to get more speed. We need more horsepower. It is good to be back in Washington with all our families and friends. I have had success on both of these courses."

Dave Villwock:

"The new boat is good. The first time out we used a small prop to make sure everything was okay. It was, so we put a big prop on and did a lap of about 164 mph. We are making adjustments now. This boat is patterned after a drawing I made in 1996 for *Budweiser*. Some little things are different. Charlie [Wiggins] started working on the boat in 2019. I worked on it last year. When we got the Apollo sponsorship, we worked hard to get it ready for the first race."

Andrew Tate:

"So far, so good. It's been fun, but we still have a long ways to go. It's a new week and a new race. Everyone is working hard. My first time in this boat was in Guntersville and I did 163 on my third lap. It was a relief to finally know what I had been competing against in the six years that Jimmy Shane drove this boat. This boat is fast, and it still needs to reach its potential. Jimmy does keep tabs on me, and he is very helpful with my questions. He is very respectful of what we are doing."

Bobby King:

"I have been racing in some of the limited classes this summer. I am excited to be back in the boat. We had a good test session in June. We worked out some gremlins. Last year I was a rookie here, but now I can go racing right away."

Greg O'Farrell:

"We changed our number to the U-35. Jay Boitano has been in business 35 years now and wants the number to honor his 35th year. We have two other sponsors: Gutters by Keith and Rise Up

Academy. The academy is a school in South Everett. I am impressed with what they do for the students and the parents. The old *Freei* hydro was given to me. We are going use it as a display boat to have at their fundraising events to help them raise money for a new school. I did have a heart-to-heart with Gunnar. I told him we are here to have fun and gain more experience."

Jamie Nilsen:

"We are running pretty good, better than last year. We are ready for the West Coast races."

Corey Peabody:

"I am satisfied with my boat, but not myself. My driving cost us points and caused repair work for the crew."

Kelly Stocklin:

"Flav R Pac is the nicest company to represent. They were happy with last year's experience, but sadly CEO Frank Tiegs passed away after the season ended. The family decided to sponsor us for the Northwest races as a tribute to Frank. We are here to represent our team and Flav R Pac well. We have speed, but we have to learn how to race. Dustin still only has a few races. I am having as much fun as I can have as an Unlimited owner.

Kelly did want to identify a new sponsor. Swoffer Instrumental, LLP, is a Washington-based company that produces a device that can easily measure the water-flow volume from streams, rivers, and other bodies of water. They have world-wide sales and can provide information that is helpful in forecasting things, ranging from flooding to water shortages.

Charlie Grooms:

We have a long-term commitment from Goodman Real Estate and Andrew to be with our boat that Jimmy Shane raced to many wins and championships. We are very focused on doing well for Kelli Jo Norris, the president of Goodman Real Estate, and for John Goodman.

Darrell Strong (before the race):

"Right now, I would give our team a grade of C. We haven't won a race. But we do have chances to improve the grade. The boats are fixed so we'll see." ❖

U-91 *Miss Goodman Real Estate* (Andrew Tate). The revised Saturday schedule had testing at 8 a.m., qualifying at 1:45 p.m., Heat 1A at 4:30 p.m., and Heat 1B at 5 p.m.

All the boats tested, doing a mixture of hot laps, starts, and identifying new marks for the start. The starting line remained the same so the distance from the exit of turn two to the start line was now shorter. All the drivers agreed that the new course would be rougher, especially in the turns. There would be less time for the water in the turns to calm down before boats would be back again.

“We have no idea what this new course will be like for racing,” said Corey Peabody. “Last night, we brought over our gearboxes that we use for a small course. I understand the reason for the change. Doing the right thing is not always the popular thing. I have had good luck at this course, but now it won’t be the same course.”

“We will do the best we can for a two-mile course,” said Jamie Nilsen. “We won’t know until we get out there.”

J. Michael Kelly said his boat ride was the best he’s had all year. “This course is now more like Seattle. I was going to have to get new marks because of the new starting procedure so the new course didn’t change that.”

Gunnar O’Farrell talked about their changes. “I am very ready to run today. We did a few things with the bull nose and the wing, and we changed the gearbox. With the different layout, we want to get out of the corners with a different gearbox.”

Seven of the eight boats qualified in the first round of qualifying. *Goodman* did not. As Tate neared the entrance buoy to turn one on his first lap, he slowed and veered to the left and went to the left of the buoy. His steering wheel had come off. He slowed down and returned to the pits. The final qualifying speeds were: *Goodman Real Estate* 156.185 mph, *Beacon Plumbing* 155.150 mph, *Flav-R-Pac* 159.568 mph, *Beacon Electric* 154.000 mph,

STATBOX

Apollo Columbia Cup

Tri-Cities, Washington; July 27–28, 2024
2-mile oval on the Columbia River (not surveyed); 28-mile race

QUALIFYING: (1) U-91 *Miss Goodman Real Estate* (#1801), Andrew Tate, 156.185, 100 points; (2) U-9 *Beacon Plumbing* (#92102), Corey Peabody, 155.450, 80; (3) U-40 *Flav-R-Pac* (#0721), Dustin Echols, 154.566, 70; (4) U-1 *Beacon Electric* (#1496), J. Michael Kelly, 154.000, 60; (5) *Miss Apollo* (#2427), Dave Villwock, 152.322, 50; (6) U-12 *Graham Trucking* (#0001), Bobby King, 149.800, 40; (7) U-11 *Miss Mercurys Coffee* (#0925), Jamie Nilsen, 148.883, 30; (8) U-35 *Gutters by Keith presents Boitano Homes* (#1999), Gunnar O’Farrell, 143.778, 30.

HEAT 1A (Re-run): (1) *Miss Apollo*, 144.215, 400, 450; (2) *Flav-R-Pac*, 136.468, 300, 370; (3) *Beacon Plumbing*, 99.212 (one-minute penalty for encroachment on U-40 turn one, lap two), 225, 305; *Beacon Electric* (DSQ – flipped in turn two, lap two in first running), 0, 60. Fast lap: (1) *Miss Apollo*, 145.137.

HEAT 1B: (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 140.927, 400, 500; (2) *Miss Mercurys Coffee*, 138.392, 300, 330; (3) *Gutters by Keith presents Boitano Homes*, 131.044, 225, 255; (4) *Graham Trucking*, 130.920, 169 209. Fast lap: (2) *Miss Goodman Real Estate* 145.091.

HEAT 2A (2nd Re-run): (1) *Beacon Plumbing*, 144.215, 400, 705; (2) *Flav-R-Pac*, 136.820, 300, 670; *Miss Apollo*, (DSQ – ran over U-12 in first re-run), 0, 450; *Graham Trucking*, (DSQ – rode up *Flav-R-Pac* roostertail and landed hard in front of *Miss Apollo* in first re-run), 0, 209. Fast lap: (3) *Beacon Plumbing*, 153.586. (First running was stopped due to out-of-place buoys caused by pond weed build up on anchor cables.)

HEAT 2B: (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 145.458, 400, 900; (2) *Miss Mercurys Coffee*, 144.563, 300, 630; (3) *Gutters by Keith presents Boitano Homes*, 133.999, 225, 480; *Beacon Electric*, (WD – damage from flip in Heat 1A), 0, 60. Fast lap: (3) *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 146.845.

HEAT 3A: (1) *Beacon Plumbing*, 143.231, 400, 1105; (2) *Flav-R-Pac*, 132.044, 300, 970; *Miss Mercurys Coffee*, (DNF – driver felt vibration, returned to the pits after the start), 0, 630. Fast lap: (2) *Beacon Plumbing*, 146.612.

HEAT 3B: (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 140.087, 400, 1300; (2) *Gutters by Keith presents Boitano Homes*, 135.269, 300, 780. Fast lap: (3) *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 146.753.

FINAL HEAT: (1) *Beacon Plumbing*, 138.317, 400, 1505; (2) *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 136.687, 300, 1600; (3) *Flav-R-Pac*, 135.770, 225, 1195; (4) *Gutters by Keith presents Boitano Homes*, 123.149, 169, 949; *Miss Mercurys Coffee*, (DSQ – entered DMZ prior to the start), 0, 630. Fast lap: (5) *Beacon Electric*, 142.625.

COMPILED BY ALLEN STILES

Miss Apollo 152.322 mph, *Graham Trucking* 149.800 mph, *Mercurys Coffee* 148.883 mph, and *Boitano Homes* 143.778 mph. Both *Beacon* boats had a chance in round two of topping *Goodman’s* speed, but they couldn’t.

Heat One

The weather for Tri-Cities was excellent all weekend. Low-to-mid 80s for the temperature with very little wind and flat

water.

In Heat 1A, *Beacon Electric* was in lane one, *Beacon Plumbing* was in lane two, *Flav-R-Pac* was in lane three, and *Miss Apollo* was in lane four. Peabody was first in and out of turn one and led Kelly by about two boat lengths at the end of lap one. Echols was in third, with Villwock in fourth.

At the apex of turn two in lap two, *Beacon Electric* ran into two rollers that



Chris Denslow

J. Michael Kelly and Beacon Electric were caught in the spray from the U-9, then over it went!

pushed the boat out into *Beacon Plumbing's* roostertail. The boat went up the tail, twisted, came down on its tail, and landed upside down. Fortunately, Kelly was able to crawl out of the bottom hatch by himself. A sore elbow was the only damage to him. Ironically, this accident happened in the part of the course that would have been the shallow water in the original 2.5-mile course.

"I'm okay. I'm just upset," Kelly said. "It was a good battle with Corey and I was moving up in the turn until I hit the rollers. I feel bad now because of the work and the expense for the team to fix things. I hurt my elbow because I didn't let go of the steering wheel, which you are supposed to do. I had some trouble getting out because my foot was caught between the pedals. I took my foot out of my shoe and got out. I thought I would lose the shoe, but it was still there stuck between the pedals after the boat was towed back to the pits." Although Kelly was okay, his boat was done for the weekend.

Peabody was asked if the course was rough. "I don't know yet because I haven't run a complete heat. We don't know what to expect, but we do know the rollers are not going away."

Heat 1B was run before the Heat 1A rerun. *Mercurys Coffee* was in lane one, *Goodman Real Estate* was in lane two, *Graham Trucking* was in lane three, and *Boitano Homes* was in lane four. Nilsen was first in

and out of turn one and led Tate down the backstretch, but Tate passed him in turn two. At the end of lap one, it was *Goodman, Mercurys, Graham, and Boitano*, in that order. Tate won by about 1.5 roostertails over Nilsen. O'Farrell beat King in a drag race to the finish line to get third.

"Kudos to Jamie for getting the inside lane," said Tate. "We have a good boat, but it is rough out there."

Nilsen said, "We gave it all we could. I am still learning the course, but mission accomplished for day one."

In the Heat 1A rerun, *Beacon Plumbing* was in lane one, *Miss Apollo* was in lane two, and *Flav-R-Pac* was in lane three. Villwock nailed the start and led Peabody by one roostertail in the backstretch, and by a roostertail and a half at the end of lap one. Echols was in third.

In lap two, Villwock stretched his lead to three roostertails, with Peabody about a roostertail ahead of Echols. Villwock went on to win by four roostertails. Echols challenged Peabody, but the inside lane gave Peabody second.

"It was fun," said Villwock. "I wanted to get in lane two and let Nine [Peabody] and Forty [Echols] battle for lane one. We are low on fuel flow, but I am happy with the boat. This short course makes it hard to get around people. It will be rough all over. There is no time for the water to settle, and it will be a long day tomorrow." With his win, Villwock at 70 years young became the oldest Unlimited driver to win a heat.

Kelly Stocklin, the *Flav-R-Pac* owner, said, "We are having throttle response issues. The fuel control puts us into ground idle."

SUNDAY

The schedule for Sunday had testing at 9 a.m., Heat 2A at 10 a.m., Heat 2B at 10:30 a.m., Heat 3A at 2:30 p.m., Heat 3B at 3 p.m., and the final at 4:30 p.m. Only *Goodman Real Estate, Graham Trucking, and Boitano Homes* tested.

Heat Two

As the boats were milling for Heat 2A, the drivers were told to return to the pits because there were some buoys out of place from milfoil/pond weed buildup.



Craig Fjarlie

The damaged *Beacon Electric* after its return to the pits following the boat's flip.



Craig Fjarlie



Chris Denslow



Chris Denslow

Since the Heat 2B boats were already in the water, they would run Heat 2A after Heat 2B.

In Heat 2B, *Mercurys Coffee* was in lane one, *Goodman Real Estate* was in lane two, and *Boitano Homes* was in lane three. Nilsen was first in and out of turn one and led Tate by a half a roostertail after lap one, with O'Farrell in third. At the end of lap two, Nilsen led Tate by about three boat lengths, but Tate ran the fastest lap of the heat to pass Nilsen in the backstretch of lap three to take the win. O'Farrell finished third.

In Heat 2A, *Beacon Plumbing* was in lane one, *Graham Trucking* was in lane two, *Flav-R-Pac* was in lane three, and *Miss Apollo* was in lane four. In the first turn of lap one, *Graham* went up *Flav-R-Pac's* roostertail and stuffed the front end as it came out and was perpendicular to the course. Unfortunately, it was right in the path of *Miss Apollo*. Villwock swerved to the right to avoid *Graham*, but he ran over the front of *Graham's* right sponson. The collision launched *Apollo* and it almost went over on its right side, but Villwock was able to fly the boat to a stop on the course.

Both drivers were okay, but there was a large gash to the *Graham* sponson, plus tail damage and a loss of the canard from its trip through the roostertail.

TOP: The skid fin of *Miss Apollo* sliced through the right sponson of *Graham Trucking* when the two boats collided in Heat 2A. **MIDDLE:** Andrew Tate drove *Miss Goodman Real Estate* to a second-place finish in the race. **ABOVE:** The winner of the Apollo Columbia Cup.



The field crosses the score-up buoy before the start of the final heat.

Apollo had damage to its left sponson and some hull damage near the skid fin. Both boats were done for the day.

King explained what happened. “I was getting into Nine’s roostertail, but I overcorrected and it put me into Forty’s roostertail. There was lots of water real fast. When I came out of it, the boat nosedived into the water and then came to a stop in *Apollo*’s path. I’m okay, but it is not how you want the weekend to go.”

“There has been a lot of carnage,” Villwock said. “I turned right to try to avoid *Graham*, but I didn’t know how much I could miss him by. After the collision, I was in the air and I realized I had to fly the boat back down to the water. I got it on the water with a bit of a bounce and then slowed to a stop. We were able to do some adjustments to the boat this weekend, and I tried to stay outside of everyone, but then *Graham* showed up in front of me. I’m okay, and we will stay here and work on the boat at *Apollo*’s shop. We still haven’t had many times on the water, but our sponsor is happy.”

In the Heat 2A rerun of the rerun, *Beacon Plumbing* was in lane one and *Flav-R-Pac* was in lane two. The boats were together at the start, but Peabody used the inside to win by three roostertails.

Heat Three

In Heat 3A, *Mercurys Coffee* was in lane one, *Flav-R-Pac* was in lane two, and *Bea-*

con Plumbing was in lane three. Peabody was first to turn one, but Echols led down the backstretch. At the exit of turn two, Peabody passed Echols and went on to win by about half a straightaway. Nilsen returned to the pits after the start because of vibrations from a bad shaft line bearing and got a DNF.

Heat 3B was another two-boat heat. *Goodman Real Estate* was in lane one with *Boitano Homes* in lane two. O’Farrell was first to turn one, but Tate was first out of the turn and won easily.

Final Heat

With only five boats left in the field, all five would be in the final and in the front row. *Mercurys Coffee* was in lane one, *Beacon Plumbing* was in lane two, *Goodman Real Estate* was in lane three, *Flav-R-Pac* was in lane four, and *Boitano Homes* was in lane five.

Peabody and Echols were the first to turn one and Tate was late. At the end of lap one, the order was Peabody, Nilsen, Echols, Tate, and O’Farrell. At the end of lap two, Peabody led Nilsen by a roostertail. Echols was a roostertail behind Nilsen with Tate and O’Farrell trailing. In lap three, Peabody increased his lead to one and a half roostertails over Nilsen, with Echols a roostertail behind Nilsen. Tate closed to within half a roostertail of Echols and O’Farrell was in fifth.

In lap four, Echols challenged Nilsen

and Tate moved to the inside to challenge both of them. In lap five, Tate used the fastest lap of the heat to move into second, but Peabody held him off to win by a roostertail, Echols was third, Nilsen was fourth, and O’Farrell was fifth.

Unfortunately for Nilsen, in the milling period he followed Tate as Tate crossed from the frontstretch to the backstretch. This is legal, but it has to be after you have passed a designated buoy. Tate was legal, but Nilsen turned left before passing the buoy and entered the safety zone. This gave him a DSQ and moved O’Farrell to fourth place.

Mercurys Coffee owner Scott Raney said, “We tried our hardest. We will move forward from the mistake. Jamie did get the inside lane.”

Peabody was pleased with his win. “I guess this is still my course,” he said. “We worked hard yesterday making adjustments to the boat to do well on this course.”

“I blew the start,” said Tate. “I was not where I wanted to be and had to play catch up. We did have a good battle to get second, and we are in one piece. We do need to give a big thanks to the rescue team. They did great work to help JMK, Bobby, and Dave.”

Flav-R-Pac owner Stocklin said he was pleased with third place. “We do the best with what we have. Dustin did the best he could with what we gave him. We have a great crew, and we are a family.”

The weekend had mixed results for the Strong Racing Team, but they did get their first win of the season. “I think our grade increased to a B, with an upward trend,” said team owner Darrell Strong.

Goodman and Tate were dominant in the season’s first two races. This race not only got the Bernie tree shade area in the pits again next year for the Strong team, but it also suggests that the fans may see more competition in the remaining two races of this season. ❖

Kelly, Beacon Electric win again at Seafair.

TATE GETS A DOUBLE-DOSE DOUSE.

BY DICK SANDERS

J Michael Kelly, driving *Beacon Electric*, used a perfectly timed start, as well as a bit of mayhem involving his teammate Corey Peabody in *Beacon Plumbing* during the score-up for the final heat, to defeat their chief rival Andrew Tate in *Miss Goodman Real Estate*. It was Kelly's fourth consecutive win at Seafair.

For the second year in a row, a tiny field of five unscathed Unlimiteds limped from the Tri-Cities into Seattle to compete for the Seafair Trophy. This year, thankfully, the crews of the *Beacon Plumbing*, *Miss Apollo*, and *Graham Trucking* worked non-stop to fix damage sustained on the Columbia River and filled the Seattle field back up to eight boats.

FRIDAY

Friday's testing and qualifying, on a free admittance day, saw great crowds on the Lake Washington shoreline enjoying temperatures in the mid-80s, which would last through Sunday.

Friday's speeds were respectable but not spectacular, with much time spent testing different combinations or practicing their trolling and timing skills in the second turn. Friday's top speeds, in order, were: Andrew Tate, U-91 *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 156.985 mph; Corey Peabody, U-9 *Beacon Plumbing*, 155.242 mph; Dustin Echols; U-40 *Flav-R-Pac*, 151.572 mph; Dave Villwock, U-27 *Miss Apollo*, 150.190 mph; Jamie Nilsen, U-11 *Miss Mercurys Coffee*, 148.306 mph; and Gunnar O'Farrell, U-35 *Gutters by Keith presents Boatano Homes*, 146.287.

Not qualifying in his first opportunity was Bobby King in U-12 *Graham Trucking*, and a fuel violation also kept J. Michael Kelly's U-1 *Beacon Electric* off the ladder after the first day. Not everybody had the opportunity for the second qualifying attempt that is guaranteed by the rules, so an additional qualifying session was added to the schedule for first thing Saturday morning.

Andrew Tate said later that he was

thrilled to have the fastest qualifying run. "The *Miss Goodman Real Estate* crew has been working hard to give me the best, most competitive boat possible for this weekend," he said. "They've made a number of changes, and it keeps getting better and better. Fans are going to see a really fast group of boats racing this weekend and Seafair 75 should be one of the best ever."



Andrew Tate drove the U-91 *Miss Goodman Real Estate* to the fastest qualifying time for Seattle's Apollo Mechanical Cup at Seafair

Chris Denslow/H1 Unlimited

SATURDAY

A rule change was announced to the race teams following Friday's first qualifying session. Details are slim but the *Unlimited News-Journal* was told there was a suspicion that fuel normally used in the starting procedure could possibly make its way into the engine, undetected by H1's flow meters. The correction was reportedly simple enough that all but one team was able to immediately implement the new rule with parts on hand. One insider said the move had been contemplated for some time, but he thought that no one was likely taking advantage of it due to possible damage to the engine.

Meanwhile, the first order of business Saturday morning was the completion of qualifying attempts. *Graham Trucking* got into the show with a lap of 142.140 mph, while J. Micheal Kelly turned a non-penalized run of 150.385 mph. Increasing their speeds were *Flav-R-Pac*, with a run of 153.744 mph, and *Miss Apollo* at 150.294 mph.

Heat One

Heat 1A was one of the weekend's best. From the inside lane, it was *Beacon Plumbing*, then *Flav-R-Pac*, *Beacon Electric*, and *Miss Apollo* outside. Dustin Echols drove *Flav-R-Pac* to the lead into the first turn, but Corey Peabody pulled alongside in *Beacon Plumbing* exiting the turn. J. Michael Kelly and *Beacon Electric* were right in their roostertails, with Dave Villwock fading in *Miss Apollo*.

The leaders duelled, trading leads several times. Coming up the backstretch of the final lap there was zero space separating the two. In the final turn, Echols took *Flav-R-Pac* slightly wide. Peabody used his inside position to pull ahead by two boat lengths and take the win, turning a fast lap of 146.424 mph.

As the boats returned to the pits, it was announced that, after a second review of the start, Echols had jumped the gun by less than a boat length, putting



Chris Denslow/H1 Unlimited



Chris Denslow/H1 Unlimited



Chris Denslow/H1 Unlimited

TOP: Teammates Corey Peabody in *Beacon Plumbing* (left) and J. Michael Kelly in *Beacon Electric* battle side by side. **MIDDLE:** Peabody leads Dustin Echols in *Flav-R-Pac*. **ABOVE:** From the top, Kelly in *Beacon Electric*, Echols in *Flav-R-Pac*, and Gunnar O'Farrell in the U-35 *Boitano Homes*.

Notes and quotes from the pits.

BY MAC CLOUSE

Mike Denslow, H1 Chairman:

"It is early, but it looks like the Water Follies was a success."

Greg O'Farrell:

"We came out of Tri-Cities unscathed and happy. We will run the same set up as last week. This week we will run as *Gutters by Keith presents Boitano Homes*. We have our new display boat out in the field with the vendors. It is the red, white, and black U-20. It is the former *Miss Freei*, and it will be used by the Rise Up Academy folks at fundraising events to raise money for a new school."

Shannon Raney:

"We thank Steve Lamson for putting us together with the Mercurys people. We are a good fit because we run our businesses in the same way with the same values. They are having fun as sponsors. They have come to every race with a large group of family and friends. They have set up booths to give away coffee, energy drinks, Italian sodas, buttons, stickers, and lip balm. They have shirts and hats for sale, and sales are going well. The Mercury model boat is still available at our U-11racing.com website. And for coffee lovers outside the Seattle area, you can order bags of coffee and Keurig containers that will be delivered anywhere you live. We are very appreciative of everything they have done for us and brought to our team."

Darrell Strong (prior to the final heat):

"At this course, the inside boat will be the winner. Both of our boats have great set ups and rides for Seattle. It will be interesting to see what happens if Andrew gets the inside lane."

Feels Like the First Time:

The rock group Foreigner had a hit song with this title. Seafair heavily promoted this year's race as the 75th anniversary of the race.

Unfortunately, the theme song for this race was the Foreigner song. There were many things during the weekend that made one think that this was Seafair's first time organizing and delivering a race. Here are some examples:

- ◆ When the gates opened on Friday, there were no security people preventing unauthorized people from entering the hot pits. There were no garbage cans in the pits. These two items were corrected by Friday afternoon.

- ◆ Testing started at 9 a.m. on Friday. The media room was not open at that time. Once it did open, it was void of results the whole weekend and had no information about the participants.

- ◆ Unlike in the past, there was no PA system along the shoreline or in the pits. There was no announcement of speeds or what was occurring on the course during the races. This was true all weekend.

- ◆ For race team members, volunteers, and others who parked in the Genesee parking lot, there were very few vans providing the usual transportation to and from the pits and the course.

- ◆ The awards ceremony was an embarrassment. No leaders from Seafair were there, and it consisted of a live TV interview with some heat wins awarded that somehow morphed into acknowledging JMK's race win by a reporter who admitted that she was new to Seattle and hydroplanes. After the interview, the TV people left and there was no one from Seafair there to take over the ceremony. The ceremony finished with drivers and H1 people announcing winners, but the second- and third-place trophies never appeared.

Hopefully, next year will look like a race that has been done 75 times before. ❖

him in fourth place. Kelly and *Beacon Electric* finished in second, never more than a roostertail behind the leading boats.

Flav-R-Pac team owner Kelly Stocklin remarked, "Dustin ran the boat hard in the first heat to compare ourselves to our competitors." Over at the *Apollo* camp, a team member said they had one engine, and it was down on power.

In Heat 1B, *Goodman Real Estate* was drawn against three of the slower qualifiers, which did not hold promise of a battle for first place. But it was still enter-

taining. Jamie Nilsen in the *Mercurys Coffee* executed a perfect lane change on the score-up lap, and cleanly grabbed lane one on the front stretch with more than a roostertail lead on both the *Boitano Homes* and *Goodman*.

It was just as H1 envisioned the new starting rules working. Nilsen was sort of nonplussed when congratulated on the maneuver, "It was just an opportunity to use the same starting procedures that I used in the smaller classes," he said.

Mercurys Coffee got a great start on the

inside and led off the exit pin of lap one, but was quickly overtaken by Andrew Tate in *Goodman Real Estate*, which would not be seriously challenged on his way to the win. Tate's first lap average of 148.969 mph was the fastest of the day.

Boitano Homes and *Graham Trucking* fell back into their own duel. Gunnar O'Farrell in *Boitano*, inside of Bobby King in the *Graham*, steadily put more pressure on *Graham*. At the start of lap three, O'Farrell pulled narrowly ahead then gradually expanded his lead to take third



ABOVE: Defending national champion J. Michael Kelly won his fourth-straight race in Seattle while at the controls of *Beacon Electric*. **LEFT:** Andrew Tate in *Miss Goodman Real Estate* (left) and Corey Peabody in *Beacon Plumbing* exit the second turn on their way to the start/finish line.

place, his second opportunity to pass someone in Unlimited competition, showing another glimmer of the untapped potential of this hull.

Heat Two

For the second year in a row at Seafair, the initial section draw for the second matched the first and therefore had to be repeated.

On the racecourse, there was no fighting for lanes in Heat 2A as Nilsen and *Mercurys Coffee* again claimed lane one without a challenge. *Mercurys* also crossed the starting line first with O'Farrell and *Boitano Homes* close behind in the outside lane. Kelly and *Beacon Electric* were a little behind in lane two and Echols had *Flav-R-Pac* charging hard in lane three.

It was a good, four-boat battle coming out of

the first turn. *Flav-R-Pac* was alongside *Mercurys*, *Beacon Electric* was a 'tail back, then *Boitano*. The positions stayed the same for another lap until the official call came through that both *Mercurys Coffee* and *Boitano Homes* had jumped the start. *Flav-R-Pac* maintained its lead to the end, followed by *Beacon Electric* a 'tail back, then *Mercurys* and *Boitano*.

After the heat, Kelly Stocklin attributed the Bucket List Racing team's success to the usual: "In the end you gotta have a fast boat," he said. But he also mentioned the advantage of bringing on board former Gold Cup champ Kip Brown as a second radio man.

With his first heat victory of the season, Echols was thankful to his racing team. "It just shows our hard work is finally paying off," he said. "It took us long enough. The last heat, I had



Chris Denslow



Chris Denslow



Chris Denslow

TOP: Jamie Nilsen and *Miss Mercurys Coffee* (right) has the inside lane in his run to the starting line with J. Michael Kelly and *Beacon Electric* at his side and Andrew Tate in *Miss Goodman Real Estate* following. **MIDDLE:** Dustin Echols in *Flav-R-Pac* leads *Beacon Plumbing* up the backstretch. **ABOVE:** Bobby King in *Graham Trucking* runs side by side with Peabody in *Beacon Plumbing*.

a good boat ride, but I just didn't hit the start right and it's on me. Finally, this one all came together and all the pieces came together perfectly. As the race unfolded, I thought, 'finally, this one is ours.'

He especially liked hearing the fans cheer his victory when he returned to the pits. "It's the absolute best feeling ever. We have a lot of fans that follow our work around the circuit, and they all know how hard we've been working to get to this point. Finally, it just paid off and they can celebrate with us."

At the starting line of Heat 2B, from inside out, it was *Beacon Plumbing*, *Goodman Real Estate*, *Graham Trucking*, and, assigned to the outside lane for being pushed away from the dock before the five-minute signal came, *Miss Apollo*. Tate had *Goodman* at the end of *Beacon Plumbing's* roostertail the entire heat, but was unable to challenge.

Peabody took the victory with an average speed of 144.743 mph, the fastest heat average of the contest. Bobby King jumped the gun in *Graham Trucking* and finished in fourth behind Villwock and *Miss Apollo*.

"It was a good run for the *Beacon Plumbing U-9* boat," Peabody said after the final result was made official. "Jeff Campbell [crew chief] and the crew have got this boat rolling for me."

SUNDAY

Heat Three

The final day of racing started with Heat 3A, where Andrew Tate nailed the start from lane one aboard *Miss Goodman Real Estate* and had the field in his rear-view mirrors for the entire three laps. Following were Echols in *Flav-R-Pac*, O'Farrell in *Boitano Homes*, and King in *Graham Trucking*.

In Heat 3B, Jamie Nilsen (who else?) grabbed lane one in *Mercurys Coffee* and led across the starting line and past the exit pin of the first turn before being passed by both Peabody in *Beacon Plumbing* and Kelly in *Beacon Electric*. Peabody opened a one-roostertail lead over his teammate to

take the win. *Apollo* trailed throughout.

Final Heat

The final heat was a rarity in our favorite sport: one that began sooo badly, with boats spread over a quarter of the course at the starting gun, only to wind up with a thrilling final lap for the fans—even if one of boats was later penalized for an earlier infraction.

Seven boats left the pits at the five-minute signal, a high for the year. The dicing and slicing action started almost immediately when both *Beacon* boats didn't even make it down the first backstretch before cutting through the infield in a staggered fashion that left what must have looked like a solid block of roostertails on the front stretch for Andrew Tate in *Goodman Real Estate* to try to dodge. Though Tate slowed, the *Goodman* caught a large hunk of *Beacon Plumbing's* roostertail, which snapped off *Goodman's* canard.

Next to see their trophy hopes evaporate was Dustin Echols in *Flav-R-Pac*. Entering the north turn before the score-up lap, the boat caught a series of holes and rollers and went to ground idle. While Echols took the blame for making an unplanned move that didn't work, owner Stocklin would later say the boat "... took water, which put the fire out. The water was crazy rough in that turn. The salt scoop did not do its job." Dustin got the engine relit, but by then all but the trailer, Gunnar O'Farrell in *Boitano Homes*, was far in the distance.

The new score-up lap got its first real test back in Heat 1B, when Jamie Nilsen pulled off a change of lanes flawlessly in *Mercurys Coffee*. In the final heat, the results weren't so rosy. Approaching the score-up buoy, *Mercurys* and the two *Beacon* boats surged down the front stretch. Andrew Tate in *Goodman* trailed by about five boat lengths in between the *Beacons*. As Corey Peabody told the *Seattle Times*, his radio man told him he had the minimum five-boat-lengths, so he moved over. Well, the distance between

STATBOX

Apollo Mechanical Cup at Seafair

Seattle, Washington; August 3-4, 2024

2-mile oval on Lake Washington; 28-mile race

QUALIFYING: (1) U-91 *Miss Goodman Real Estate* (#1801), Andrew Tate, 156.985, 100 points; (2) U-9 *Beacon Plumbing* (#92102), Corey Peabody, 155.242, 80; (3) U-40 *Flav-R-Pac* (#0721), Dustin Echols, 153.744, 70; (4) U-1 *Beacon Electric* (#1496), J. Michael Kelly, 150.385, 60; (5) *Miss Apollo* (#2427), Dave Villwock, 150.294, 50; (6) U-11 *Miss Mercurys Coffee* (#0925), Jamie Nilsen, 148.306, 40; (7) U-35 *Gutters by Keith presents Boitano Homes* (#1999), Gunnar O'Farrell, 146.287, 30; (8) U-12 *Graham Trucking* (#0001), Bobby King, 142.140, 30.

HEAT 1A: (1) *Beacon Plumbing*, 143.616, 400 points, 480 cumulative points; (2) *Beacon Electric*, 134.886, 300, 360; (3) *Miss Apollo*, 128.981, 225, 275; (4) *Flav-R-Pac*, 102.532 (one-minute penalty for jumping the start), 169, 239. Fast lap: (3) *Beacon Plumbing*, 146.424.

HEAT 1B: (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 142.464, 400, 500; (2) *Miss Mercurys Coffee*, 138.850, 300, 340; (3) *Gutters by Keith presents Boitano Homes*, 134.572, 225, 255; (4) *Graham Trucking*, 132.498, 169 199. Fast lap: (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 148.969.

HEAT 2A: (1) *Flav-R-Pac*, 140.541, 400, 639; (2) *Beacon Electric*, 137.663, 300, 660; (3) *Miss Mercurys Coffee*, 97.396 (one-minute penalty for jumping the start), 225, 565; (4) *Gutters by Keith presents Boitano Homes*, 93.668 (one-minute penalty for jumping the start), 169, 424. Fast lap: (1) *Flav-R-Pac*, 145.687.

HEAT 2B: (1) *Beacon Plumbing*, 144.743, 400, 880; (2) *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 143.201, 300, 800; (3) *Miss Apollo*, 120.505 (left the dock too early, crew member did not have hand on boat at 5-minute signal, had to start on the outside), 225, 500; (4) *Graham Trucking*, 94.653 (one-minute penalty for jumping the start), 169, 368. Fast lap: (1) *Beacon Plumbing*, 148.689.

HEAT 3A: (1) *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 142.949, 400, 1200; (2) *Flav-R-Pac*, 136.347, 300, 939; (3) *Gutters by Keith presents Boitano Homes*, 131.654, 225, 649; (4) *Graham Trucking*, 123.958, 169, 537. Fast lap: (2) *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 145.457.

HEAT 3B: (1) *Beacon Plumbing*, 142.390, 400, 1280; (2) *Beacon Electric*, 141.474, 300, 960; (3) *Miss Mercurys Coffee*, 135.839, 225, 790; (4) *Miss Apollo*, 133.740, 169, 669. Fast lap: (2) *Beacon Plumbing*, 144.456.

FINAL HEAT: (1) *Beacon Electric*, 141.358, 400, 1360; (2) *Miss Mercurys Coffee*, 131.051, 300, 1090; (3) *Miss Apollo*, 129.689, 225, 894; (4) *Miss Goodman Real Estate*, 127.750, 169, 1369; (5) *Flav-R-Pac*, 122.326, 127, 1066; (6) *Gutters by Keith presents Boitano Homes*, 120.355, 95, 744; (7) *Beacon Plumbing*, 114.082 (one-minute penalty for encroachment on U-91 during the milling period prior to the start), 71, 1351. Fast lap: (5) *Beacon Electric*, 145.044.

COMPILED BY ALLEN STILES

the boats may or may not have been five lengths, but *Beacon Plumbing's* roostertail entering the first turn was at least seven lengths. *Goodman* got hosed again and slowed to ground idle, putting Tate out of the running.

At the start, Jamie Nilsen once again

had *Mercurys Coffee* in lane one, but his lead only lasted half-way through the first turn, as J. Michael Kelly in *Beacon Electric* blew past him. Peabody was a bit slower at the start in *Beacon Plumbing* and, after passing Nilsen, still gave up a roostertail-length lead to his teammate in *Bea-*



The podium finishers celebrate after the race. From the left, Jamie Nilsen finished second in *Miss Mercurys Coffee*, J. Michael Kelly won in *Beacon Electric*, and Dave Villwock finished third in *Miss Apollo*.

con Electric.

The rest of the field then stretched out, with *Mercurys* in third, Dave Villwock's *Miss Apollo* in fourth, Dustin Echols in fifth aboard *Flav-R-Pac*, O'Farrell and *Boitano Homes* in sixth, and *Goodman* last but quickly catching up—and eventually passing two boats.

It seemed that the race might end this way, with the *Beacon* team coasting to a one-two victory, but Peabody began pushing the *Beacon Plumbing* faster in laps three and four, slowly reeling Kelly in, and finally pulled abreast of Kelly at the beginning of lap five. The fans got to see a fantastic final-lap duel, which ended with Kelly holding on and *Beacon Electric* winning by just two boat lengths.

Returning to the pits, Andrew Tate appeared to show his displeasure with Peabody for washing him down twice by briefly hosing down the *Beacon Electric*. The referee must have agreed with Tate, announcing 15 minutes later that Peabody had been penalized one minute for encroaching on Tate during the score-up. Everyone behind Peabody moved up a position, a cause for celebration in the second-place *Mercurys Coffee* and third-place *Miss Apollo* camps.

For Kelly, whose boat suffered a dev-

astating accident in the Tri-Cities only the week before, it was his fourth-straight race victory on Lake Washington. “This is just amazing and it just shows you the team that we have and the team that backs me and Corey [Peabody],” he said. “I created a lot of work in Tri-Cities this past week and we spent a lot of hours fixing my boat, so to be able to come back from that and chip away and find speed and to win Seattle again is just amazing.”

He also praised the effort of his teammate, Corey Peabody, in trying to catch him. “He could have slowed down, but I looked in my mirror and there was

a lot of white and blue *Beacon Plumbing* there,” he told reporters. “He made me man-up and put my foot to the floor.

“It’s crazy to be able to bounce back,” he continued. “Proud of my team, proud of myself and just proud of everybody that put in the effort. Proud of everyone at *Beacon Electric*, *Beacon Plumbing*, Darrell and Vanessa Strong, and my entire team. I’m the lucky guy who gets to drive these things and I love doing it and I hope I’ve got some more years in me. This was a much-needed win and just an amazing feeling right now.”

Though he didn’t win the race, Andrew Tate’s chances of winning the national championship for *Goodman Real Estate* at San Diego in September are still very good, but it always hurts to lose the hometown race. Just ask Kelly Stocklin, or Rob Graham.

Regarding the new starting procedure, there’s long been a rule, in the interests of safety, requiring boats to stay in their lanes at the start of the heat from the exit pin before the starting line, all the way around to the exit pin of the first turn. But the new rule creates a second, de facto start that ignores the old safety concerns. Hopefully H1 can figure out a way to reconcile this. Extending the overlap rule from the current five lengths to seven, or to just using an outright roostertail-length might help. You spray, you pay. ❖

National Points Standings

AS OF AUGUST 5:

U-91 Miss Goodman Real Estate (Andrew Tate).....	5,819
U-9 Beacon Plumbing (Corey Peabody)	4,870
U-40 Flav-R-Pac (Dustin Echols).....	3,837
U-11 Miss Mercurys Coffee (Jamie Nilsen).....	3,810
U-1 Beacon Electric (J. Michael Kelly).....	3,795
U-27 Miss Apollo (Dave Villwock).....	2,088
U-35 Boitano Homes (Gunnar O’Farrell)	1,693
U-12 Graham Trucking (Bobby King).....	746

UNJ INTERVIEW: Jonathan Abbott, H1 Unlimited's Chief Referee

At the close of the 2023 season, it became apparent that H1 would need a new chief referee for 2024. Through most of the winter, names of possible referees were bantered about, but when the announcement finally was made, the choice was Jonathan Abbott—someone most of in the Unlimited community us had never met. Personable yet self-assured, the new referee approached his responsibility with intensity, becoming familiar with people and policies on his first weekend. The following interview with Abbott was conducted at Guntersville on June 28, 2024, by Craig Fjarlie.

UNJ: Will you tell us a little about your background?

ABBOTT: I was born in south Quebec, just outside Montreal.

So, your background is Canadian.

Yup, I'm Canadian, Quebec.

You speak French?

I speak French fluently. I was born into boat racing. My father used to race 7-Litre when I was...

He raced in Canada?

Yeah, he used to race that in APBA on the East Coast. He had a 7-litre Stau-

dacher by the name of *Long Shot*.

Oh, okay.

Raced that for about three, four seasons, and then in...

He drove it?

Yeah, he raced that. Then after I was born, my dad started to call it quits for family reasons, 'cause I was around now. At the age of nine I started racing the J Stock class. But every time, I went to the Valleyfield Regatta—I've never missed a Valleyfield Regatta in my life. So, I can say boat racing has been in my blood my

whole life. At the age of nine I started racing in the J Stock, A Stock, moved up. At the age of 16, I moved into the 1.5-litre class and raced that for about four seasons.

Who built that boat? Did you buy it new, or...

My first boat was an old Caruthers. That was my first one that I ran for two seasons. Then we bought a Henderson 2.5, which we bought from the Brown-ing family. I campaigned that for three seasons and then I decided to move into the 5-litre class. So, we ended up buying a Jones hull out west from Craig Boner. Mark Evans drove for him. He was on the Unlimited team for a while, too. So, we bought that off of him. I raced that and it became the 350 class. I ran for two seasons. Then I decided to call it quits. It was getting too expensive, and I was looking at buying a house. Then, after that, in the off-season, I was approached by HRL if I'd be interested in becoming chief referee, and that would have been in the 2014 season.

So, had you refereed at all before that?

Boat racing, no, but I spent 13 years



Chris Denslow

Mike Denslow, H1 board chair, (left) and Jonathan Abbott at a driver's meeting.



Jonathan Abbott

ref'ing hockey—minor hockey. So, refereeing, I'd been doing for well over 10 years. When they approached me, I'd never considered it and I said, "Why not?" I was going to end up in the pits, I knew a lot of people anyway. So, I said, "If I'm going to be in the pits, well, then, why not work?" Did that for—I'm still involved with HRL, chief referee. It'll be 11 seasons now. I'm on the board of directors also for them and this off-season got a call from Mr. Mike Denslow.

How did they happen to select you, do you know?

The Kings—Bobby King, Jimmy King—they race on the HRL and they pushed, saying I'd be an ideal candidate.

Okay.

And I wasn't expecting it. I got a call. Corey Peabody called me up. We were chatting about rules and he asked me if I'd accept, and the next thing you know I'm getting calls from Mr. Denslow, Kelly Stocklin, and asking about my interest and I guess the interview progressed and then early—I would say around February—they told me I got the job. And it was something I never expected.

Had you been to Unlimited races?

I'd been to a couple Unlimited races in Detroit because we'd run the GPs

there, we were running them at the same time. So, I knew what it was all about, but never in a million years did I expect...

What is the most interesting thing you're learning this weekend?

It's a whole different experience. These are bigger boats, new rules, you know. I've been doing rules in HRL for 10 years, predetermined lanes, so it's just learning a whole new rule book. Learning a whole new team, working with a great team. Learning all about the owners and drivers that I'd only heard of growing up, right? You know, a lot of these guys I'd heard of, but never expected I'd be officiating them one day.

Yeah.

So, to me it just became like a dream come true, right? If you're a driver, you always wish to be racing at the higher-end level, and now, as an official, when I was approached, it was like, I never expected this. In terms of officiating, you can't go any higher, right?

You're following a lot of well-known footsteps.

Yes, exactly. And then to be the first ever Canadian chief referee, out of Valleyfield, you could say I'm so grateful for this opportunity.

As an aside, when we go to Madi-

son, we expect to see Jean Theoret there.

[Laughs.] Yeah, and you know, Jean Theoret was best friends with my dad, and he was the best man at my dad's wedding. So, when everything became official, I'd finally gotten word from Raneys, they're good friends, and the funny story is Jean calls up my family and says, "Oh, do you have any news for me?"

My dad goes, "What do you mean?"

Jean goes, "Well, I just got word that your son is now H1."

My dad says, "Well, the officials didn't want me to tell anybody."

Jean says, "Does he know what he's getting into?"

Yeah, so he was one of my dad's best friends, so I watched him racing in the Grand Prix, the Super 7, and all that. He did my radios when I was racing 350.

Obviously, you know Jimmy King and...

Bobby, he's been running HRL, Jimmy in the GP, Bobby in 350 and he's progressing there. Andrew Tate, same thing, he's been running with us. It was my fortune with H1, they're the ones that pushed to have me there and threw out my name, and you could say the rest is history. Here I am now, having a great experience.

Just to clarify, do you prefer to be called John, or Jonathan, or...

I don't mind Jonathan, John, people call me anything. Yes, ask my mom, my name's Jonathan, she doesn't like John. It doesn't bother me.

What kind of work do you do away from racing?

I was a painter in the automotive industry. Did that for 10 years. Now, for the last few years, I'm an estimator for Mercedes-Benz collision center. I do estimates for insurance companies on damages on wrecked cars.

All right. We've covered a lot. Thank you for your time. ❖

WE REMEMBER A FRIEND

BY JON OSTERBERG

Bob Greenhow, longtime key contributor to the *Unlimited NewsJournal*, acclaimed hydroplane photographer, and friend to many, died July 21 after a long battle with Parkinson's. Bob was 78.

Known as much for his "Rain Man"-like memory as for his hydro photos dating to the 1960s, Bob was a kind and gentle soul who lived in the Seattle area all his life, aside from his time serving in the U.S. Army. He graduated from Shorecrest High in 1964 and was a longtime Lake Forest Park resident before moving to assisted living in Bothell in 2020.

Bob traveled across the country for decades shooting the *Unlimiteds*. He attended the Miami Marine Stadium races that kicked off each season, plus races from Detroit to San Diego and in between, where he'd lug his Pentax camera, tripod, and big 600mm lens that he named "The Monster."

One long-ago September at Mission Bay, Bob shared our blanket on Ski Beach and in the lull between heats asked, "Jon,

how old are you? What's your birthday?" I told him and he paused for a second, wringing his hands together in thought. Then he says, "Hmmm, March 26. That was a Friday. It was overcast, and it rained a little in the afternoon. I remember because that's the day our new refrigerator was delivered at home."

Many people who knew Bob can share similar extraordinary exchanges.

Bob was a repository for arcane hydro-history minutiae. He could tell you the order of finish for the field in nearly any given heat that he'd witnessed in his life. After Bob read my 2012 book *Dragon Days*, he complimented me, then suggested he could offer some corrections. "The reporters didn't always get things right," he said, scanning my bibliography, noting that such-and-such boat actually finished fourth, not fifth, in a heat, or that another actually conked out before the finish.

Sure enough, after confirming most of Bob's corrections were accurate, I incorporated them into my book's 2020 edition.

Bob was unique, perhaps even quirky, and endearing. He loved Washington Huskies football, the Seahawks, and for years he traveled to the state class-B high school basketball championships. He loved to reminisce about pop culture.

One year Bob emailed me to note it was the anniversary of when the Beatles first played in Seattle. I replied, "The Beatles? Bob, you hated them and rock music!" He wrote back, "I liked the Brothers Four very much. I liked the Kingston Trio, Frankie Lane, sometimes Peter, Paul and Mary, and Petula Clark. But my favorite singer from the 1960s was Vikki Carr."

Yet hydros were always Bob's first love. I think at one time Bob finagled pit passes to shoot closeups of the boats, but later he opted for the mellower shoreline

scene. In Seattle you'd often find him and The Monster in the shade of madrona and maple trees approaching the north turn, south of Mt. Baker Beach. That's where he and I and fellow geeks like Dick Sanders spent a handful of Seafair weekends in the years before the pandemic.

Before computers, Bob typed the final draft of each *Unlimited NewsJournal* for production. He later maintained the computer database for subscriptions, renewals, and address labels.

Bob bemoaned the advent of digital photography in the early 2000s and, not wanting to invest in new cameras and lenses, he eventually shelved his Pentax and Monster in favor of binoculars. By 2013 he said most of his race action involved *Unlimiteds* Northwest RC hydro events, where he ran the clock and helped with scoring.

The day after Seafair 2016, Bob sent an email that foreshadowed his illness. "Hi, Jon. I failed to make it out to Lake Washington because I got in an argument with cement. I fell when I went to get the mail on Aug. 3 and just got out of the hospital tonight."

The following year Bob fell again but said he intended to be at Seafair all three days. "I have to stop and rest while walking every so often, so I might be a bit late arriving," he wrote. Seafair 2017 ended up being Bob's last in person. We spent "free Friday" together where he enjoyed meeting my grandkids, reminiscing, marveling at Andrew Tate's fast laps, and lamenting the boring white paint schemes of several boats over the years.

Sadly, Bob fell a few more times in 2018 and said he was unable to attend Seafair. That Christmas Eve he emailed me that he "had the shakes" but was thankful his ailments didn't hit when he was taking pictures or driving to prep basketball games. In August 2019 he said he often was tired and "need to sit this Seafair out." Five months later he wrote,



Jon Osterberg

Bob Greenhow

“It looks like my driving days are over. But I am still far better off than over half the world population.”

Bob repeated that sentiment when he said in August 2020 that he was moving into an assisted-living facility in

Bothell. His voice sounded shaky, but he seemed as sharp as ever. Bob cited his faith, his comfort in the book of Romans, and said he was keeping all his hydro photos.

I recently learned that Bob donated

all or most of his collection to the Hydro Museum, where Patrick Gleason is carefully scanning and editing Bob's photos.

Bob's family says there will be a private memorial at a later date. ❖

AROUND THE CIRCUIT

Race Site News by Chris Tracy



Mercurys Coffee brews up a block party.

Hydroplane sponsors often use their sponsorship to showcase their products or company. Many hydro fans recall Art Oberto walking the race site beaches handing out Oberto stickers and Oberto snacks. HomeStreet Bank sent Jimmy Shane and the team's display boat to community events where their bank had a role. Boat sponsors often have their boat on display, usually at their place of business.

This year, Mercurys Coffee entered the sport by sponsoring the U-11, owned by Scott and Shannon Raney, and they put a new twist on their sponsorship by hosting a block party.

Corporate headquarters for Mercurys Coffee is in Bellevue, Wash., an east-side suburb of Seattle. A few doors down from their corporate headquarters is the company's flagship retail store. To help celebrate their sponsorship of the U-11, Mercurys Coffee closed off a big part of that store's parking from 4 to 7 p.m. on July 31 (the Wednesday before the Seattle race) and brewed a big party that was open to all.

The U-11 *Miss Mercurys Coffee* was on display. But also unveiled was the new Mercurys Coffee display boat, originally the 1984 *Atlas Van Lines*. The Raney's team had done all of the graphic work on the display boat, which they borrowed from Mike and Lori Jones. Driver Jamie Nilsen



was there to talk with attendees and sign autographs as were many crew members and owners, Scott and Shannon Raney.

There was a DJ playing music and baristas were making partiers their favorite Mercurys drinks. The barbecue was set up and hot dogs and hamburgers were served—and all was complementary for those attending. Many of the people attending were Mercury's customers or local area residents—all being introduced to hydroplane racing. U-11 co-owner, Shannon Raney summed it up well. “I'm so excited to partner with a company that puts so much effort into the community.”

The party didn't end with the block party. At Seattle's Apollo Cup, Mercurys Coffee set up a stand and gave away their drinks.

BTW, try a vanilla cream cold brew; you'll thank me later! ❖



Scenes from the party.

Photos by Chris Tracy

MY \$0.02 WORTH

Editorial Comment by Andy Muntz



A couple of unrelated thoughts:

An Alabama news outlet reported recently that ticket sales and sponsorship income for the Guntersville race came up about \$86,000 short of expenses. We've also heard reliable rumors that the people running the sport, mainly the boat owners, will be asking for more tow money next year.

I've talked about this issue before, as it is something that seems to characterize this sport more than any other. The races are produced by non-profit civic organizations that are always strapped for cash, while the people that do the racing are involved in a pastime that is extremely expensive, and they therefore want more money. In other words, the two have interests that are colliding with one another.

The last time a profit-making company tried to run the sport, the effort ended when this reality could no longer be reconciled. The race sites revolted against Hydro-Prop in 2004 because they couldn't afford the sanction fees that Hydro-Prop was requesting. Meanwhile,

the boat owners that weren't part of Hydro-Prop revolted because Hydro-Prop wasn't providing them with the money they felt they had been promised.

Maybe there's a lesson to be learned?

On another topic: Did you notice a familiar ring to the complaints about the results of women's gymnastics at the Summer Olympics?

Third place was initially won by a gymnast from Romania, but a protest was filed after the competition had ended and the American was instead awarded the bronze medal. Several days later, however, the Romanians objected saying the American protest was filed too late.

Sure enough, the committee that oversees such things agreed, found that the American protest was submitted four seconds after the deadline, and reversed the original ruling on that technicality—giving the Romanian the bronze medal.

Reversing the order of finish after the event was over? Where have we seen that before?

We often hear the "expert" complainers on Facebook loudly claim that

hydroplane racing is uniquely absurd because sometimes the officials make a decision after the race is over that changes the outcome. Well, guess what? The same thing happens in other sports, too—even in the Olympics.

There was another part of the story that also caught my attention. The American gymnastics people, as well as some well-respected journalists, reacted to the decision in a manner as if to say, "Come on; give us a break. It was only four seconds!"

I couldn't help but think of how that contrasted with the way that Dave Villwock reacted when he was disqualified before the final heat in San Diego in 2021 because he dropped below 80 mph for 5.05 seconds—five one-hundredth of a second too long. But, instead of trying to blame someone else or elicit sympathy, Villwock owned it.

"We have a light that goes on if I am below 80 mph," Villwock explained, "but I was watching other boats and the course and I didn't see it. Maybe I need a hammer that hits me to alert me." ❖

EDITOR: Andy Muntz

ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Craig Fjarlie, Chris Tracy, Dick Sanders

HYDROFILE EDITOR/WEBMASTER: Lon Erickson **TREASURER:** Bob Senior

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