

MARCH 2013



# The 2013 Oryx Cup, from Doha, Qatar

by Jimmy Gilbert

Photos from Chris Denslow



In less than a month following the completion of the 2012 Oryx Cup in Doha, the unlimited hydroplane teams were again on airplanes journeying from the United States to Qatar for the first round of racing of the H1 Unlimited Hydroplane 2013 season. A few of the team members from the Beacon Plumbing team elected not to return to the

U. S. after the January Oryx Cup race and toured other places in the Middle East, but they were the exceptions. Most folks went home for (about) three weeks between the races. Just when it seemed that we were about to recover from jet lag from the first trip, another long trip was upon us.

Unfortunately, the trip to Qatar didn't go quite as smoothly as many trips had been in the past. Notably, Jon Zimmerman the driver of the 9 Jones' Racing team had his luggage misplaced during the flight. His driver's suit was one of the items in the missing luggage. Likewise, Steve Dean of the Oberto team had his luggage lost. Steve had made new U-1 decals for the Oberto boat, truck and trailer, and those items were in his wayward luggage. Jon Zimmerman telephoned home and arranged to have Mike and Lori Jones, owners of the Jones' racing team bring another driver's suit with them to Doha since they were traveling to Doha later than the rest of the Jones team. Steve Dean's dilemma wasn't quite as easily resolved. Steve had traveled from Cincinnati to New York on Delta Airlines and transferred to Qatar Airways for the Doha flight. Apparently his luggage wasn't transferred by Delta to Qatar Airways. It took several days to locate his luggage in New York before it was finally forwarded to Doha. In the meantime, black electrical tape was used to mark the new bold U-1 on *Oh Boy! Oberto*. Since Oberto won the 2012 National Championship at Doha in January, the new number was required to replace the U-6 banner under which the boat had raced during the 2012 season. It was about Friday or Saturday before Steve's luggage finally arrived in Doha, at least four days late.



One thing of note was that the driver's suit that the Jones brought with them from Seattle was the suit that Jon had worn when the Jones boat was leased to the Oberto team at the Gold Cup in 2011. Jon tested and qualified the 9 in Doha while wearing his Oberto suit. When his regular suit finally arrived in the lost luggage, the Jones team decided that Jon should continue to wear the Oberto suit because it seemed to have brought them good luck in the race so far. Jon wore the Oberto suit throughout the heats as well as in the Oryx Cup final.



Again, the Oberto team had traveled to Doha a day earlier than many of the other unlimited teams to begin set up activities on Wednesday rather than Thursday. The extra day would be to provide "insurance" against unforeseen problems that might arise during the set up activities. Testing, qualifying, and the first rounds of heats were scheduled to begin on Friday so Thursday was the nominal set up day. Because four of us on the Oberto team had remained an extra week in Doha after the January Oryx Cup to perform a lot of preventative maintenance on the boat,

the extra set up day probably wouldn't be required, but we had it just in case. One of the items that required attention on set up day was the RacePak data logger on the U-1 boat. It was determined that the Global Position Satellite function of the data logger wasn't working during the January race. The logger was removed and returned to RacePak for refurbishment. On set up day, the data logger had to be reinstalled in the boat. Once reinstalled, the GPS functions were checked and verified to insure proper operations. Other things that were reinstalled include the rudder, skid fin rods, the skid fin itself, battery connections, driver's air hoses, air bottles, the boat's engine, gearbox, propellers (mounted on short shafts), and the drive shaft. The rear wing was installed and aligned before the Oberto crew called it a day. All that remained before racing began was to install the H1 performance monitoring equipment, fuel the boat, and test fire the engine.

On this trip the H1 teams were staying at the Doha Marriott near the airport. The hotel is about a half-hour drive from the race site so a fleet of buses were on hand to transport the teams back and forth to the hotel during race week. The Doha Marriott has theme restaurants on the premise that serve excellent food. The restaurants include Mexican, Indian, Asian, Italian, an American steakhouse, and “killer” hamburgers served on the patio and in the hotel lobby. I saw more hamburgers being consumed in the lobby by the H1 teams than in all the years that we’ve stayed there before. However on one evening, several members of the Oberto team elected to take a taxi to the Italian restaurant at the Marriott City Center where we stayed in January to enjoy the food and say hello to the wait staff we’d gotten to know during our previous visit. With the bountiful lunches provided by Sheik Hassan and QMSF at the race site every day, it’s needless to say that the H1 teams and officials were well fed during the visit to Doha.



One of the noticeable changes in the Doha pits this trip was the size of the cranes used to lift the hydroplanes into the water. The cranes were enormous! At the January race, a big problem encountered by the H1 teams was caused by low tides. According to tide tables, it was predicted that during the February race, the twenty-eight day cycle of the tides forecast the same conditions that became a major problem at the January race. The race site arranged to have the floating dock, where the teams launch the fleet, moved farther away from shore, in an effort to get into deeper water. The larger cranes were

required to achieve the longer reach. All in all, it worked pretty well but as usual with boat races, there were to be exceptions. During one launching operation, Mike Campbell of the Jones team jumped into the water to manually guide his boat into the position the team was trying to achieve from the very movable floating dock. Slipping and sliding on plastic floatation wasn’t amenable to precisely positioning a 7,000 pound race boat, so Mike took matters into the water, and it worked.

Finally on Friday, testing began. Brian Perkins in the U-21 *Snoqualmie Casino* managed to run 139+ mph. Jimmy Shane in the 5 *Graham Trucking* ran over 144 mph. Kip Brown in the 95 *Spirit of Qatar* managed a lap at over 125 mph and Jon Zimmerman in the 9 Jones Racing entry turned in a lap at over 140 mph. Tommy Thompson in the U-11 *Peters & May* turned in a lap over 137.5 mph, J. Michael Kelly in the 37 *Beacon Plumbing* ran 124.7 and Mark Evans in the 57 *Formula* logged a lap at 111.8 mph. Steve David in *Oh Boy! Oberto* ran into trouble during the first test session. Just after a lap of just over 140 mph, Steve reported hearing a loud “pop” from the rear end of the boat. After being towed in, it was found that one of the turbine blades in the “hot” section of the engine had “let go”. That means that the engine threw a blade, essentially taking out all the rotating elements from that stage of the engine to the exhaust pipe. It was a very expensive calamity. At right, *Oh Boy! Oberto* in tow after first run.

Fortunately, there were two more engines in the Oberto camp. Unfortunately, the “blown” engine was the most powerful, according to results from dynamometer tests. At least it wasn’t a thrown blade from a propeller. That could have caused potentially disastrous consequences to the hull and drive train had that happened. Quickly an alternate engine was installed but



there wasn't enough time left in the test session to be able to determine if fuel flow restrictions on the engine were satisfactory. Based on dynamometer tests, the fuel flow should be fine but those tests were conducted in a laboratory environment, with perfect engine loading and not a propeller bouncing in and out of the water.

Before the first round of testing was completed, Jimmy Shane managed to run a lap of almost 145 mph, quite impressive indeed.

Qualifying for the Oryx Cup began at 1:00 PM after the morning test session on Friday. Kip Brown in *Spirit of Qatar* ran just over 142 mph. Second up was Brian Perkins in the U-21 who ran 137.1 mph. Mark Evans in *Formula* experienced trouble and managed only about 112 mph while Ryan Mallow in the U-100 ran just under 130 mph. Tommy Thompson in *Peter & May* ran 135.2 mph and J. Michael Kelly in *Beacon Plumbing* managed to turn in a lap of just under 138 mph. Jon Zimmerman turned in a lap of almost 141 mph but was flagged for a fuel flow violation. Later he would run a lap at just over 140 mph for an official qualification run. Jimmy Shane in *Graham Trucking* qualified at about 141.3 mph and Steve David, with the new engine installed, ran 143.8 mph to become top qualifier. The 57, 9, U-100, and 1 all ran second qualifying runs but only the 9 fared better during their second run (because of their fuel violation during their first attempt). With qualifications completed, it was time to go racing!

Heat 1A was scheduled to start at 3:30 PM and the draw for the heat included Tom Thompson in the U-11 entry, Ryan Mallow in the U-100, Brian Perkins in the U-21, Jimmy Shane in the 5, and Steve David in the 1 *Oberto*. The U-1 led the first lap with a lap of 141 mph followed by Shane at 136 mph. Perkins was in third and Mallow struggled with just under 86 mph for fourth. Thompson and *Peters & May* failed to start. The fleet remained in that order for the finish of 1A, Steve David, Shane, Perkins and Mallow.



Heat 1B included Kip Brown in the 95, J. Michael Kelly in the 37, Jon Zimmerman in the 9, and Mark Evans in the 57. Zimmerman assumed the lead from the start and was followed by Brown, Kelly, and Evans in that order. However at the start, it was ruled that Kip didn't have sufficient overlap before moving over on Kelly in lane 1 so the 95 was assessed a lap penalty and a monetary fine for the encroachment. At the end of three laps, it was Zimmerman, Kelly, Evans, and Brown (running an extra lap because of the penalty) in that order.



Before leaving the pits on Friday following heats 1A and 1B, the Oberto team changed engines again. A test session was scheduled for Saturday morning and Michael Hanson, the Oberto crew chief, wanted to make sure the engine ran properly and complied with the H1 fuel flow restrictions. Once the engine was changed and other preventative maintenance items completed, the Oberto team retired to the hotel, happy with the results of qualifying and the first round of racing.

On Saturday morning, five teams tested their boats. Included were *Spirit of Qatar*, *Snoqualmie Casino*, *Oh Boy!* *Oberto*, U-100, and *Peters & May*. The 1 *Oberto* went out a second time during the second test session and

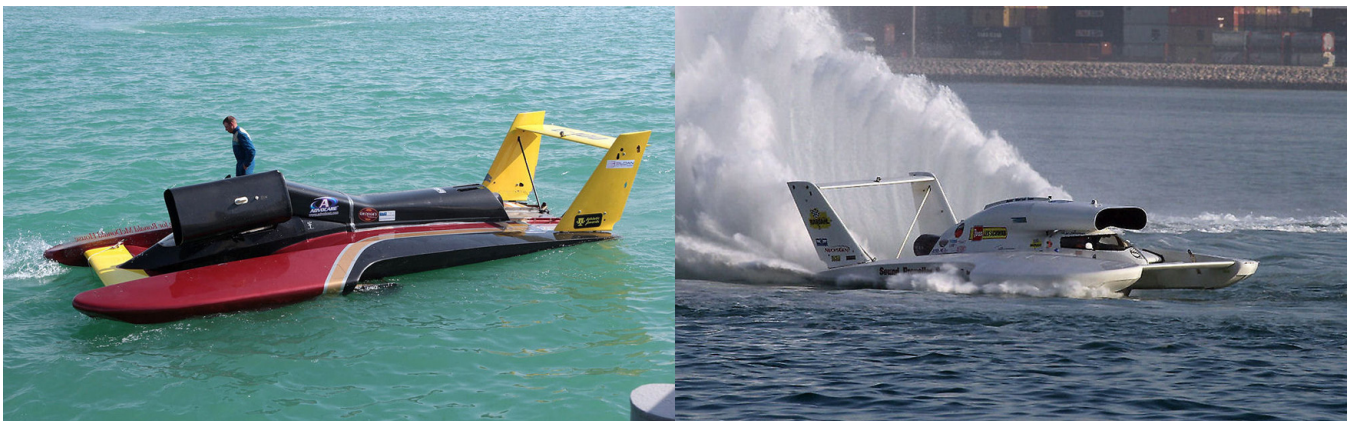
ran the boat completely out of fuel, not a good thing because it is bad for the sensitive fuel controls. Some good lap speeds were posted in the test session. The U-11 ran 137.9 mph, U-21 ran 137.5 mph, U-95 ran 138.5 mph, U-1 ran 142.3 mph, and the U-100 ran 135.7 mph. Good results indeed.

The second rounds of heats were scheduled to begin at 1:00 PM on Saturday but were delayed until about 2:40 because of the low tide. The draw for heat 2A included the U-21, U-11, 9, 37, and 95. After the first lap and at the beginning of the second, the U-11 hit a wave, lost skid fin traction and bounced over the top of the U-21. The race was quickly stopped and rescue efforts started. The skid fin of the U-11 hit the top of the cockpit of the U-21, doing



damage to the cockpit lid as well as to the left side of the boat. The right sponson of the U-11 was completely sheared off. (There was an outstanding Bill Osborne photograph of the accident on the front page of the Sunday edition of the local newspaper, *The Gulf Times*. The newspaper became a keepsake item for most of the H1 crews). The impact of the U-11's landing was so violent that the boat's engine sheared from the motor mounts and the engine was hurled into the water apart from the rest of the boat. The accident occurred in a fairly shallow part of Doha Bay so the U-11 was stuck on the bottom. Brian Perkins was unscathed in the incident but Tommy Thompson suffered a severely bruised arm and possibly a concussion. He was taken to the hospital in an ambulance. It took quite a while to free the U-11 from the bottom of the bay before the craft could be towed back to the pits. The engine wasn't found until the following morning. Submerged in saltwater isn't exactly the best thing that can happen to a turbine engine. When it was finally returned to the pits, the U-11 crew began the arduous task of trying to undo a lot of the saltwater damage that had been done. It probably will be an ongoing operation.

In the meantime, it was decided to race heat 2B. Included in the heat were the U-100, 1, 57, and the,5. Steve David in *Oberto* took the lead from Shane (who incurred a one minute penalty) and led to the wire. Evans in the 57 was second followed by Shane in the 5. Mallow in the U-100 went dead on the second lap and had to be towed in.



The restart of 2A included the 9, 95, and 37. The 95 was judged to be early as the start so was assessed a penalty. The finish order was first, Jon Zimmerman in the 9; second, J. Michael Kelly in the 37; and third, Kip Brown in the 95. Zimmerman turned the third lap in 133.8 mph — very respectable.

With the incident involving the U-21 and the U-11, the H1 teams were unduly on edge for the third round of heat racing on Saturday.

Heat 3A was drawn and pitted Ryan Mallow, J. Michael Kelly, Kip Brown, and Mark Evans against each other. Kelly managed to grab lane 1 but was quickly out accelerated during the race by Brown. Evans followed in third. Unfortunately, Mallow wasn't able to start the race in the U-100. At the wire, it remained, Brown in the 95, Kelly in the 37, and Evans in the 57. Kip managed a lap in the 133 mph range during the race and averaged 130.7 mph for the three laps.



Heat 3B was contested by Jon Zimmerman, Steve David, and Jimmy Shane. Shane grabbed lane 1 during the "mill" and managed to hold onto it until the wire. Steve David in the *Oberto* finished second and Jon Zimmerman was third in the Jones' Racing entry. On lap 1, Shane turned in a 140+ to clinch the heat.



With heats 2 and 3 concluded, there was to be a couple of days off before the Oryx Cup final. The final (as well as the fourth round of heats) was scheduled to be run on Tuesday, February 12, 2013. Before we departed from

the pits, several members of the Al Anabi (automobile) drag race team came by the Oberto camp to visit. It was a real pleasure to meet fellow motor sportsters and to discuss the similarities and differences between our sports. The Al Anabi team had just won the pro-mod drag class at the Qatar Racing Club event the previous weekend. Those cars are capable of accelerating to over 200 mph on a 1,000 foot long race course! It was a lot of fun to visit with them.

On Sunday, the Oberto team went to the pits early to do preventative maintenance and give the boat just one more check over. The work was completed just after noon so the team journeyed to Doha City Center Mall for lunch and shopping (for those so inclined). Because we were in work clothes, Cindy Shirley of the Oberto team actually went to the mall in her Capri pants. I don't think that she'd ever gone out of the hotel or pits before in her "Western" wear. Qatar is fairly conservative about customs but really no one seemed to make note of her attire. On previous trips, the guys had gone all about everywhere in Qatar wearing shorts but nothing had ever been said about it whatsoever. So maybe Qataris are becoming more accustomed to the Americans and their way of life.

Monday was a "holiday" for the H1 teams. Sheik Hassan arranged a beach party for all the crews, complete with jet skis, boat trips, surf side swimming and a picnic. One of the jet skis managed to ingest a tether rope, fouling the drive impeller and was thus put out of commission. Otherwise, a great time was had by all. It's not often that all the H1 teams get together for an informal outing. It seems that we are either racing, at trophy presentations, or attending formal awards banquets. It was a nice departure from the norm thanks to the Qatar Marine Sports Federation and the Sheik.

Tuesday was National Sports Day in Qatar. Government offices were closed as well as quite a few businesses. Everywhere in the nation, sports were to be emphasized. There was a marathon and a 10 kilometer foot race planned. Car and motorcycle rallies, bicycle races, physical fitness exhibitions as well as huge parades were being conducted everywhere. Traffic after about 7:30 AM came to a standstill all over the city. The H1 teams had made arrangements

to get to the pits from the hotel at 6:00 AM so that we would avoid the massive traffic jams. The Al Anabi team said that they would return on Tuesday for the Oryx Cup but were apparently prevented from doing so by the traffic situation. The Oryx Cup would play a big part in the Qatar National Sports Day, considering the fact that the race was in the center of it all — right in the middle of Doha Bay.



Sheik Nawaf Bin Hassan in his winning 96 J-Class hydro.

One of the new features of the Oryx Cup for the 2013 race was the addition of J-Class hydroplanes. The drivers had to be 14 years of age or under. A year or so ago, J. W. Myers of the Peters & May team built an outboard hydro for Sheik Hassan's son, Nawaf. Sheik Nawaf became sufficiently skilled operating the boat to go racing. Young racers from all over the Middle East came to the 2013 Oryx Cup to contest the J-Class race. One youngster came all the way from Canada. Unfortunately high waves on Doha Bay caused the cancellation of many of the activities but races were conducted. The final results of the J-Class Oryx Cup were as follows:

first place - Sheik Nawaf Bin Hassan Al-Thani of Qatar; second place - Ammar Saber of Egypt; and third place - Ali Mohammed Qassim of Jordan. The J-Class hydro races were a great hit with the fans and really contributed to the Unlimited Hydroplane Race and the Qatari National Sports Day.

The draw for **heat 4A** included the U-100, 1, 5, and the 9. Steve David leap-frogged around Shane in lane 1 after the one minute score up buoy and managed to keep the lane until the start. Steve increased his lead during the three lap race and managed to finish over a rooster tail ahead. Shane was second, Zimmerman third, and Mallow in the U-100 fourth. Mallow was penalized for encroachment on the 9, assessed a lap penalty plus a monetary fine.



**Heat 4B** was contested by the 37, 57, and the 95. As has become his usual custom J. Michael Kelly “parked” the 37 in lane 1 and maintained that position through the start of the race. However, he was early at the start. Kelly was able to lead the race from start to finish but he was really in third place. At the end of regulation laps it was the 95, the 57, and the 37. However, a post race analysis of the H1 monitoring equipment showed a flagrant fuel flow violation for the 37 – an automatic disqualification from the heat and thus zero points. So the final results were that Kip Brown in *Spirit of Qatar* won the heat and Mark Evans in the *Formula* was second.



The stage was now set on Doha Bay for the final, the 2013 Oryx Cup World Championship. The top five boats in points standing after the preliminary heats were the 1, 5, 9, 57, and the U-100. The boats were lifted into the water and made ready to race. With the drivers strapped in and all final preparations made, the fleet was off.

Jimmy Shane managed to grab lane 1 in *Graham Trucking* during the “mill”. Steve David in *Oh Boy! Oberto* was just to his outside in lane 2. Jon Zimmerman held back a little but was safely in lane 3. Mark Evans in the 57 was quite further back, but was maintaining a lot of speed. Ryan Mallow in the U-100 was near Zimmerman at the one minute score up buoy. As the fleet passed the one minute buoy, Steve David shot past Shane and moved over into lane 1. H1 rules state that at least five boat lengths overlap are required to change lanes after the score up buoy.



It was ruled by H1 officials that the U-1 didn't have a full five boat lengths overlap on Shane when the move was made. Steve David was assessed a one lap penalty, (plus a monetary fine), before the race ever began. At the starting gun, it was Steve David in lane 1 (although a lap down), Shane in lane 2, Zimmerman in lane 3, Evans in lane 4. and Mallow bringing up the rear. Unfortunately, Mallow in the U-100 managed to complete only two laps before the boat went dead on the course. Mark Evans in the 57 got confused on the third or fourth lap and ran outside of the course, earning an automatic disqualification. Because of the haze on Doha Bay during the day of the race, it's easy to see how a driver might become somewhat disoriented, especially following in the wakes and rooster tails of the boats that are ahead.

At the end of five laps it was Jimmy Shane in *Graham Trucking* and Jon Zimmerman in Jones' Racing. Steve David drove the 1 *Oberto* another lap and finished the race in third place. Naturally the Oberto team was disappointed because of not winning the final but at least the team was in first place for National High Points. Jimmy Shane had done a superb job hitting his timing marks and piloting his boat to another World Championship. Jon Zimmerman is to be commended for his outstanding effort also. Steve David managed to overcome the lap penalty and finish in third place in the final.



Back at the hotel, Peters & May driver Tommy Thompson was out of the hospital and greeting people in the lobby. His arm was still swollen somewhat but apparently on the mend. His boat didn't fare so well. Scott Raney, the owner and crew chief of the U-11, vowed to have the boat repaired and ready for the Sacramento race in late May. It's a tall order, but if anyone can get it done, Scott and his able crew can surely do it. Likewise, Jeff Minar of the Spirit of Qatar team is ready to tackle repairs on the 96 once it gets back to Seattle. The 96 (then the 1) suffered extensive damage from a fire at the 2012 Oryx Cup back in January. The U-21 *Snoqualmie Casino* will be in the able hands of Brian O'Farrell and Jim Harvey once the boat returns to Seattle. It wasn't stated whether the boat will be repaired or the new boat that the O'Farrell's are building will be used for the balance of the 2013 season. There was also some talk in the pits that the old U-48 hull of the O'Farrell's might again be pressed into service should other options not materialize according to plans.

On Wednesday, the H1 teams returned to the pits to complete the cleaning and packing efforts to get the boats, trailers, and transport trucks ready to ship back to the United States. Salt had to be washed away for the inner compartments of the boats and grease applied to cleaned drive shafts, the skid fins, and rudders. It is an arduous task but necessary in order to prevent rust and corrosion. Finally the boats were covered in their shipping tarps and



removed from the pit area. A few of the H1 officials were to remain in Doha for many more days to finish packing the H1 equipment and transport the boats, trailers, and trucks to the port of embarkation. The boat crews on the other hand were busy packing for their return flights.

Our flight back to the United States was uneventful but long. Prevailing head winds from the west slowed the flight. It normally requires about one to two hours longer to fly west over the Atlantic than east because of the winds. Fortunately our flight arrived early, allowing those with connecting flights more time to insure that connections could be made. An uneventful flight is always a good thing.

Again, Sheik Hassan and his QMSF staff (including Mona Nasser and Ashraf Al-Buy) are to be congratulated on a job well done. Having the Oryx Cup be a part of the Qatar National Sports Day was a big plus. The J-Class hydro race added to the festivities and hopefully will become a permanent part of the Oryx Cup celebration. Boat racing in the beautiful city of Doha is always pleasant and we'll always look forward to doing it again. At right is the author of the 2012 and 2013 Doha, Qatar Race Reports, Jimmy Gilbert, working on *Oh Boy! Oberto*; the new National Champion.



## 2013 Damage (so far)

Two unlimiteds were damaged at Qatar in the first race of the 2013 season, the U-11 *Peters & May* and U-21 *Snoqualmie Casino*. Will they return in late May for the second race. Will they be rebuilt or replaced? The current *Peters & May* looks very much like the former U-37 *Peters & May* (#9401) that was wrecked at Detroit in 2010, except it was the left sponson the was ripped off. This damage looks much worse, but Scott Raney says the team will repair the hull for the Sacramento race.

Greg O'Farrell's U-21 *Snoqualmie Casino* (#0721) will not require as much work to repair the damaged hull. They question is, will he finish the new hull they have, or use the old U-48 *Lakeridge Paving* (#9610)?

I guess we will just have to wait to find out.

The Ellstrom's 96 *Spirit of Qatar* that was damaged in the 2012 Qatar race, also has to be repaired after it gets home to Ballard.

# UNLIMITED NewsJournal

## 2012 Season Summary Table

Boat Name	Hull I.D.	Driver	Madison, Indiana	7/17-7/18	Detroit, APBA Gold Cup	Tri-Cities, Wash.	7/28-7/29	Seattle	8/4-8/5	San Diego	9/15-9/16	1/11-1/12	Doha, Qatar UIM World Championship	Nat'l High Point (Sub-totals)	National High Points (Team)
1. 6 Oh Boy! Oberto	(0706)	Steve David	2	2	2	6	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	9,377	9,377
2. 5 Graham Trucking	(0001)	Jimmy Shane	8	6	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	8,193	8,193
3. 1 Qatar	(0116)	Dave Villwock	1	1	3	3	3	3	3=	3=	DSQ	DSQ	DSQ	6,845	6,845
4. 9 Bello's Pizza Corporate Fleet Service Inc. Miss Sound Propeller Services (no name)	(9210)	Jon Zimmerman	7	4	5	5	5	5	5	3=	3	3	3	6,370	6,370
5. 88 Degree Men	(9501)	Scott Liddycoat	3	9	4	4	6	6	7	7	7	7	7	(3,879)	5,130
U-88 Snoqualmie Casino	(0721)	Brian Perkins	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4	4	(1,251)	--
6. 37 Miss Beacon Plumbing	(1188)	J. Michael Kelly	11	3	2	2	7	7	DNF	DNF	6	6	6	4,954	4,954
7. U-11 Peters & May	(0925)	J.W. Myers Tommy Thompson	5	11	10	10	10	10	10	5	5	5	5	4,533	4,533
8. U-100 Xtreme Precision Products Fifth Third Bank (no name) Fox Plumbing & Heating	(9899)	Greg Hopp	6	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	3,970	3,970
9. U-17 Red Dot	(0717)	Kip Brown Nate Brown / Jeff Bernard	4	10	8*	8*	11	11	DNF	DNF	7	7	7	3,468	3,468
10. 57 Formula Miss DiJulio FEDCO	(9010)	Mark Evans	9	5	12	12	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	3,127	3,127
11. U-21 Miss HAPO Albert Lee Appliance	(0721)	Brian Perkins	--	10	9	9	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	1,252	1,252
12. 18 (no name)	(1218)	Kelly Stocklin	--	--	13	13	DNQ	DNQ	8	8	8	8	8	690	690
13. U-99 (no name) Fox Plumbing & Heating Too	(9701)	Ryan Mallow	--	11	11	11	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	582	582
14. U-22 Matrix System	(8806)	Mike Webster	10	DNF	DNF	DNF	DNF	DNF	DNF	DNF	DNF	DNF	DNF	510	510
U-13 Tubby's	(8700)	Cal Phipps	DNS	DNF	DNF	DNF	DNF	DNF	DNF	DNF	DNF	DNF	DNF	0	0

\* Nate Brown attempted to qualify

# “Voice” of the Unlimiteds Lights, John Lynch

## What Happened to the Unlimited Lights?

It's an honor to be asked to contribute to the *Unlimited NewsJournal*, a publication and website project I've enjoyed for more than three decades.

In my years as the “Voice” of the Unlimited Lights (2001 through 2011) I saw and announced a lot of great racing, and met a lot of great people. I also wrote quite a few columns titled The Lynch Line. You can read them at [www.ulhra.org](http://www.ulhra.org) under the heading Lynch Line.

Unfortunately ULHRA, Inc. has not been part of a racing event since 2011. A few former ULHRA teams that raced as restricted supercharged entries formed their own group, GPWest. Today they race with much hotter engines than were permitted in ULHRA with mixed results. Some shows are quite competitive but they've had an attrition problem, more than they did with the ULHRA engine package. The other element that remains challenging is boat count. There are only seven core teams in GPWest and that makes it difficult to provide a full field.

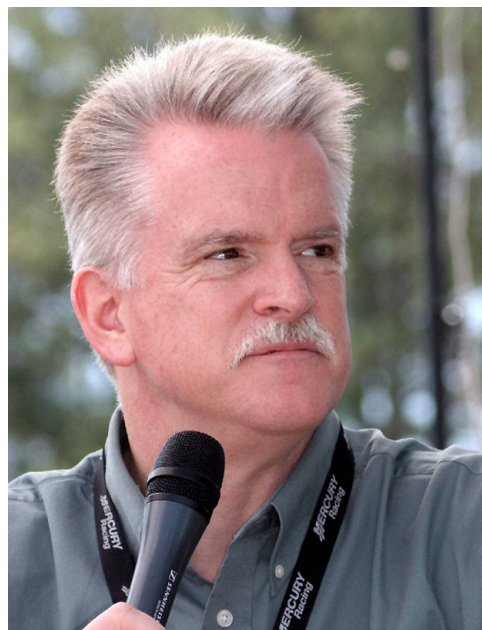
On the plus side, GPWest is participating in several events this year and four of their teams have been invited to participate in the 75<sup>th</sup> annual Regates de Valleyfield near Montreal. This is an event that really captures hydroplane racing because that's all they do. They race hydroplanes in a variety of classes, back to back all day long for three days. The pit area is a large grassy park and a fleet of tractors tow the race boats to the cranes and back in a very well coordinated operation. Plus they do “party hearty” at Valleyfield with major Canadian music acts performing into the wee hours and the event attracts big crowds day and night. Four teams from GPWest will compete with up to 14 teams from the Canadian ACHA Grand Prix series. Among the drivers from the west coast will be Unlimited veteran Greg Hopp who, though he hasn't secured an unlimited victory is the all time winningest driver in Unlimited Lights' History. He'll be at the wheel of the quickest race craft to come out of ULHRA and GPWest. This is the hull that began as Paul Drouillard's *American Eagle*. Also competing at Valleyfield will be Unlimited veteran Jerry Hopp, former *Miss Budweiser* and *Mr. Pringles* winning driver Scott Pierce and his co-driver Kevin Eacret plus Dustin Echols. The Valleyfield event is the weekend of July 12-14. Two weeks later the GPWest contingent will be at the Tri City Water Follies.

Over at ULHRA, all appears quiet on the outside and that's quite a change from the salad days. You may recall, for example, when the “Lights” came of age in 2002. That August Sunday on Lake Washington saw a final heat with Jerry Hopp, Phil Bononcini, Dave Bender, and J.W. Myers all taking the white flag at Seafair virtually dead even with the fans on their feet along with a big KIRO TV audience. “Grandpa Jerry” that day won his first Unlimited Lights race after seven years of trying. It also was the first ever victory in the series by a supercharged engine.

Unfortunately, a decade later, 2012, ULHRA, Inc. was inactive. GPWest did their best to deliver viable shows but an ongoing challenge was viewed at Tri Cities. In the prior decade ULHRA delivered 10-14 boats to events and once reached 17 teams at a single race. This was when ULHRA featured both naturally aspirated and restricted supercharged engines competing together. At the 2012 Water Follies event there were only seven GPWest boats in the pits and one never started a heat. That left 6 teams to begin the first heat on Saturday and by the second heat that same day only three of those teams could start. Low entry numbers and high attrition is a combination every racing series tries to avoid. Hopefully those days of double-digit entries of automotive thunderboats are not permanently in the rear view mirror.

After being a virtual lifelong resident of Western Washington, except for a couple years away at the beginning of my radio career, the past four years have found me in Omaha, Nebraska. While not on the radar screen of hydroplane racing, being in Omaha has given me an opportunity to seriously look into automotive thunderboat racing and develop some plans and recommendations. Hopefully they'll see the “light” of day. Pun intended.

Let me state that it's my fervent hope this “automotive powered brand” of hydroplane racing returns to its previous level and succeeds far beyond historic markers. As the Unlimiteds have shown over the years, it's a difficult chore to



Paul Kimmie photo

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rebuild but it can be done. Right now the H1 program is doing rather well after the sport came somewhat close to going under at the midway point of the last decade. Even though due to the Federal government's "Sequester" H1 Unlimited is probably losing their Air Guard title sponsorship this year, that series has seen a sort of rebirth while automotive thunderboats have severely contracted. It doesn't have to be one or the other. Both could flourish given the proper circumstances and that would be good for boat racing.

One thing I learned over the years whether I was announcing hydroplanes, drag racing, circle track racing or a variety of team sports is this element shared by every form of professional sports. When the participants control the series eventually problems develop. NHRA and NASCAR leadership run those series and very successfully. The leaders don't race. That is the case in H1 Unlimited as Sam Cole is not a team owner or driver. In ULHRA the sport was always controlled by the racers and it worked quite well, for a while. In fact, one had to be a team owner racing at 60% of the events in order to be eligible to serve on the Board of Directors or become President. That was understandable considering ULHRA, Inc. needed to be formed in late 2000 to protect the team owners' interests but by 2011 the die had been cast. And it's a story that's been written many a time over the past century of motor racing.

This is not to demean the efforts of those in charge at ULHRA. Unfortunately when racers in power make decisions, it seems almost inevitable that racers out of power will consider some of those decisions to be favorable to the powerful. Eventually, regardless of the benevolent intent of those in charge, others find fault and may (and in the case of ULHRA did) leave.

So, what's next? There are quite a few race-worthy craft that can get back to racing and quite a few currently inactive racers who would like to again be active. I even know a pretty fair announcer who'd enjoy returning behind the microphone to call the action. Can it happen? Most definitely: Will it happen? That is the \$5,000 question.

Why \$5,000? That's what it costs in real dollars to race one automotive thunderboat for one weekend. And that's just basic expenses such as racing fuel, hauler fuel, spark plugs, oil, travel for the crew plus lodging and meals (a lot more cans of tuna than mesquite grilled swordfish in that crew meal budget). It doesn't buy a propeller or a skid fin, much less a new engine or hull. It is enough to keep this brand of racing, racing. How often did the ULHRA teams get this kind of payout at a racing event? Once, at the previously mentioned Regates de Valleyfield, an event I really enjoyed the times I was able to attend and hope to visit again someday as would a number of racers. But, unfortunately in today's economy \$5,000 per team won't cover the cost to get a team from Seattle to Valleyfield, much less return home.

Automotive thunderboat racing is an "act", as are the H1 Unlimitees. Any race site promoter looks at their budget and their program and has to decide many months in advance what level of "show" they can offer their ticket buyers and sponsors. The fee paid to the H1 Unlimited teams isn't nearly what it costs those teams in real dollars but it is what the race sites can afford. H1 teams cover the balance via sponsorship or the owner's bank account. ULHRA teams did likewise, until the owner bank accounts read "empty". Still, after a year's inactivity I believe a re-launch of automotive thunderboats is within reach. There are plenty of naturally aspirated and restricted supercharged teams currently on the beach.

Race sites cannot be expected to fund the entire program. It's incumbent upon the racing series to develop new financial means of support for their racers so they can race and race sites can afford to bring in another "act". H1 Unlimited has accomplished a great deal in developing additional revenues to help support their teams. Automotive thunderboat interests must do the same. Unfortunately, ULHRA Inc had been making some progress in this key area when the program came to a halt.

We all know that a dozen H1 Unlimitees does not comprise a weekend long show. That's why air shows or other elements are added. If automotive thunderboats could bring in 12 plus entries and even reach or exceed 20 teams at a given event (It's possible in the future) in addition to the H1 Unlimited teams, that fills a much larger chunk of time on the water. It keeps the fans on the shore or listening on radio or watching on television, entertained. Yes, that is the key word. It's not simply "boat racing". At the professional level it's "Entertainment".

That's what I've been working on here in Omaha along with others around the country. We all believe in the product and the potential. Will it happen this year? I'd like to say yes but that may be a bit unrealistic. Still, I like unrealistic goals. When an unrealistic goal becomes real, that's quite an accomplishment!

As the one who was privileged to announce that 2002 Unlimited Light Final Heat on KIRO TV, I'd like to see automotive thunderboat racing make a serious comeback and will do what I can to, as Captain Picard on Start Trek Next Generation used to say, "Make it so".

**Interested? Drop me a line at [lynchj105@cox.net](mailto:lynchj105@cox.net)**

# 2013 Diamond Cup

by Steve Nelson

Tickets for the 2013 Diamond Cup race on Lake Coeur d'Alene Lake, Idaho, went on sale Friday, morning March 1<sup>st</sup>, and a hand full of die-hard race fans were waiting when the ticket doors opened. Doug Miller, President of Coeur d'Alene Diamond Cup Regatta Inc. was greeted by several fans who wanted to be the first to buy tickets the Labor Day weekend event. Miller said "We wrote a little bit of history today, as the eleventh running of the Diamond Cup is now on."

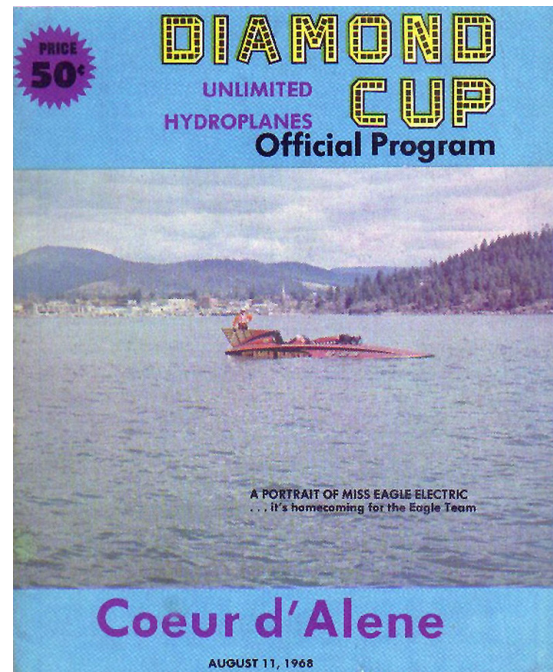
Unlimited hydroplanes have not raced on Lake Coeur d'Alene since Billy Schumacher piloted the 'checkerboard' *Miss Bardahl* to victory in 1968. But race organizers at the 'Lake City' appear to be on track to break the dry spell, with several new developments:

- All permits from Idaho State and Kootenai County officials were submitted in January, and are now signed and completed.
- Ticket sales, offering a variety of packages, are now being sold. Weekend rates for adults range from \$35 to \$50 for both days, with discounts offered to youth. Those prices include parking and shuttle service to the bleacher area seats. Log boom tickets are also available. Tickets are available at [www.TicketsWest.com](http://www.TicketsWest.com).
- A three-day racing schedule, featuring unlimited boats, grand prix boats, and vintage hydroplanes, is now available on the organizations website at [www.CDADiamondCup.com](http://www.CDADiamondCup.com).
- A volunteer fair has already been held, and organizers say they have made a dent in their goal to enlist up to 250 volunteers.
- H1 Operations Manager Ted Grange and Detroit Gold Cup organizer John Gysin are scheduled to arrive in Coeur d'Alene in March 11<sup>th</sup> to begin mapping out the pits and dock areas, as well as the operational facilities for the race.

Although sponsors for the event have not yet been announced, Miller says he has had encouraging talks with national, regional, and local companies. Miller says he hopes announcements will be made soon. Sponsorships will be important, because the Regatta association has penciled in costs of \$450,000 to hold the race this summer.

Miller says Diamond Cup organizers anticipate more than 50,000 fans will attend the race on August 30 to September 1. The two-mile course will be located on Silver Beach, southeast of the Coeur d'Alene Resort Gold Course. Plans call for bleachers to be installed along 2.2 miles of unobstructed land, with boats racing within 400 feet of the shoreline. The outside portion of the course will be defined by a log boom with boat hookups, just like at Seattle. Miller says, with all the water they have to work with, the site lines on this course will make it a premier race site on the H1 schedule.

Race promoters have invited the last two drivers to win races at Lake Coeur d'Alene, Mira Slovak and Billy Schumacher, to serve as co-Grand Marshall for the boat parade that weekend. Miller says he is hopeful both invitees will be able to attend.



Rich Ormbrek photo



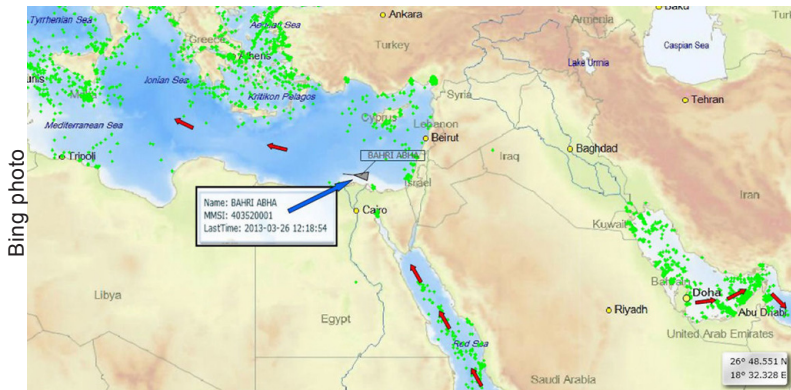
**HydroFile**  
**Lon Erickson**

With the H1 fleet in transit back from Doha, most of the teams are taking an opportunity to get a break from racing while others are hard at work in preparation now an even shorter turn-around time before Sacramento/Big Wake Weekend event May 31- June 2.

The original schedule had the H1 fleet returning approximately the first week of April into the Port of Houston. Now due to changes in the vessel Bahri Abha's route and time spent in ports of call, the schedule has fallen out of the original plan. Accommodations have now been made for the ship to unload the H1 fleet in Baltimore, MD. with an ETA of April 16<sup>th</sup>.

With this change in getting the teams' hull and equipment back to U.S. soil two weeks later than first anticipated; it will most likely create changes in several of the teams' plans for the next month. Most directly affected will be the three boats that suffered damage in the two Doha events, the 11, 21, and 96. As we mentioned before, all three of those teams have been relatively quiet in announcing any definite plans and this delay gives good indication why the reservation to say much before having their equipment back to their own shops.

This map shows the position of the Bahri Abha, as of March 26, as it clears the Suez Canal, continues through the Mediterranean Sea, and heading towards crossing the Atlantic Ocean.



below in 2010. Until their primary hull #0721 returns from Doha, further evaluation of the damage incurred, and the steps necessary to repair are made. No decisions have been made for the upcoming events for what hull they will run. They do have definite commitments for the Albert Lee sponsorship for Seafair along with some involvement with Snoqualmie Casino.

**22.** Webster Racing progress on the repairs of their hull continues, with the rebuilt sponson now hung, they have re-decked the hull, and rolled the boat for further work. Soon new paint will begin, hardware, and systems will begin going back in. They are on schedule and plan on being ready for Sacramento.

**57.** Once the Evans Brothers hull returns to the states, the plan is for the 57 to go directly to Monroe, Michigan headquarters of primary sponsor FEDCO. There they will have the resources of FEDCO to help them prepare for the U.S. races.

**96.** No further news has come out of the Ellstrom camp since **Erick Ellstrom** announced he was considering his options for how to proceed in the current season, and for plans to build a new hull for the 2014 season. As

**11.** The URG/Peters & May team has been working on building what new replacement parts they can for repairs to the hull when it returns to the shop. In addition, they have been building back-up parts and going through their current inventory that was not taken on the Doha trip.

**21.** Go Fast Turn Left Racing – The O'Farrell team has done some updates and re-painted one of their hulls, #9610, most recently known as the U-48 *Lakeridge Paving*, seen



Michael Prophet photo

with the Peter's & May and O'Farrell teams, part of that decision will come based on closer examination of their hull damaged in Doha.

**100.** The Leland Unlimited team is now in the progress of going through the recently re-acquired Leland hull#0100 (former Degree display hull). Systems are being evaluated and updated to go back in the boat. They will need to make upgrades to bring the boat up to some H1 technical updates in the skidfin area and meet the new standards implemented since this hull last ran in 2010. The team is considering other options for the cowling, as the current one was designed for display purpose only, and also is still deciding on a paint scheme for the season.

Once the former primary hull#9899 returns from Doha, *if time allows*, the plan is to go through the hull and determine updates needed to that hull. The black/maroon hull has a lot of wear and the team consensus is the hull is in need of structural work.

Their other hull#9701 (Casper) is also available if the need should arise, though they do have some changes they would like to make to the hull but it is not a priority at this point.

The main Leland team focus is to get the "new" hull#0100 ready to go.

**USA Racing.** At this point leading up to the events in the U.S., there has been no press release or information from the Gregory family indicating sponsorship for the 2013 season. The *Unlimited NewsJournal* has made several attempts to get updates on the status of the team and the equipment for 2013.

This boat, #9501, last ran in San Diego in 2012 and didn't travel to the Middle East. They leased the U-21 for Qatar to finish out the 2012 season. ~ Karl Pearson photo



Above is the former *Degree for Men* display hull, #0010, being prepared for the upcoming May race. Below, the U-99 *Fox Plumbing & Heating Too* ready as a back-up. It last raced at Seattle last season. Both photos from Lon Erickson



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Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

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-everyone welcome!

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