



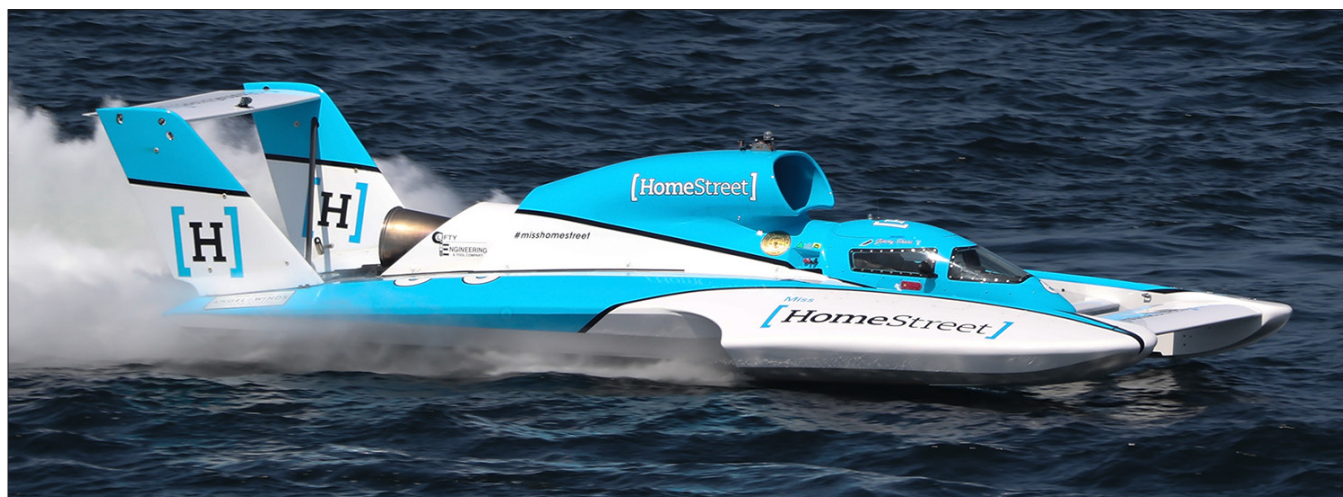
December 2019

# UNLIMITED NEWSJOURNAL

*A Chronicle of Speed*

## 2019 SEASON REVIEW:

# Shane dominates, but Kelly wins more races.



The 2019 national champion was the U-6 *Miss HomeStreet* driven by Jimmy Shane.

by Andy Muntz

**W**hen historians look back at the 2019 H1 Unlimited Racing Series, they are likely to see the campaign from three different perspectives. They might see it as a year when Jimmy Shane and the *Miss HomeStreet* were dominant, or they might be impressed by the fact that J. Michael Kelly and the *Graham Trucking*

ended the year with three straight victories, or they might see that with only five events on the schedule and with some controversial calls by officials, the sport is still struggling to gain a footing with its fans.

All three viewpoints would be correct.

Shane and the *Miss HomeStreet* were clearly the class of the 2019 field. Shane won his sixth national championship in the past seven years and his race team collected

its ninth national title in the past 12 seasons. The *Miss HomeStreet* was the fastest qualifier at every event and won 19 of the 23 heats that it entered during the season. But, three of those four heat losses came during the final winner-take-all heats of the last three races of the season.

That's where J. Michael Kelly and the *Graham Trucking* team entered in. They proved that getting the inside lane at the start of the

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Chris Denslow

Placing second in the national standings, and the winner of three races, was the U-12 *Graham Trucking*, driven by J. Michael Kelly.

final heat is a fundamental component of their strategy for winning an event's first-place trophy. Using good fortune, a controversial call by the officials, and taking full advantage of a rule change, they pulled off the feat at the Tri-Cities, Seattle, and San Diego

As for the controversies, the 2019 season featured some doozies, perhaps the most long-lasting of which was a head-spinning series of unfortunate decisions at the end of the Seattle race. But, more about that later.

The 2019 campaign got underway on May 31 with the annual Spring Training event on the Columbia River at Tri-Cities, Wash., where the unlimited race teams are given the opportunity to make some test runs and show off what they accomplished during the off season.

Five race teams took advantage of the sunny skies and warm weather to get their boats on the water. Dustin Echols started the event by driving the U-440 *Bucket List Racing* onto the course and reported later that his speedometer read 188 mph going down the straightaway, but their day then ended suddenly when boat's gear-

box was fried after an oil line fitting failed.

Speaking of gearbox issues, Tom Thompson then took the U-11 *J&D's presented by Reliable Diamond Tool* onto the course, but he soon felt a vibration and went back to the dock. To fix it, the gearbox needed a part that wasn't available in the team truck, so another team was done.

As for the other three teams on the shoreline, Jimmy Shane took the *Miss HomeStreet* around the Columbia River course a total of 21 times during the day, including one lap that was clocked at almost 165 mph. Defending champion Andrew Tate also was there and drove the U-1 *Delta Realtrac* through nine smooth laps.

The Graham Trucking team brought two hulls, their regular U-12 *Graham Trucking* and a boat that most recently saw action as the *CARSTAR powers Miss Rock*. That team's owner, Stacy Briseno, was killed in an accident just before the 2018 race in San Diego, so Rob Graham purchased the hull during the offseason and decided to enter it as the U-98 *Graham Trucking American Dream*.

With its new black and red paint

job, the *Graham Trucking* circled the course 21 times during the day with J. Michael Kelly at the helm. As for the patriotic red, white, and blue *Graham Trucking American Dream*, it was handled by Corey Peabody. Unfortunately, igniter issues limited its action to only a few laps late in the day.

## Guntersville

**F**our weeks later, the fleet was assembled on the shore of Guntersville Lake, Ala., for the season opening Southern Cup. Five of the boats that had been at Spring Training were joined by Bert Henderson and the U-7 *Spirit of Detroit*. The one boat missing was the defending champion U-1 *Delta Realtrac*. Andrew Tate apparently had a schedule conflict that prevented him from attending.

Shane started the testing with a lap of over 158 mph then, after a storm interrupted the qualifying action on Friday afternoon, turned in the fastest laps during qualifying on Saturday morning with a run of 162.442 mph, a new course record. One of the highlights of the qualifying was the performance of Dustin Echols and the *Bucket List Racing*, which for the first time exceeded the 150-mph barrier.

With six boats in the field, the race organizers devised a format where each boat would appear four times during the six preliminary-heat sections. Shane prevailed in three of his four appearances and in the process set new course records for a heat average (159.311 mph) and for a competition lap (164.431 mph) in Heat 2A. His only misstep was a one-minute penalty for jumping the gun in Heat 2B. Meanwhile, J. Michael Kelly came away with two heat victories and Tom Thompson had one.

In the final, Kelly grabbed the inside lane and Henderson was



first across the starting line in lane three. But Shane, running in lane two, came out of the first turn with a two-boat-length lead and held that position to the end. Kelly finished second and Henderson was third.

## Madison

The six boats from Guntersville were joined by Tate and the *Delta Realtrac* team the following weekend on the banks of the Ohio River in Madison, Ind., where the town's citizens were thrilled to be hosting the Gold Cup for only the fourth time in Madison's almost 70-year association with unlimited racing.

The hometown boat, the *Miss HomeStreet* of the Miss Madison Racing Team, was again the fastest qualifier with a run of 148.885 mph, a course record, then the racing got underway on Saturday afternoon on a two-mile course that seemed to be constantly changing as buoys worked their way loose and began floating down the river. Both Shane in the *Miss HomeStreet* and Kelly in the *Graham Trucking* came away with victories in that day's action.

During the six preliminary heats in the hot and humid conditions on Sunday, Shane and the *Miss HomeStreet* again came away victorious in each of their appearances. Shane even managed to win one of those events, Heat 2B, despite the fact that he had jumped the gun and was penalized one minute. Henderson and the *Spirit of Detroit* also won a preliminary heat while Tate and the *Auxier Marketing presents Delta Realtrac* took two.

Tate was the first across the starting line in the final heat and through the first lap maintained a slim lead over Shane, who was on his inside. But as the boats completed the first turn at the start of their second time around, the *Delta Realtrac* suddenly hooked in the



Chris Denton



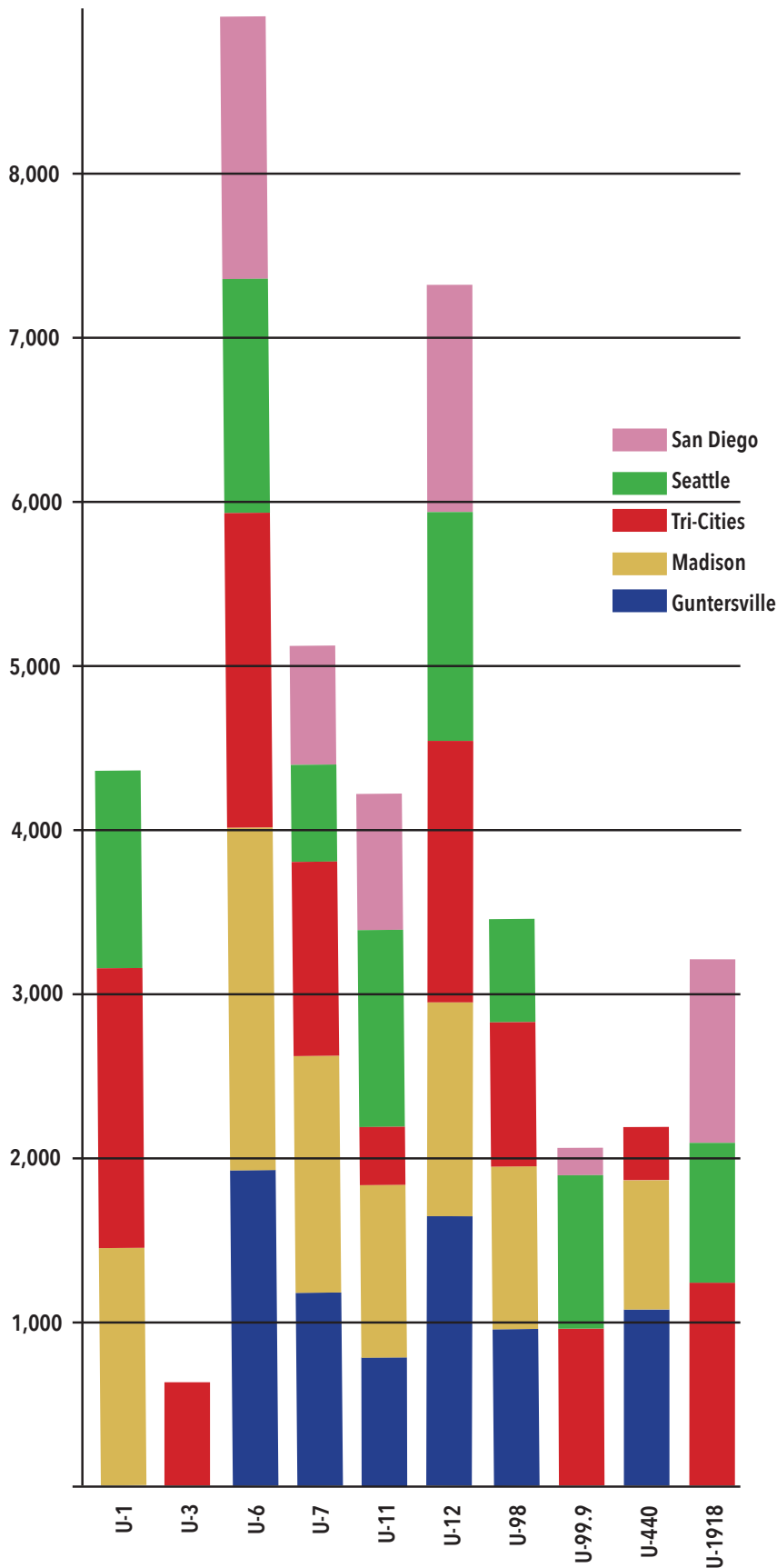
H1 Unlimited



Lon Erickson

From top to bottom above are the third, fourth, and fifth place finishers in the national standings. [Top] The U-7 *Spirit of Detroit*, driven mostly by Bert Henderson. [Middle] The defending champion U-1 *Delta Realtrac* driven by Andrew Tate. [Above] The U-11 *J&D's presented by Reliable Diamond Tool*, which was driven by both Tom Thompson and Jamie Nilsen.

# 2019 National High-Point Standings



rough water and veered sharply to its left. That was the opening Shane needed. He immediately pulled away from Tate and, with loud cheers from the hometown fans, took the checkered flag to complete a perfect weekend.

Tate and the *Delta Realtrac* team returned to the pits thinking they had finished second, but then came word that he had jumped the gun at the start and was assessed a one-minute penalty. That gave runner-up honors to the *Spirit of Detroit* and the third-place trophy to *Graham Trucking*.

## Tri-Cities

The boats then headed west and gathered again in the Tri-Cities three weeks later for the HAPO Columbia Cup. There, the seven boats that had been in Madison were joined by the U-1918 *Oberto Super Salami*, the Allison-powered U-3 *Griggs Ace Hardware*, and the brand-new U-99.9 *Darrell Strong presents PayneWest Insurance*. There also was a cockpit change. Jamie Nilsen replaced Thompson behind the wheel of the *J&D's presented by Reliable Diamond Tool*.

Once more, Shane and the *Miss HomeStreet* were the fastest qualifiers, this time turning in a speed of 163.573 mph. Things were also the same as always during the first day of competition. Shane and *Miss HomeStreet* won both of their preliminary heats while Andrew Tate won each of his preliminary heats aboard the *Delta Realtrac*.

Shane continued his dominance on Sunday, winning both Heats 3A and 4A. As for Heat 3B, Kelly jumped the gun and both *Bucket List Racing* and *Griggs Ace Hardware* fell by the wayside, *Bucket List* with a broken gearbox and *Griggs* with a thrown propeller that tore up the boat's stern. That left the race to Jeff





Corey Peabody drove the U-98 Graham Trucking American Dream to a sixth place finish in the 2019 national standings.

Bernard in the *Oberto Super Salami*, a craft that during the first half of last year carried the name *Miss HomeStreet*. In Heat 4B, Henderson and *Spirit of Detroit/Boitano Homes* got across the finish line before Brian Perkins in the *PayneWest Insurance*.

Shane's luck ran out in the final heat, however. In the dicing before the start, Henderson quickly locked up lane one, Kelly took hold of lane two, and Tate left the dock later than the others and made a beeline for lane three. Shane, meanwhile, trailed the others and was forced to start to their outside. That gave Kelly the advantage he needed. He pulled ahead of Tate and held his lead to the end. Tate finished second and Shane was third.

## Seattle

Next came Seattle. The *Griggs Ace Hardware* went home to Evansville, Ind., with its damaged stern and the *Bucket List Racing* was out with extensive damage to its gearbox, which left a field of eight for the HomeStreet Bank Cup.

For the fourth straight time, Shane's *Miss HomeStreet* was the fastest qualifier, this time with a speed of 154.513 mph. Things also assumed their regular pattern during the first set of preliminaries.

Kelly and *Graham Trucking* took Heat 1A by outrunning Tate in the *Delta Realtrac* while Shane won Heat 1B, an accomplishment that was made much easier because two of the others had jumped the gun at the start.

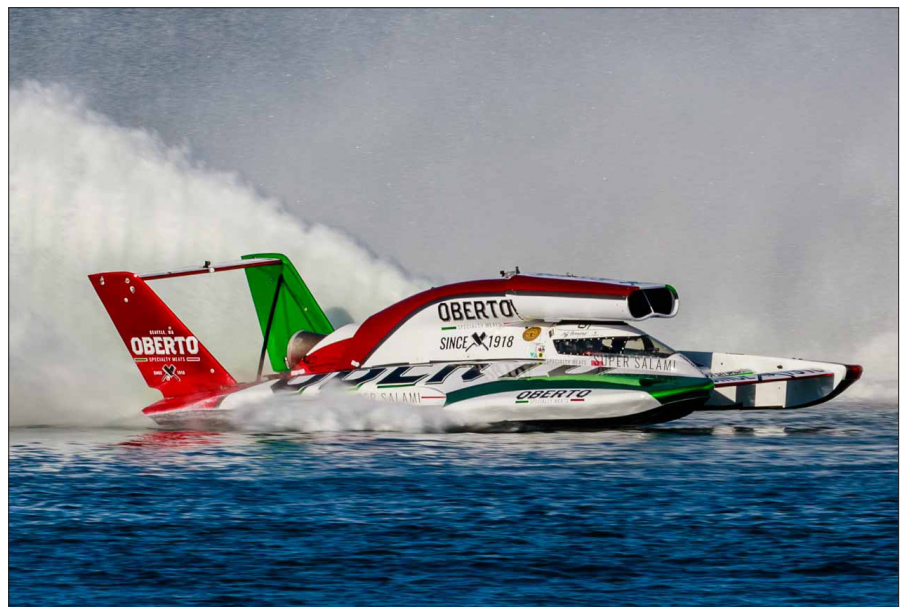
On Sunday, Shane turned in two more victories in the preliminary heats, while Jamie Nilsen drove the *J&D's presented by Reliable Diamond Tool* to a win in Heat 2B and Bernard took the *Oberto Super Salami* to the winner's circle in Heat 3B. Perhaps the most memorable incident of the early heats occurred in Heat

3A when the engine cowling on the *Graham Trucking/Beacon Plumbing* came loose and wrapped itself around the boat's horizontal stabilizer. Kelly managed to finish third in that heat, nevertheless.

At the start of the final, Perkins, in lane five, took the early lead as the boats screamed across the starting line and into the first turn, but then the officials confirmed why he was ahead of the others. He had jumped the gun and was assessed a one-minute penalty. Soon, another penalty was handed down as officials announced that Kelly had gone too slow before the start and also would get a one-minute penalty. That turn of events then clearly opened the door for Shane.

Shane took a comfortable lead over the others with Kelly chasing behind despite the penalty. And, that's how it ended, with Shane first across the finish line, Kelly next, Tate third, and Nilsen fourth.

Shane returned to the pits to celebrate his victory. There were hugs and handshakes from his teammates and he talked warmly about his sponsor and his crew as he stood on the stage before live TV



Appearing only on the West Coast was the U-1918 *Oberto Super Salami*, which was driven by Jeff Bernard and finished seventh in the standings.

cameras to accept a gold watch and the first place trophy. Confetti was shot into the air and champagne was sprayed among the top three finishers.

Then, it happened—a controversy that is still reverberating within the sport. As the TV announcers were wrapping up their live broadcast and as the streets near the racecourse were jammed with the traffic of fans heading home, there came an announcement that the results had changed.

In reviewing the recording of the race, officials discovered that Shane had gone too slow before the start and was assessed a one-minute penalty. They also found that Kelly had not violated the rule, and therefore rescinded his penalty. As a result, the official order of finish was Kelly first, Tate second, and Nilsen third.

It was the third year in a row where the boat crossing the finish line first in Seattle turned out not to be the winner of the race.

## San Diego

Complaints about the way the Seattle incident was handled continued for the next six weeks, when the boats returned to action again on Mission Bay in San Diego for the running of the HomeStreet Bank Bayfair event. There was talk in the pits about the need to change the procedure for starting a race and there were even rumors that, because of the kerfuffle in Seattle, the leaders at HomeStreet Bank were thinking about ending their association with the sport.

One of those topics turned out to be true. Before the racing got underway, officials announced that the 80-mph minimum speed before the start would not be enforced. Meanwhile, Shane did the usual and was the fastest qualifier, this time at 158.623 mph.



Chris Denslow

The season for the U-440 *Bucket List Racing* was cut short because of gearbox issues suffered in the Tri-Cities. Dustin Echols drove the boat to an eighth-place finish.

There were six boats in the field for the Bill Muncey Cup. One could say it was the same group of boats that had started the season in Guntersville, except the *Bucket List Racing* was replaced by the *Oberto Super Salami*. The race format was also similar to the one used in Alabama: four preliminary heats, with the entrants staggered in such a way that each boat raced three times.

During those preliminary heats, Shane and the *Miss HomeStreet* won each of the three heats in which they were entered. His win in Heat 1 was especially important because it also gave him enough points to clinch the national championship for himself and his team. Meanwhile, as Shane sat out Heat 2, Kelly and the *Graham Trucking* became the only other team to claim a preliminary heat victory.

Each race was remarkably clean, by the way, with the only penalty being called against Patrick Haworth, who as a rookie starting his first unlimited heat, was supposed to start behind the pack. Instead, his competitive instincts took over and he started with the others.

The 2019 season's final heat started with just the kind of thing that many years ago caused race

officials to implement the minimum speed before the start. Believing that his only chance to win the final rested in getting the inside lane, Kelly drove the *Graham Trucking* to the backstretch of the racecourse, settled as close to the buoy line as he could, and slowed to a crawl in order to claim that position for himself.

The strategy worked flawlessly. As the clock wound down the final seconds to the start, Kelly punched the accelerator, hit the starting line at high speed just as time expired, and was first into the first turn. Then, keeping Shane on his outside hip, he rounded the course tight to the buoys, thus going a shorter distance than his rival, and held firm to the lead. In the third lap, when Shane was caught in the slop created by slower boats, Kelly increased his advantage and met the checkered flag comfortably ahead. Shane finished second and Bernard was third.

With the competition completed for the year, the final tally of points had Shane and *Miss HomeStreet* with 8,977 while Kelly and *Graham Trucking* finished second with 7,319. Taking third in the standings was the *Spirit of Detroit* team with a consistent performance all year



long. In fourth was the defending national champion *Delta Realtrac* and earning fifth with another consistent performance was *J&D's presented by Reliable Diamond Tool*.

## What's next?

**T**here was a great deal of uncertainty a year ago when the 2018 season ended. Some of those questions still remain.

We didn't know last year at this time, for example, to what extent the defending champion team owned by Mike and Lori Jones was going to compete in 2019. It turned out they did compete, but in only three of the five events. Heading toward 2020, those same questions remain, especially with Andrew Tate's recent announcement that his highest priority next year will be in driving a boat in the Hydroplane Racing League circuit.

At the H1 Unlimited annual award dinner, which is covered in more detail elsewhere in this issue, the folks at HomeStreet Bank snuffed out the continuing rumors about their involvement and announced they would be back as the sponsors of the Miss Madison



H1 Unlimited

The brand-new U-99.9 appeared in the Tri-Cities as the *PayneWest Insurance* and in Seattle as the *CARSTAR powers Miss Rock*. Brian Perkins did the driving.

Racing Team. The boat will be the U-1 *Miss HomeStreet*. The evening also included an announcement that the team's backup boat will be campaigned in 2020 by somebody new to the sport.

Dave Bartush and his *Spirit of Detroit* team seemed happy with their performance this year and have let it be known that they will run two boats next year. It's not certain whether that second boat will be the former *Trendwest* (Hull #0302), which was rebuilt last year, or the former *Budweiser T-3* hull

that last raced as *Degree Men* in 2012 (Hull #9501), which Bartush purchased last spring. Whatever it is, we are certain that the second boat will be driven by Patrick Haworth.

Rob Graham has been quiet about his plans for next year, but we all hope that he'll be back with both the *Graham Trucking* and the *Graham Trucking American Dream*. Kelly Stocklin has already shown that he is committed to the sport and will most likely have his *Bucket List Racing* entry back and running next year.

The same is true of Scott and Shannon Raney and their *J&D's presented by Reliable Diamond Tool*. There is one change coming for that team, though. They apparently will move their shop from Edmonds, Wash., to the other side of the Cascade Mountains near Cle Elum.

Charley Wiggins spent the entire past season in his Gadsden, Ala., shop rebuilding his U-27 hull, which was severely damaged when it caught the skid fin wash from another boat and went flying at the 2018 Seattle race. Given the amount of work he's already put into the project, it would be a shame if he wasn't back in action sometime soon.



Lon Erickson

The Allison-powered U-3 *Griggs Ace Hardware* appeared only at the Tri-Cities race, with Jimmy King in the cockpit. The boat suffered hull damage when it lost a propeller and then went home to Evansville, Indiana.

## 2019 SEASON SUMMARY

Num	Boat	ID#	Driver	Guntersville		Madison		Tri-Cities		Seattle		San Diego		Subtotal	Total Pts.
				Southern Cup 6/29-30	Governor's Cup 7/6-7	Columbia Cup 7/27-28	HomeStreet Cup 8/3-4	HomeStreet Cup 8/3-4	Bill Muncey Cup 9/14-15						
1.	U-6 Miss HomeStreet	1801	Jimmy Shane	1st 1925	1st 2100	3rd 1925	5th 1427	2nd 1600						8,977	
2.	U-12 Graham Trucking	0001	J. Michael Kelly	2nd 1639	3rd 1305	1st 1595	1st 1395	1st 1385						7,319	
3.	U-7 Spirit of Detroit	9712	Bert Henderson	3rd 1175	2nd 1444								4955	5,124	
	Spirit of Detroit/Boitano Homes					5th 1186	593								
	Spirit of Detroit presented by Boitano Homes							4th 557							
	Spirit of Detroit presented by Boitano Homes		Patrick Haworth					169					169		
4.	U-1 Auxier Marketing presents Delta Realtrac	9210	Andrew Tate		5th 1447	2nd 1705	2nd 1205							4,357	
	Delta Realtrac														
5.	U-11 J&D's presented by Reliable Diamond Tool	0925	Tom Thompson	780	4th 1054								1834	4,220	
			Jamie Nilsen			6th 356	3rd 1200	830					2386		
6.	U-98 Graham Trucking American Dream	9899	Corey Peabody	5th 955	994	7th 880	6th 632	5th 167						3,628	
7.	U-1918 Oberto Super Salami	0706	Jeff Bernard			4th 1238	4th 854	3rd 1120						3,212	
8.	U-440 Bucket List Racing	1218	Dustin Echols	4th 1073	790	326								2,189	
9.	U-99.9 Darrell Strong presents PayneWest Insurance	1999	Brian Perkins			6th 958	7th 936							1,894	
	CARSTAR powers Miss Rock														
10.	U-3 Griggs Ace Hardware	0203	Jimmy King			630								630	

The brand-new U-99.9 *Payne West Insurance* and *CARSTAR powers Miss Rock* had a good showing in 2019 and there's no reason to think Greg and Brian O'Farrell won't bring it back next year. In fact, the crew has already been doing some work on it. But, if the boat does come back, it will certainly have a new driver, as Brian Perkins has announced that he'll sit out the 2020 season. The team also has a second boat that is fully capable of racing.

As for Ed Cooper's U-3 team, it's likely given their history that they will once again appear in the Tri-Cities. Beyond that, who knows?

We also don't know at this time how many races there will be in 2020. The folks in Guntersville have already confirmed they will hold a race. Madison will have the Gold Cup again and the race committee is reporting the 2019 event was a success. They've even announced they are building a new stand for the race officials.

Race fans can always count on an event in the Tri-Cities and the uncertainty that has surrounded the Seattle race the past couple of years seems to be gone. The organizers in San Diego also always seem to get things put together every year.

The big question mark is Detroit. There is no word yet whether the unlimiteds will be back in the Motor City or when such a race might be held.

The coming season also is likely to include differences in the world of H1 Unlimited. Work is already underway that will likely result in some significant rule changes, for example.

So, as we head deeper into the 2019-20 off-season, there is definite reason for hydroplane fans to keep paying attention to the latest news. You can be assured; the *Unlimited NewsJournal* will be there covering it. ❖





# An item off the Bucket List.

by John Woodward

**E**ver wonder what it's like to drive an unlimited hydroplane? For me, the very thought of it began in 1967 at the Gold Cup in Seattle.

At the tender age of 8 years old, I witnessed the violent crash of the U-7 *Notre Dame*, which nearly took the life of the great Jack Regas. Weirdly enough, the accident did not phase me in the least. I vividly remember telling my horrified parents, "Wow, that was cool! That's what I want to be when I grow up!"

From that point on I became obsessed with the thunderboats, constantly daydreaming of one day being in the cockpit of a race boat. My persistence finally paid off when I drove my first 280-class inboard hydroplane in 1985 as a member of the Muncey race team. Since then I have had the pleasure of driving 10 different race boats, all being open-cockpit inboards. Two of those hulls were in actual competition during the mid to late '80s and the others

were in the Vintage and Historic division of the APBA from 2005 to current.

For those who are not familiar with the feel of a hydroplane from the cockpit seat, there are major differences in every hull based on several factors. The first is the era of the actual hull. The oldest boat I have ever driven was round-nosed conventional hull (engine in front of the cockpit) that was built in 1957 with a very narrow transom. The run down the straightaway is similar in all race boats as the hull rides on a cushion of air as it gracefully dances back and forth on the sponsons, however the corners are completely different depending on the age of the hull and who built it.

In the early days of boat racing, there was virtually no way to effectively turn the boat in the corners other than cranking the steering wheel hard left hundreds of feet before the entrance pin and sliding through the corner. Up until the early '70s, the modern day turn

fin, normally located on the back side of the left sponson for the most part, did not exist.

I never drove a round-nosed conventional hydroplane until 2015 after spending three decades in very stable cab-overs with wide transoms and non-trips to keep the air under the boat through the corners, but a key factor was the size and angle of the turn fin that allowed me to carve the corner without lifting my foot off the gas pedal.

Another important factor was the center of gravity in the race boat. If the hull sat heavy on the transom or heavy on the nose, it made a huge difference in how hard you pushed the boat. One of the most crucial factors was the powerplant and the type of propeller used. The pitch and the rake of the prop made all the difference in the attitude of the race boat.

Every time I climbed into the cockpit of a race boat I was not familiar with, I had to be focused on every feel and sensation as it danced across the water until I felt confident



John Woodward (in the cockpit) gets a lesson on starting an Allison engine from David Williams, executive director of the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum.

enough to open it up and let her fly. I would have to honestly say, I enjoy driving a cab-over (engine behind the cockpit) over the conventional configuration because of the wider transom and the deeper turn fin, but the challenge of driving an old-school conventional is always something I looked forward to, helping me to increase my resume of different race boats driven. But the dream of being in the cockpit of an unlimited hydroplane was still at the very top of the bucket list.

Based on my lack of availability to work on a vintage project at the hydroplane museum, being that I lived three hours south in Vancouver, Wash., my opportunity to earn a ride in an unlimited was all but non-existent. There were a couple of opportunities that briefly arose, but never came to fruition until this past July when my wonderful wife purchased a ride through the driving school at the hydroplane museum for my 60th birthday present.

When the official document from the museum came in the mail is when it finally sunk in. I was going to be able to drive an unlimited hydroplane at Mahogany & Merlot, and even better than that,

it was going to be in the vintage U-77 *Miss Wahoo*, an exact replica of the original 1956 hull that was built for Bill Boeing and driven by one of my favorites, the late great Mira Slovak.

During the next three months, I spent nearly every day thinking of the upcoming ride and what it would be like compared with my experiences in the various inboards I had driven. Two weeks prior to my ride I drove up to the museum for a driver's school training and test firing of the hull I was to be in.

Fortunately for me, I was a good listener and fired the WWII Allison up on the first try. Wow, what a feel that was! The entire hull shook from the vibration of the engine as it roared to life, belching smoke and fire from her stacks. It was far beyond my expectations of what I thought it would feel like.

Finally, my opportunity had arrived, the 2019 Mahogany & Merlot vintage raceboat regatta on Lake Chelan during the first weekend in October. At one point I was not sure the opportunity would happen as two of the three available HARM boats, the *Oh Boy*, *Oberto* and the *Miss Bardahl* had experienced problems on the first

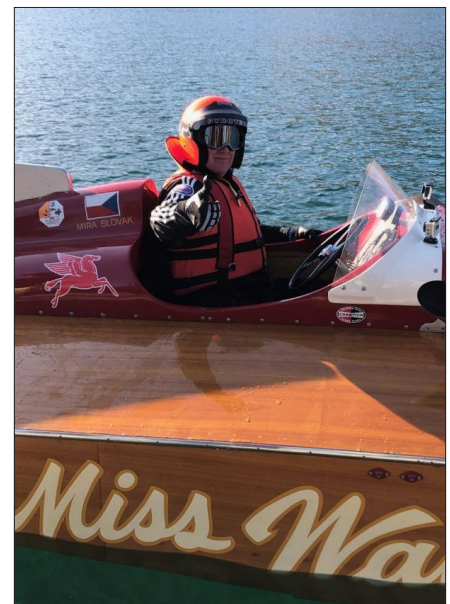
day, leaving the *Miss Wahoo* to pick up all the slack. I was worried that something would go wrong before my number was called.

I hardly slept on Saturday night as I mentally prepared for the following day. As the sun rose on Sunday morning, the wind was gone, the water was glass, and the light for taking pictures was perfect.

As I suited up for the ride with my driving instructor and good friend Glenn Raymond, I could not help but think of how the ride would be. Just prior to the run, we briefly talked about simple hand instructions to go slower or faster, but nothing after that mainly because of my familiarity with being in the cockpit of a hydroplane.

As we pushed away from the dock, the outside temperature was barely above 40 degrees, which meant the Allison V-12 was slow to fire. The normal pre-fire to warm the oil and lubricate the moving parts had not happened.

We probably floated a good thousand feet or so trying to get the engine to light. I started thinking about being towed back to shore and just then she let out a three-foot



Leah Woodward

Woodward in the cockpit of the *Miss Wahoo*.





From the left, Glenn Raymond, John Woodward, and Teah Woodward.

flame from her left stack as the big engine roared to life.

I had once sat in the seat of the *Miss Wahoo* while she was on display during the 2010 Albert Lee Cup in Seattle, trying to visualize what it would be like, but I was not prepared for what I was about to experience other than absolute joy and exhilaration. The first half lap was to warm up the ole girl and then, when we hit the backstretch, there came the feeling I had been searching for my entire life.

The acceleration as incredible as I watched the speedometer climb to past 110 mph! I had never gone that fast before in any race boat, but the feel was all relative based on the size of the craft and, for me, it did not seem as fast as the gauge indicated.

There are no shock absorbers in a race boat so you can feel every little bump and every rolling wave. As I gazed out over the front of the *Miss Wahoo*, you could literally see the hull flex and bend in front as we flew across the waves.

Then came that magical moment when Glenn gave me the wheel and it was mine to pilot down the back straightaway. The sensation was way beyond comprehension as we flew down the back stretch watching the speedometer steadily

climb to 130 mph. To see if I was really driving and not dreaming, I turned the steering wheel ever so slightly to the left and right and, sure enough, I was truly in control of an unlimited hydroplane! My mind kept flashing to a time when my driving idols ran on the very same body of water nearly 60 years ago.

It must be something you're born with, but there was never a single moment that I felt anxious or scared during my ride. Most if not all the sensation and feel of the race boat comes from your rear, as

in your butt. I can literally judge the performance of the boat based on the feel coming from the seat.

As we completed our fourth and final lap on Lake Chelan, I could see the gathering crowd of friends and associates cheering and clapping with exuberance. Then, as I climbed out of the *Miss Wahoo*, my emotions finally boiled over. I embraced my wife with eyes full of tears. My 52-year dream had finally come true and one of the top items on my bucket list was officially checked off.

I now have a whole new appreciation for the men who raced the thunderboats on the ragged edge back in the glory days of hydroplaning, defying the laws of gravity and risking their lives in every heat of racing.

If you grew up being a huge hydro fan like I did and if you have ever wanted to know what's it like to be in the cockpit of a hydroplane, limited or unlimited, I highly recommend that you get ahold of the Hydroplane Museum and get your name on the list. Believe me, it will be the best money you have ever spent. I guarantee it. ❖



A happy John Woodward at the end of his ride in an unlimited hydroplane.



Craig Fjarlie

# CONNECTIONS

Recently, I've been trying to pay attention to what factors help a sport, or a politician, or a business connect with its fans, supporters, or customer base. I've been contemplating those factors because I have been forced to conclude that the connection unlimited hydroplane racing had with the throngs of spectators who once filled beaches at race sites is slipping away. The question is, then, "What has changed and what can be done about it?"

Let me emphasize up front that my comments are not aimed at any one person. Second, the problem has been going on for some time; it has just become more obvious in the last few years.

Since I live in the Seattle area, I am inundated with things promoting the Seahawks football team. People wear T-shirts with the team logo, plaster their cars with stickers, fly flags in their yards with Seahawks emblems, and the players do television advertisements for businesses and charitable causes.

I've paid attention to Formula 1 racing since I had a college roommate who followed it with the same intense interest that I have for hydroplanes. Fans display obvious preferences for certain manufacturers. Drivers hail from different countries; the winner's national anthem is played during the trophy presentation and spectators wave flags while they cheer.

Politicians have loyal supporters. One person has a group of devoted followers who travel around the country to see him. Pundits have compared them to Deadheads, who were the ardent fans of a famous rock band.

Commercial businesses have customers who consistently patronize their products, whether it is for coffee, pizza, or internet service.

When I was growing up in Seattle in the 1950s, virtually everyone I knew could discuss unlimited hydroplane racing with considerable accuracy. We knew boat names and every race team's home port. Drivers were local heroes and owners were colorful figures whose opinions were reported in newspapers and sports broadcasts on our black-and-white television sets.

The first hint of change was ushered in when yacht clubs complained that being responsible for putting on a Gold Cup race was exceeding their budgetary limits. Unlimited racing went "professional" and cities had to bid on the right to play host to the Gold Cup. A few years passed before the connection linking a boat with its home port began to fade. The last time it was a major item was when *Miss Madison* won the 1971 Gold Cup.

When racing resumed following the conclusion of World War II, boats carried a variety of engines, and hulls that featured unusual

designs. There were regular debates about Allison versus Rolls. Two engines in tandem, or side-by-side, were tried in more than one boat. Could auto engines work? *Miss Chrysler Crew* proved they could.

The *U-95* showed that unlimiteds of the future would be powered with turbine engines. Long after three-point hulls demonstrated their design was superior to what had come before, step hulls were still being built, including *Miss Pepsi*, *Gale's Roostertail*, and *Something Else*. Then there were stranger vessels, *Shanty II* and *Miss U* among them.

In the ensuing years, unlimited hydroplanes lost their individuality. Currently, the only boat that stands out is Ed Cooper's *U-3*, because of its turbocharged Allison engine. Aside from that, to the casual observer, the boats all look and sound alike.

Drivers, who once waved at spectators before and after heat races, now sit in enclosed cockpits virtually out of sight. Turbine engines remind someone of a commercial airport. Boat names often change with every race, although in 2019 most remained the same throughout the season.

The advent of social media and the way our society receives news has had a direct effect on hydroplane racing. Newspapers once had writers who routinely covered boating, sail as well as power. Boating magazines were readily available on newsstands and they carried articles about racing. A few were devoted to racing exclusively.



Before TV news became infotainment, sports reports included developments in hydroplane racing throughout the year, not just the week the boats were in town. Now, one must search for hydroplane news on the web. The problem is that younger people, especially, fail to look. Sometimes I tell a coffee shop barista or other person in a commercial position, that I like the hydroplanes. The usual response is a blank stare, or maybe a polite remark such as, "That's interesting."

There is no quick fix for restoring connections to the community. Football, baseball, basketball, soccer, and hockey teams are all based in a city and the name of the city is included with the team mascot. How does a sport, or more specifically, a boat that has no readily identifiable connection to a city re-establish a link to a specific home town, especially when

there may not even be a race in the owner's place of residence?

Sponsors could emphasize their location in a specific city, but businesses are reluctant to take on the roll of outcast or villain at the next race, even if they have no commercial activity there and it is held on a body of water a thousand miles away.

Hydroplane racing is a spectacle with high speeds and soaring roostertails, and that fact has helped encourage spectators to attend races. However, if there is no direct connection that holds people's long-term interest, then there's no guarantee they will return for more every year.

The challenge is to develop a workable plan to secure the interest of people on the beach and provide a reason they should maintain an emotional attachment to a boat or driver so they will follow the circuit

and come back again year after year. My feeling is, there's no time to waste. ❖

## Corning to lead Seafair.

The Seafair Board of Directors has removed the word "interim" from the title that Eric Corning has held since February and has made him president and CEO of the 70-year institution that runs the annual hydroplane race in Seattle, along with many other events.

Corning, who first joined Seafair as a summer intern in 1993, will supervise a full-time staff of nine and over 3,000 volunteers. "Eric is a perfect choice to lead this beloved non-profit," said Joel Andrus, chair of the Seafair Board.

## We love to hear from our readers.

Thanks for another interesting discussion. But I have a real problem with "earned lane format." What that means is that the fastest boats or the best drivers will always get the inside lane, and as the race and the season go on, there will be less and less competition, with the early winners taking all for the rest of the year.

Not too long ago there was a variation on this that might work OK. The fastest qualifier got the inside lane in heat 1, and then, based on qualifying or race results, it was inverted for heat 2, so the fastest boat started on the outside, etc.

Maybe this would be a good solution. Though I still think angling for position before the start is one of the most interesting parts of the race - if it can be done cleanly, safely, and up to speed.

Roger Lippman, Seattle

First, I want to tell you how much I enjoy every issue of the Unlimited News Journal. The stories of the people and boats that made and continue to make this a great sport.

As to How to Start a Hydro Race, you are right that changes

need to be made. I don't have a problem with the 80 mph rule if an affordable, reliable and enforceable solution can be found. The strobes are no good if you don't have enough for ALL the boats and it's no fun watching a guy Trolling for fish.

As far as shortening the starting process, I believe this could help. I was thinking at the four-minute mark the boats are released from the Pits, at the three-minute mark the boats must be on plane. I think requiring the drivers to cross the starting line at least once is a great idea. Present your boat to the officials and fans at speed. They should also use a gun/cannon at the one-minute mark and the start of the heat to get the spectators attention. Not everyone can see the starting clock.

In closing, as a volunteer in Detroit, I would like to thank you for your coverage of the Detroit Hydrofest. All though the Unlimiteds were not in Detroit this year the spectators were not disappointed. The Hydroplane Racing League Grand Prix, H350, and Jersey Speed Skiffs put on a great show. All the fans I spoke to had a great time.

Thank you  
John Middel

# Around the Circuit

## Race Site News



Chris Tracy

## H1 Unlimited 2019 Awards Banquet

**T**he H1 Unlimited 2019 Awards Banquet was held on November 16 at the Angel of the Winds Casino and Resort, located about an hour north of Seattle in Arlington, Wash. Shannon Raney took the lead in organizing the event and even displayed their team's U-11 *J&D's presented by Reliable Diamond Tool* hydroplane in front of the casino.

The impressive venue recently finished a \$60 million expansion and remodel, complete with new restaurants, parking garage, event center, bowling alley, and more. It was a posh venue for the 125 people who attended the banquet.

Fans may recall that unlimited hydroplanes had an Angel of the Winds sticker on them at the HomeStreet Bank Cup race in Seattle. But there is more to the hydroplane connection, as former hydroplane driver and owner Nate Brown works in management at Angel of the Winds, as well.

Earlier in the day there had been H1 meetings. UNJ's editor Andy Muntz made a presentation that reviewed the history of the types of starting procedures that have been used. Before dinner there was a cocktail hour and there was time to talk with many participants in the sport. Owners, drivers, crew members, sponsors, officials, etc., were in attendance.

The Bucket List team had previously booked the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum for an event and they were not in attendance, although Kelly Stocklin attended the business meetings earlier in the day.

No one represented the U-3 and that team seldom sends a representative to the awards banquet. But more obvious was that the Jones team was not represented. It has been widely rumored, but not publicly confirmed, that H1 Executive Director Ron Perry and Associate Executive Director Kristine Perry separated from H1 after the 2019 season and they were not in attendance.

Brad Luce was the Master of Ceremonies, but also was called in to pinch hit for Tim Austin, the chair of the H1 Board. Austin had a family emergency and, at the last minute, could not attend. Luce echoed the theme of the night, which was that the sport recognizes concerns and confusion, but will work for continuous improvement. Examples of continuous improvement were relayed, like the improved schedule this past year at the Seattle race and improved streaming of the races.

A 2019 season in review video, produced by Jared and Tait Meyer, was shown and was well received. And then the award presentation started.

Two years ago, many—maybe too many—awards were handed out. Last year, the number of awards was trimmed. This year, the number of awards was trimmed again—no more photographer, radio, online, print journalism, fan awards, etc. Instead, the awards were limited to those directly involved with hydroplane racing. It worked well.

In Tim Austin's absence, Luce presented the two Chairman's Special Awards. Charlie Grooms

was recognized for his leadership with H1. Lisa Courneya and Brian Montgomery also were recognized for their role in utilizing and operating the drones this past year. All were present to accept their awards.

Before moving to the general awards, Luce spoke about how awards were determined. Awards were voted on by team owners, drivers, and crew chiefs.

### **Race Site of the Year:**

Guntersville Lake Hydrofest. Katy Norton accepted for Guntersville and she remarked, "We have a good time. Come visit."

### **Sponsor of the Year:**

HomeStreet Bank. As Luce said, "their signage is hard to miss, and it has become a recognizable brand." Mark Mason, HomeStreet's chief executive officer and president, accepted the award. He described their hydroplane involvement as a "fabulous experience" and challenged all to expand the sport and produce a product that will bring in other sponsors.

### **Volunteer of the Year:**

Emily Raney. Luce said the purpose of the award was to recognize a volunteer whose sole purpose is to make a difference. Raney has helped coordinate social media and credentials for H1 and much more. She even checked in folks that attended the banquet.

### **Outstanding Contribution:**

H1 Live Streaming Team. Online numbers doubled this year and the entire streaming product was improved, especially with the addition of coverage from the drones. Walt Ottenad accepted



the award for the team that also includes Lisa Courneya, Brian Montgomery, Jared Meyer, and Tait Meyer.

**Crew Chief of the Year:**

Mike Hanson, crew chief of the HomeStreet team. Hanson thanked his brother Larry, who is also on the team, and remarked, "Larry makes no mistakes." He also thanked his wife, who was spending her birthday at the H1 Awards Banquet.

**Crew of the Year:** Graham Trucking, U-12. Luce remarked that the Graham Trucking team tried to continuously improve and look for more speed and "usually found their fastest laps around 4 p.m. on race day." Driver J. Michael Kelly and crew chief Tom Anderson accepted the award. Kelly remarked, "I do the fun part, while you guys [crew] bust your butts." Anderson thanked owner Rob Graham for his support.

**Owner of the Year:** Rob Graham, Graham Trucking U-12 and U-98. Luce noted that the owners are an interesting group and "no two are alike." Drivers J. Michael Kelly and Corey Peabody accepted the award for Rob Graham and Kelly said that "Rob Graham is one of the biggest fans of the sport." Peabody added that while Graham does not attend every race, that

"Rob watches every heat online."

The awards ceremony then moved to the national high points awards for the top three boats and drivers.

**Third Place:** Bert Henderson, driver of the U-7 *Spirit of Detroit*. Henderson, who completed his first full year of unlimited driving in 2019, said, "I never thought I'd be accepting a trophy this year." He revealed that owner Dave Bartush plans to campaign two boats next season. Henderson also thanked his crew and H1.

**Second Place:** J. Michael Kelly, driver of the U-12 *Graham Trucking*. Kelly thanked his wife for letting him drive and noted that "Graham Trucking is two teams, but one family." He thanked crew chief Tom Anderson and singled out his efforts for helping with strategy. Kelly thanked his team and sponsor and then tossed out a goal. "I want to know what it is like to be the fastest qualifier."

**First Place, National Champion Driver:** Jimmy Shane, driver of *Miss HomeStreet*. The award for the national champion driver is officially the Bill Muncey National Point Champion Driver. Luce mentioned that Shane is a champion off the water, as well, with fans and sponsors. Shane

accepted the trophy with his two young boys in tow. He recognized his father, who attended, and thanked his crew and sponsor and humbly noted that he was just "the meat in the seat."

**Martini and Rossi National High Points Champion Team:** *Miss HomeStreet* / *Miss Madison Racing*. *Miss HomeStreet* was the fastest qualifier at every race. The boat was consistent as it entered 23 heats and finished 23 heats and finished first 19 times. Team manager Charlie Grooms accepted the award and thanked the HomeStreet Bank executives attending the banquet for their support.

Grooms said, "We kicked some ass in 2019 for [Dan Hoover] our former crew chief." Grooms noted that the team set records for T-shirt sales, too, and said that, "We strive to make sure fans have a good time." He thanked the citizen owners of Madison, Indiana, and their sponsor HomeStreet Bank.

He noted that for the first time in 58 years, the Miss Madison organization raced two boats and thanked Steven and Larry Oberto and driver Jeff Bernard. Grooms extended a thank you to Nate Brown, and then Brown briefly welcomed everyone to the Angel of the Winds Casino.

Grooms noted that HomeStreet will be back as their sponsor in 2020 and that Seattle real estate investor John Goodman will help facilitate running their second boat in the 2020 season.

Mark Mason thanked the Miss Madison team for excellence, for setting goals and achieving them, and for presenting a great product. He said that the hydroplane program "represents HomeStreet in a positive light." And Mason noted that the goal is to focus on the fan experience. ❖



Brad Luce

The Unlimited NewsJournal crew at the H1 Unlimiteds Award Banquet.

# HydroFile

## Race Team News



Lon Erickson

### U-1 HomeStreet Racing/Miss Madison

As some of the crew works on winter prep for both of the Miss Madison Racing team hulls, news comes that both boats will compete in the upcoming 2020 H1 season. At the recent H1 Awards banquet, HomeStreet Bank CEO Mark Mason confirmed that his company will continue to sponsor the primary raceboat, driven by Jimmy Shane and first launched in 2018. Team Manager Charlie Grooms also announced a new developing sponsorship for the second hull, which ran as the U-1918 in 2019 (Hull #0706), with Seattle real estate developer and racing enthusiast John Goodman (right). Goodman has ties with the racing world through his auto racing, classic car collection, unlimiteds, and is the owner of the 1982 *Atlas Van Lines* at the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum.



Trey Holt



Trey Holt



Guntersville Hydrofest



## U-7 Spirit of Detroit Racing

Off season plans for the Spirit of Detroit team includes prepping two hulls to compete in 2020. They currently have three racing hulls to consider: the U-7 (Hull #9712) T-5 hull that has raced the last few seasons with Bert Henderson driving, the rebuilt former U-2 *Trendwest* (Hull #0302), and the former 88 *Degree* (Hull #9501) T-3. Henderson reports they are undertaking some lightening of the U-7 during the off-season, working on retrofitting and updating the *Degree* hull, and want to get the rebuilt *Trendwest* hull on the water in the spring to test the changes they made during its rebuild last year. Upcoming new H1 driver Patrick Haworth (below) is expected to fill the second seat of the two-boat team.



Spirit of Detroit Racing



Spirit of Detroit Racing

## U-9 Jones Racing

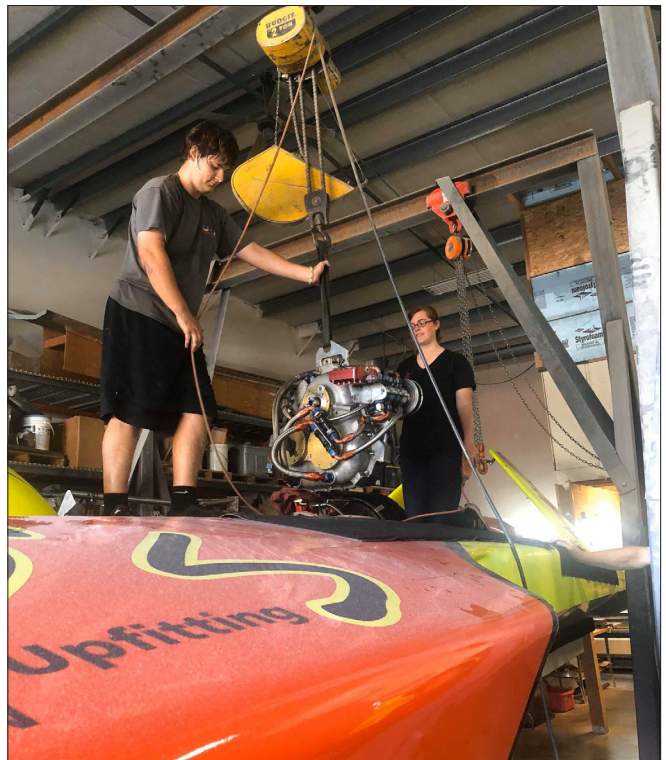
After choosing to not compete at San Diego Bayfair, there is no news coming from the Jones Racing team for 2020. Driver Andrew Tate (pictured on an HRL boat below) has signed on for the full 2020 season in the HRL series as the new driver of the national champion GP-777 *Steeler*. Quoted in the *Journal Saint-François*, Tate reported, "I will drive wherever HRL goes, it will be my priority. I spoke with Mike Jones; it is possible that the U-9 team (now *Delta Realtrac*) will take a break from the Unlimited circuit in 2020."



Hydroplane Racing League

## U-11 Unlimited Racing Group

Offseason work at the U-11 URG shop is well underway. The crew is breaking down all the hardware and engines used, then will begin preparing them for the 2020 H1 season.



Scott Raney



## U-27 Wiggins Unlimited

Charley Wiggins reports that work continues on the build/rebuild of the U-27 hull that last raced in Seattle as the U-1918 *Oberto Beef Jerky*. The hull will be built around the existing cockpit, while the rest of the hull and sponsons are new fabrication.



Photos by Charley Wiggins

## U-99.9 Go Fast Turn Left Racing

The GFTL team had another crew weekend in October that consisted of shop housekeeping and winter prep maintenance (below). More recent news out of the GFTL team is from driver Brian Perkins. "As 2019 comes to a close and we begin the 2020 race season, I would like to take the time to thank the O'Farrell Family and Go Fast Turn Left Racing for the wonderful years of racing," he said. "I will not be driving for the 2020 race season. However, I still have plans to be involved with the sport. See everyone in 2020!"



GFTL Racing

## 440 Bucket List Racing

The 440 team has the hull in the shop, rolled over, and is doing some extensive work on the bottom of the hull, in addition to upgrading running gear that brought their 2019 season to an early stop and caused them to miss the Seattle and San Diego events.



Michael Lemler



Michael Lemler



# My \$0.02 Worth

## Editorial Comment



Andy  
Muntz

Dear Santa,

Three years ago, I wrote you a letter that made just three simple requests. Perhaps you don't remember it from among that gigantic pile of letters you must get from all the little girls and boys around the world, both naughty and nice, so I'll remind you. It was a request, made on behalf of thousands of hydroplane fans that simply asked for more boats to be in unlimited races, more races, and more media coverage.

Ring a bell?

Anyway, I just wanted you to know that I'm greatly disappointed in you because nothing seems to have come from that request. Regarding the number of races, for example, when I wrote that letter in December 2016, there had been only five events held the previous season. To put that in perspective, I pointed out that a couple of decades earlier there had been twice that number.

Care to guess how many races

there were this past year? Yep—five.

Not much progress.

OK, I'll give you a pass on that one, Santa. I realize it's tough to put a whole race and all of those buoys in that big sack of yours. That's why I also asked for more boats. Can't have a boat race without boats.

Want to know what happened? When I made that request three years ago, a total of 12 boats had been entered in those five races.

I actually thought I was making a reasonable request to ask for more than 12 because, after all, there had been 16 two decades earlier and 19 a decade before that. What's more, even as recently as last spring, when we counted the number of boats that were somewhat possible, there were 15. And, that's not counting boats that are for sale or that were being talked about on Facebook.

So, getting more than 12? Should have been a piece of cake, especially with St. Nick on our side!

Know how many we actually

had in 2019? Only 10. Last I checked, that's going in the wrong direction, Santa.

And, what about that media coverage? Well, the traditional media—the newspapers and the radio and TV stations—still largely ignore the sport, but I will admit that you've pulled through with one thing. The live streaming coverage on the internet is vastly improved from three years ago. The drone stuff was spectacular! I'll give you that one, Santa.

But I'm still concerned about the lack of races and the boats. Something needs to be done there. A little greater focus on addressing that issue would be greatly appreciated.

Just sayin'.

Thanks, big guy! We're counting on you.

Oh, and give my best to Mrs. Claus and the elves. ❖

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Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

**PLEASE JOIN US AT THE NEXT MEETING OF UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS.**

2 p.m. on Sunday, December 8, 2019

Bellevue Public Library, Room 3, 1111-110th Ave. NE, Bellevue, Washington 98004