



2015: No Margin For Error, So Says the Swami

by Brian Anderson

With the recent untimely contraction of the Unlimited Hydroplane series to a mere five races the importance of eliminating errors is at an all time high. One bad bounce or wave that results in a blow over will take you right of the picture immediately. This season is now or never time, if you don't show up and be fast from day one you will never catch up. Should someone throw a propeller through the bottom of the hull it will be all over, not just for that race but for the championship itself. With this small a margin the smart play just might be to race a little on the conservative side. But what will that get you? Maybe it gets you the championship, but more



than likely it gets you a middle of the road season. So this is where the real strategy begins. Should a team risk it all and run wide open for the five races and risk something catastrophic? Or just run strong and hope some unforeseen event takes out the competition? This is the dilemma crew chiefs, owners, and of course drivers will be facing in this unprecedented short season. As usual it's the points that will be most important and winning every time out is more important than it ever has been.

The projecting of a champion has never been a tougher task as the teams prepare for the opener in the small Ohio River town of Madison, IN. As usual some teams have not changed at all over the off season and some have a different look. The defending champion *Oh Boy! Oberto* at the top of the list for standing pat. Driver Jimmy Shane returns to drive the community owned boat, a team once an underdog but now a proven champion. His title defense will not be easy. His toughest rival from a year ago J. Michael Kelly stays put driving Ted Porters U-5 *Graham Trucking* (red). These two would have to be labeled as the odds on favorite to fight for the title. But with the short season nobody can truly be counted out. Giving these two a run for their money has to include the U-96 *Ellstrom E-Lam Plus* with Jean Theoret who took over late last season in the Ellstrom family owned boat. Another sure to make waves in every heat is the U-9 Jones Racing with Scott Liddycoat returning to the unlimiteds to drive. The championship should come from one of the aforementioned teams. Even with this short season it does not seem likely that a true underdog will emerge.

Beyond the top three rookies rookies may mix it up with the contenders. Another team that may be contenders by the time the season winds up, A nother contender is the U-27 Wiggins Racing to be piloted by veteran Cal Phipps. This new team acquired the former U-17 of Nate Brown which proved to be fast and is the 2013 Gold Cup winner.

Rounding out the field and definitely needing a lot of luck to contend for the title are Mike Webster in the U-22 Webster Racing , Brian Perkins in the U-21 Go Fast Turn Left Racing, Tommy Thompson in the gbr/U-11 *Peters & May*, rookie Patrick Sankuer Jr. in the U-12 *Miss DeJulio*, Kelly Stocklin in the U-18 Bucket List Racing, and rookie Kevin Eacret in the U-100. Maybe we will have some surprise entries but don't count on it.

With the season as short as it is the Swami fires up the crystal ball ever so briefly for the yearly gaze into the strange world known as the 2015 season.

From the top

Winning it all

1) U-5 *Graham Trucking*, J Michael Kelly, 5 career wins.

Precision Marine, 16 career wins
Decatur, IN

Swami Sez: This will be the season Kelly takes it all. It may be short in the number of races but this rocket will stay out of trouble, qualify fast and collect points to clinch, but it will go down to the final in San Diego. Expect them to be in every final heat, win the Gold Cup in Tri-Cities and take two out of the five races.

Second but not by much

2) U-1 *Oberto*, Jimmy Shane, 8 career wins.

City of Madison, Ind. 21 career wins
Madison, IN

Swami Sez: It is very hard to go against the defending champion but this team took only two of the six races in 2014. But fear not as the boat and driver are as fast as ever and should be top qualifier at most events and take one victory. They will be in contention until the final heat of the year.

3) U-9 *Les Schwab/Red Dot*, Scott Liddycoat, 1 career win

Mike & Lori Jones, 2 career wins.
Kent, WA

Swami Sez: Here is the dark horse that can win the title if a few breaks go its way. The boat looked very good in its preseason test and just might sneak in for a win. Expect them to be in every final heat and racking up good points in the prelims. Will avoid the mechanical failures of years past this time and we just may see them in victory lane.



- 4) U-96 *Ellstrom E-Lam Plus*, Jean Theoret, 6 career wins
Ellstrom Family, 29 career wins
Seattle, WA.

Swami Sez: This is another fast boat that put in some preseason testing and looked good doing it. Jean Theoret has proven he can win but in this short season can he get off to a good start. Will be good, but not outstanding.

A Step Behind

- 5) U-7 *Graham Trucking II*, Jesse Robertson
Precision Marine, 16 career wins
Decatur, IN

Swami Sez: Here is a boat driver combination that will no doubt surprise. The hull is extremely fast will charge as soon as Jesse is turned loose. This is the 'black' boat of the *Graham Trucking* tandem which will qualify well and just might shock the sport with a victory.

- 6) U-27 Wiggins Racing, Cal Phipps, 0 career wins.
Wiggins Racing, new team
Gadsden, AL

Swami Sez: The 2013 Gold Cup winning hull now has a new home in Alabama and a new owner and driver. How quickly they can get this unfamiliar hull dialed in will be the key to the season. Should qualify well and make three of the five final heats.

- 7) U-22 Webster Racing, Mike Webster, 0 career wins
Webster Family, 0 career wins
Reading, PA

Swami Sez: A consistent but not overly fast boat make this team a solid competitor and will be right there if a mistake is made by the hot dogs. Qualifying speeds will be mid-pack and should see at least one final heat. Webster has a way of playing it smart and stealing and heat win when least expected.



8) U-21, Go Fast, Turn Left Racing-Brian Perkins, 0 career wins

Greg O'Farrell, 0 career wins
Maple Valley, WA

Swami Sez: A new boat is always tough to get a read on, that's why they are rebuilding the broken one. This should ultimately prove to be fast as before, but with no testing the team will probably struggle at the first race or two before hitting their stride. They will miss Madison. Fast speeds will probably come late in the season, what there is left of it. Brian Perkins will drive it smart.



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

Scott Raney, 0 career wins
Edmonds, WA

Swami Sez: This team has been an underachiever for the last few seasons. They have a solid sponsor and a good driver but for some reason have had trouble putting it all together.



10) U-12 *Miss DiJulio*, Patrick Sankuer Jr., rookie
Jay Leckrone, 0 career wins
Burien, WA

Swami Sez: Team has not been able to qualify and run with any consistency. They do have a flashy paint scheme but will most likely be done after the preliminaries. Will need a lot of luck to move up



11) U-18 Bucket List Racing, Kelly Stocklin, 0 career wins

Kelly Stocklin, 0 career wins
Sammamish, WA

Swami Sez: The former G-class hull with a T-53 turbine is a really good field filler and will typically finish almost all heats, but don't expect to see them up front in the prelims or at the top of the speed charts.



12) U-100 Leland Racing, Kevin Eacret, Rookie
Leland Racing team, 20 career wins
Kirkland, WA

Swami Sez: A team that has had trouble getting its act together the last couple of seasons. This season will probably see more of the same. Most likely done after the prelims.

Boats where art thou?

U-37 Former *Beacon Plumbing*
Billy & Jane Schumacher, 4 career wins
Seattle, WA

Swami Sez: Boat now sits for sale and is in New York state, or so I'm told. The hull would be a good runner if the price were right.

U-3 Former *Master Tire*
Ed Cooper, 4 career wins
Evansville, IN

Swami Sez: Do you think? Probably not.

U-96 Ellstrom & U-787 *Boeing*
Ellstrom Family
Ballard, WA.

Swami Sez: The Ellstrom's #0116 Qatar hull could be a raceable boat, or the #9516 *Boeing* hull with the most recognizable name world wide in this sport sit idle. Why Not?



Wild Card

U-57, *FEDCO*, Mark Evans 10 career win
Evans Brothers Racing, 0 career wins
Swami Sez: Ted Porter display hull, Not for Sale!
Yet. But could still race.



66th Seafair Kick-Off at WESTLAKE



Above left is King Neptune Mark Dyce-Ryan, Miss Seafair Jasmine Goodwin, Queen Alcyone Suzanna Darcy-Hennemann, and Jimmy Shane; Rex of the World's Fastest Raceboats," and his son Colton; "Baron of the Next Generation of Boat Racing." Mr. Kelly a Starbucks representative, and Seafair CEO and President, Beth Knox on the podium. At right clowns, pirates, and others at the June 10th Seafair Kick-off. UNJ's Karen and Bob Senior and Karl Pearson, who took these photos, were there enjoying the festivities.



Two unlimited hydroplanes were on display at the Westlake Mall for the Seafair Kick-Off. The vintage U-77 *Miss Wahoo* and modern *Albert Lee* display boat.





HydroFile
Lon Erickson

As we head into the first race of the season, majority of the team news is focused on last minute preparations before hitting the road, converging on the banks of the Ohio River in Madison over the 4th of July weekend. A successful testing session for 3 teams in Tri-Cities (covered in the story in this issue) and now the breaking news of Detroit being added back into the 2015 race schedule.

U-1 Oberto: A look at the 2014 National Champion hull in the shop with the U-1 on the nose. ~ Tyler Hanson photo



U-5 Team Porter: They announced 10 years of unlimited hydroplane racing. ~ Porter Racing facebook photo

U-7 Graham Trucking: After the recent Tri-City testing the U-7 team was on display at Meyers Auto Tech in Kennewick. ~ Porter Racing facebook photo



U-9 Les Schwab/RedDOT: The U-9 Jones Racing display hull made the rounds to a local elementary school and the Maple Valley Days parade. ~ U-9 Jones Racing facebook photo

gbr1/U-11 Miss Peters & May: Three of the team turbines in the engine shop and wings/fairings in the paint bay at West Coast Collision Center for the gbr11 team. ~ gbr/U-11 facebook photos.



U-12 Miss DiJulio/Centurion Racing: Gary Scott has been named 2015 crew chief for Centurion Racing. Final hull prep work, hauler maintenance being completed. ~ Centurion Racing facebook photos

Media Visibility: Over 24 million web site visits throughout season
Races streamed live via Internet and Cable TV
2 Northwest races broadcast live over TV and Radio
Dominates local sports reporting

Customer Interactivity: Display boat available for customer events
Customer conversion programs available

U-21 Go Fast Turn Left Racing: They are seeking sponsorship for the 3 races on their schedule.

U-22 Webster Racing: The final colors and clear coat finish is done on the U-22 hull, and systems going in now. ~ Webster Racing facebook photos

Sponsoring the Go Fast Turn Left Racing Team will energize your brand in its association with an exciting racing environment. As some of the fastest boats in the world, attention is paid very closely to the boats in action. Be a part of the boat's and the team's visibility by becoming a sponsor for the 2015 season and rewarding top employees and VIP customers!

Go Fast Turn Left Racing: an affordable and effective sports marketing buy!





U-27 Wiggins Racing: Engine and gearbox alignments being checked on the U-27. Looks like we are going to be waiting until Madison to see what final colors appear for the new team.
~ Wiggins Racing fb photos



U-96 Ellstrom Racing: In a change from recent news, it is now being reported that the *Qatar* name is being dropped from the Ellstrom owned hydroplane. For Madison, the name will be the U-96 *Ellstrom E-Lam Plus*.

U-100 Leland Racing: The crew for Leland Racing is wrapping up their preparations for 2015. The boat updates are done, the hull is back on the trailer, and a successful trailer firing completed. Below right, **Kevin Eacret**, *Bob Burks* and crew discuss deck hatch repairs on the boat. ~ At left Ben Rice photo; On right Lon Erickson photo



HOW DO WE START IN 2015? THE USUAL QUESTION!

H1's Mike Noonan explains the Rules for 2015

Interview by Clint Newman

UNJ: Mike, we've been doing this Rules Interview for many years, and always the first question is "What's the starting procedure going to be?" Do we have a new procedure for 2015?

Noonan: We have no changes to the starting procedure. It's the same as it was the entire 2014 season. You can't leave pits before the 5 minute gun. A minimum speed at all times will be enforced again, starting with the 80 MPH used last year and it seemed to work on most courses. No one minute score up buoy, no having to pass the judges' stand at speed. It's really just fighting for lanes. You have to establish your lane at the entrance pin of turn 2, and run for the start.

We will attempt to use a GPS measuring system, self-contained in the boats, that is set to turn on a strobe light if the boat drops below the minimum speed, which is for now set at 80 mph. This can be used as a tool for the referees. When the light is flashing, the referee can indicate to the corral to radio the boat to speed up. That's the warning. After the initial trial in Madison, the committee will issue a Competition Directive with terms, conditions and number of warnings to add the penalty. The idea is to try to eliminate the guess work on the 80 mph determination.

UNJ: So, all of the boats are equipped for this?

Noonan: Yes. They did a test at Tri-Cities, and it worked fine. It's just a matter now of finding a strobe light that is bright enough, and to install it on the boat where it can be seen anywhere on the course by the referees.

UNJ: The minimum speed took care of the boats parking to establish a lane?

Noonan: Yes, there was no parking. There was a lot of leap-frogging. There were a lot of questions about boats that did leap-frog someone going down the backstretch to move over into lane 1, with the overlap, then had to slow down to make a legal start. There were a lot of questions. Was the boat really going 80 mph or less than 80 mph. The debate was, "What was 80 mph?" It was such a subjective call. So, that's when the idea came up with the GPS system that would track the speed and turn on a light.

UNJ: On the starting procedure, what is the overlap rule?

Noonan: A five boat overlap before the start and seven after the start.

UNJ: Prior to the season, there was talk of a "no harm, no foul" approach to rule making. What has been done to reflect that?

Noonan: Nothing has changed in the rules. It's more of an interpretation, how the rules are applied by the officials. It is up to the Chief Referee to determine whether there was an infraction or not. The infractions weren't



Clint Newman said this was taken in Madison at the Thursday night party at the Boneyard Grill, owned by Charlie Grooms. It is always a really fun evening, well attended by drivers, owners, crews, officials, and lots of fans. I wouldn't miss it! he says. ~ James Crisp photo

removed, the lane changes, distances, none of the physical requirements of racing were removed. That being said, the referees have been encouraged to be certain that a call must be clear, convincing, and of substance. If they are not, the call should not be made. It wasn't opened up to just do what you want to do, and if you don't hurt somebody, do whatever you want.

UNJ: You have a new right-of way rule . . .

Noonan: This is a rule that was in effect years ago and later removed. The Competition Committee recommended to put it back in. It has to do with coming out of the infield. If you are on the course and running in an established lane, you have right of way over anybody coming out of the infield. Since you don't have to pass the exit pin of Turn 1, theoretically, you could just come out of the infield and pull in front of the field and establish lane 1. The feeling was that you can't come out of the infield in front of somebody and take away their lane. The only way you can do that is to run past two straightaway buoys in that lane. So, until you have passed two straightaway buoys, that boat you have moved over can come around you and come back to the inside lane without an overlap. Theoretically, you have no right to be there in the first place.

That rule was in the book, and was used a lot in the Kropfeld and Hanauer days of cutting through the infield and trying to get in front of the field for lane 1.

UNJ: It was announced early on the power plants would not be restricted in the future. The T-55, the T-53, and V-12 aircraft engines are specifically mentioned in the Rule Book. What about other power plants that may be new to the sport?

Noonan: It's easy to say that you can bring whatever you want, and then show up with a 30 foot boat with an outboard motor on the back. All that would do is detract from the show. The new rule reads: Requests for use of power plants not specifically referenced in the current Rule book shall be submitted to the Competition Committee for evaluation and approval based on sustainability, reliability, and performance criteria. The motor has to have a reasonable chance of competing. If it's something brand new, the existing Rule talks about automotive power plants, reciprocating power plants being brought in, a certain number built for production, a minimum of 100, that was trying to eliminate a hand-made engine, one of a kind that nobody else can get. That was in the Rule Book to allow people to bring experimental power plants in. Again, they have to prove the engine has been test-run, that if it breaks, there is a spare and spare parts. You wouldn't want to get 10 boats to a race site, 4 with a new experimental powerplant (one of a kind), and then when it breaks, they are out of the race. The rule is to protect the competition level. But, we want to allow innovation without someone having to build 100 production motors.

UNJ: Are there some new power plants in development right now?

Noonan: Yes, several. There are several in development, and several existing, along the lines of the offshore power plant. That's been mentioned a lot. These are large, reciprocating engines that are not built for the automotive world; they are built specifically for racing. They are limited production, and are expensive. But, they did not meet the original criteria of a production automotive powerplant.

UNJ: Mike, I don't understand the new N2 data rule.

Noonan: This is a Competition Directive that was issued last year that we put in the Rule Book. Prior to this rule, in qualifying runs, if you had an N2 violation, an engine output rpm greater than 110% for more than 3.0 seconds, your entire qualification attempt was thrown out. That caused teams to come back in, make changes, and go back out to qualify. We looked at it and saw that when you are actually racing, you are allowed two overages (called occurrences), and that's just a fine. Why didn't that apply to qualification as well? So now, you are allowed two overages for each qualification attempt. If you have three, the time is automatically thrown out, just like it would have been before.

UNJ: I noticed a rule about smoothing fuel data. What is that all about?

Noonan: The Racepak data loggers record the fuel flow and they display the output on a graph. It looks like a sawtooth. The rule says teams are responsible for maintaining the fuel flow “at or below” the maximum fuel flow of 4.10 gpm. Over the years some teams have figured how to run at or “above” the limit and still be legal. A function of the Datalink program allows levels of smoothing that, in layman’s terms, throws out the high and low spikes. With some of the low spikes ignored, the data shows high, or over the limit. The intent is to make the flow average on the 4.10 line, not over it.

UNJ: One of the big concerns for years has been calling a winner of the final heat before the fans go home and they don’t know who the winner really is. What progress have you made on this front?

Noonan: There are no changes in the rules. We’ll run the same way we did in 2014. All decisions on course rule violations are to be made and finalized before the next set of heats. The decision on the Final Heat shall be made within 30 minutes of the finish. The rule did not change. However, the race winner will be determined as quickly as possible. The Chairman has instructed the referees to make a decision in 15 minutes or less, unless there are extenuating circumstances like getting a video from a helicopter to the Chief Referee due to logistical problems. It is a matter of trying to get better information and better communications between the officials and the Chief Referee to make that decision. None of that applies to technical violations. That can still come after the fact. Technical violations can still be called any time after the event.

UNJ: There has been some talk about having more transparency. Last year, a rule was put in place that said that the start/finish line videos would be shown to the Driver’s Representative and the Driver’s Representative only. Does that still stand?

Noonan: Yes, that still stands.

UNJ: What about new Rules relating to safety?

Noonan: The first deals with the brackets used to mount the skid fin. They were required to be removed once a year and tested. We found that once you have removed them once and tested them, subsequent removal has not found any damage. The committee agreed that removing them annually was a lot of extra work that did not yield anything new. So now, they have to be removed every two years and have sent out to test for cracks.

When we talk about more and more new engines, including automotive reciprocating engines, just like other motorsports using them, you have the fly wheel which has the potential to become shrapnel when it comes apart at high rpms. Fly wheels, blowers, those things will have safety straps, shields, guards, containment blankets like they have in tractor pullers, race cars, dragsters, etc.. Since we don’t have an issue right now with a particular motor, we want whoever is bringing a powerplant in to know that they have to have the proper containment.

UNJ: Thinking about safety, who is in charge of the H1 rescue divers? Do they get special training, and is there continuity from race to race?

Noonan: Dennis Olsen is our Director of Rescue. He has a team of three divers that he rotates throughout the season. He and two others are at every race. Local race sites have their divers who do their own training programs. Local groups have done it for years. Together, the teams usually meet on a Thursday, and go over their plans. Dennis has a standard operating procedure that is issued to all race sites. Even when we have new sites, like Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, they brought in the Tri-Cities rescue group to help out.

UNJ: There is a new rule that ways qualification heats are to be determined by blind draw.

Noonan: This involves the two boat owner rule. The old rules said that if one owner has two boats, the first one drawn went into that heat, and the second one automatically went into the other heat. That was removed this year. The Competition Committee felt that it was unfair to the other teams that only had one boat. That rule gave one owner potentially two first place victories, almost a guarantee of 400 points in that round of heats when you separated the two boats. Why shouldn’t they compete with each other like everybody else? Now, there is no preference as to what heat a boat is in, regardless of ownership. It is the luck of the draw.

UNJ: When we talked last year, we talked about the possible uses of drones in officiating, and getting into more use of GPS technology. Has progress been made in this area?

Noonan: I have already discussed the use of GPS technology with respect to the minimum speed indication. Drones continue to evolve. There are proposals on the table for using drones to replace helicopters. There are issues relating to FAA clearances. Lots of our big races have air shows. There are rules and regulations plus the cost. It isn't a freebie; you don't just throw away the cost of the helicopter, you have to offset that with time, travel, personnel, and rental fees for UAV's. It's still being looked at. There's a good possibility that we may find funding to do one or two drones with over the air, live video feeds back to the judges' stand. If we can get that, calls can be made by watching a monitor, rather than being in a helicopter and relaying it back down. That's the ultimate goal we are looking for. The ideal situation would be to have a drone parked over each turn with live video, remote controlled cameras, and monitors in front of the officials, like NASCAR officials sitting in the big truck watching everything unfold in front of them on TV monitors. It's not free and not cheap, but we are working on it.

UNJ: H1 Rules changes are recommended by the Competition Committee, then submitted to the H1 Board of Directors for approval or modification. Who is on the Competition Committee?

Noonan: Ted Porter is the Chairman. Other members are Jim Harvey, Charlie Grooms, Scott Raney, Jeff Campbell, Mike Hanson, and myself.

UNJ: Last year you told us that H1 was trying to develop new referees for the sport. Has this been successful?

Noonan: Yes. Chief Referee Brian Hajny has put together a diverse team of officials. The idea that Steve (David) has is to use a lot of APBA experienced officials and use them more regionally than we used to do. This would eliminate a lot of travel, airfares, and extra days on site. At least six new people will be used this year who have done it in the past or have previous officiating experience.

UNJ: Thanks, Mike! Hopefully, we'll do this interview again next year!

~~ End



Above left H1 official Mike Noonan. ~ Karl Pearson photo; At right our reporter and friend Clint Newman. ~ Lon Erickson photo

Tri-Cities May 29th test on the Columbia River



Lots of spectators (an estimated 1,000 fans), were in Lampson Park Friday to watch the H1 Unlimiteds first test runs of the 2015 season at Columbia Park in Kennewick. There was beautiful weather and smooth water. Three unlimited teams and four drivers participated in the first test session of the season. The U-7 Graham Trucking team, U-9 Les Schwab /Red Dot team, and the U-96 Ellstrom team. There was also one Grand Prix in the pits, the GP-74 *Premonition*. But sadly, things didn't go well for them. When the crane tried to lift the boat off its trailer, the left sponson cracked. The boats on tilt above. ~Karl Pearson photos

Surprisingly all three team's elected to run on a less than a mile racecourse instead of preparing for the HAPO's Gold Cup 2-1/2 mile course.

Jay Leckrone and U-12 Centurion Racing were scheduled to be in Tri-Cities, but late Thursday the team cancelled the trip because electrical issues. Their driver Patrick Sankuer Jr. was in Lampson Park for the test though. He had never been here before and wanted to see what it was like. He was impressed.

Oberto's sponsor Larry Oberto was also in Columbia Park and watched the action in the pits, even though his team wasn't on hand. Steve Montgomery was here to watch the action too. Larry Oberto at right. ~ Karl Pearson photo



Ted Porter had doubts at first, hauling his U-7 boat all the way from Indiana to the Northwest for this test, but a chance to test run the U-7 where the HAPO Gold Cup was too hard to pass up.

He said they used a lot of the West Coast crew, and it's worked out great for them. He also wanted to get his new driver, Jesse Robertson, who replaced Cal Phipps (Phipps moved over to drive for Charlie Wiggins' U-27), some seat time in the boat. They also tried out a couple of different turbine packages and different gear ratios.

Jesse Robertson has driven the U-57 for Mark Evans and the U-12 *Miss DiJulio* the past few seasons. Robertson said the U-7 was like night and day compared to the two other boats.

J. Michael Kelly first drove the U-7 *Graham Trucking II* making sure the systems worked before Jesse Robertson climbed in the cockpit. J. Michael Kelly's U-5 *Graham Trucking* is back in the shop in Indiana, and he said his boat was in great shape and ready to race.

J. Michael Kelly logged seven laps before the shaft log broke putting the boat on the beach at the end of the day. Below left the first run of *Graham Trucking II*. At right, the U-7 returns to the pit in later run. ~ Lon Erickson photos



From left to right are J. Michael Kelly, Jesse Robertson, Jean Theoret, and Scott Liddycoat. ~ Karl Pearson photo



Crew chief Mike Hanson and U-96 team were in the Lampson pits. Erick Ellstrom's father, Sven Ellstrom, was ill and both stayed in Seattle. After last year, finishing a new boat, then crashing in Seattle, set them way back and they want to be better prepared this season. Mike Hanson spent the winter revamping the boat.

Their driver, Jean Theoret, said he felt comfortable in the boat. The test run went very well according to Theoret. He said he had been waiting for a good opportunity to race again. The opportunity to work with Erick Ellstrom and Mike Hanson was too good for him to pass up. He came back last season after 5 years to replace an injured Kip Brown and drive the U-96 *Qatar* at Doha for Erick Ellstrom. Before that, his last unlimited ride was in Billy Schumacher's U-37 in 2009.

The U-96, still named *Qatar*, finished running around 2:30 pm. Jean Theoret said they tried two out different skid fins, a new 'pit man' on the rudder, and made some smaller changes.

Mike Hanson and Jean Theoret confirmed, that even though the Doha race has been canceled, the team still will be sponsored by the sheik this year. Well, it seems that things have changed, see Hydrofile.

Scott Liddycoat stepped in this season to drive the U-9 for Mike and Lori Jones, replacing Jon Zimmerman who wanted to spend more time with his family. It's good to see him back in the cockpit. In the off season Liddycoat drives a Monster Truck.



Above left, Jean Theoret and the U-96 *Qatar* on first run. ~ Karl Pearson photo; At right the U-96 on final run of the day. ~ Lon Erickson photo

It has been a few seasons since Scott Liddycoat has had a full-time ride, but he feels the U-9 is a great fit for him. Liddycoat was in the 2012 88 *Degree Men*, 2011 U-7 *Valken.com*, and in the U-21 *Beacon Plumbing* at San Diego in 2014. He said this boat is the nicest one so far. Crew chief Jeff Campbell and his brother Mike, and the crew had the boat ready a week before the test. When he got to the shop, everything was ready to go.

The U-9 ran the most laps and they also had the most drivers in the boat. Lori and Mike Jones allowed long-time crew members Mike and Jeff Campbell drive the boat for several laps. Jeff went out first and ran very good speed laps. They had a hard time getting him off the course. Mike had a little trouble getting the engine going, but finally got it up on plane and ran some fast laps. He also parked the boat closer to the dock better than his brother did according to the crew. Below left, the first run for Scott Liddycoat and the U-9 *Les Schwab/Red Dot*. At right the U-9 heads out on the Columbia river in a later run. ~ Lon Erickson photos



The highlight of their test session was towards the end of the day when former U-10 *Smokin' Joe's* driver Mark Tate's son, Andrew Tate (25 years old), climbed into the cockpit of the U-9 and ran some laps. He is the third generation of the family of hydro drivers. He was pleased with his runs saying, "It's definitely a thrill. Andrew Tate at right. ~ Chris Denslow photo



Other Players at Tri-Cities



Crew chief Jeff Campbell at left and Mike Campbell (props, wings, and deck), on right. Both drove the U-9 *Les Schwab/Red Dot* several laps on the Columbia River. ~ Karl Pearson & Lon Erickson photos



At right is Patrick Sankuer Jr. U-12 Centurion Racing team driver was here to see what the River looked like and was pleased with the setup. Our Web Master Lon Erickson had a long talk with him. ~Chris Denslow photo Below left are Lori and Mike Jones, owners of the U-9 *Les Schwab/Red Dot*. ~ Karl Pearson photo



Below is Steve Montgomery and U-9 crewman Mike Campbell.



The Cup is Half Full, Not Half Empty

The 2015 season will have five races and it appears the teams will be well prepared. H1 has emphasized that teams need to show up ready to race and, in fact, prize money pay-outs reinforce the notion that those ready to race will be rewarded. The *UNJ* hears that H1 is committed to more transparency and working to provide support so many race calls can be made on hard evidence.

July 3-5 is the Madison, Indiana Regatta and pretty much the whole fleet of unlimited hydroplanes are expected. Evidently, the U-21 Go-Fast Turn Left/Lakeridge Paving boat will not be repaired in time for the race. While there is not a title sponsor for the race, many local businesses have stepped forward to support the race. The Grand-Prix boats will be part of the event. Master *UNJ* statistician, Allen Stiles, will write the race report for the *UNJ*.

July 24-26 is the Gold Cup and it will be in Tri-Cities, Wash. Event director, Kathy Powell, and the entire Tri-City Water Follies are excited and proud to host the HAPO Gold Cup as they celebrate the 50th anniversary of racing in the Tri-Cities. The June issue of *Alaska Beyond*, the Alaskan Airlines magazine, even includes a short race blurb and hydro picture. The Grand Prix class will also race. The air show will be quite robust with the Patriots Jet Team anchoring the show. For those that have not made hotel reservations, visittri-cities.com can be helpful in locating rooms. Photographer and writer Bill Osborne will pen the race report for the *UNJ*; Osborne has attended every single Tri-City race!

July 31-Aug. 2 is the Albert Lee Cup in Seattle, Wash. Albert Lee Appliance has been the title sponsor for the unlimited race for many years. The Grand Prix boats will race and Graham Trucking is the title sponsor for the USF1 race. The Blue Angles will highlight the air show and Boeing is their title sponsor. Longtime race reporter, Ben Keller, will write the story for the *UNJ*.

Aug. 22-23 is the UAW-GM/Detroit Riverfront Events race in Detroit. Perhaps the signature H1 accomplishment for the 2015 season was to help put together a Detroit race after the Detroit River Regatta Association (DRRA) folded. This event was just announced as the *UNJ* was going to final editing, but rest assured, the *UNJ* will cover the race.

Sept. 18-20 will be the San Diego Bayfair race. At least 8 unlimited boats are expected to race. As always, there will be plenty of other classes racing including the Grand Prix boats and drag boats. RV space is available and can be purchased via the San Diego Bayfair website. Expert reporter, Mac Clouse, will write the *UNJ* race report.

Due to political change, unlimited and other powerboat events were canceled in Qatar. While disappointed that the race will not continue, we should think about how this event has impacted our sport and our thinking. The Qatar race literally opened up a new world to our race teams and their families and friends. They learned about a different culture and the race helped break down walls of division and promoted bridges among people. Unlimited racing, unknown in that part of the world, was given publicity in the Middle East. And running the Qatar name on one of the fastest boats in the fleet has helped develop fans and, yep, there are Americans rooting for the Spirit of Qatar sponsored boat. Likely, the Qatar race brought Peters and May into hydroplane sponsorship. And finally, during the economic slump, the money H1 and teams received from racing in Qatar helped keep the series together.

There was some disappointment in developing the domestic schedule this year. The new group organizing the Coeur d'Alene, Idaho race decided they needed another year to pull off a successful race. Exhibitions in Evansville, Indiana and Owensboro, Kentucky will not happen. And the drought continues in Calif. and Folsom Lake, near Sacramento, is a mere shadow of itself and cannot support a race. The good news is that likely most or all of these venues could be held in 2016.



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NEXT MONTH: Madison Race Report

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Next Meeting of Unlimiteds Unanimous

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