

JANUARY 2012



2011 UIM World Championship Oryx Cup

by Jimmy Gilbert



The 2011 unlimited hydroplane line-up in Florida; ready to head for the Middle East.

2011 marked the third time in as many years that the H1 Unlimiteds returned to Doha, Qatar, for the final race of the season. The logistics of transporting the boats, including the *Miss Madison/Oh Boy! Oberto* to Jacksonville, Florida, for ship transportation to Qatar were somewhat complicated by a scheduled four-boat exhibition in Washington, D. C., one week after the race in San Diego, California. *Oh Boy! Oberto* was driven to Madison, Indiana, by the *Miss Madison* painter, Steve Dean, in an almost non-stop marathon from San Diego, so that two gearboxes could be reconfigured to different ratios for the Doha race. Larry Hanson was poised to begin the reconfiguration task as soon as the boxes arrived in Madison. Engines had to be inspected for salt ingestion from the runs in San Diego, and engine #4 was installed in the boat for the upcoming Washington D.C., exhibition. [Engine #4 hadn't been raced in a couple of years, but the last time it was run on a dynamometer, it performed as expected.]

Steve Dean was able to sleep a few hours following his arrival in Madison while the gearboxes were being off loaded from the truck and the boat's engine was being changed. Then Steve was off to Washington, D. C., for another whirlwind trip. The Washington, D. C., exhibition didn't go well for the Madison team. The fuel control on engine #4 was slow to respond to the starting procedure and consequently, the engine effectively "burned up" when Steve David attempted to make the exhibition run. Apparently, too much fuel had accumulated in the engine's burner can, causing a severe high temperature condition in the "hot end" of the engine. The exhaust gas temperature gauge indicated a very high temperature and Steve immediately shut down the engine, but the damage had already occurred. Nothing could be done except to pack the boat, trailer and truck for the return to Madison to retrieve the rebuilt gearboxes before heading to Jacksonville for trans-shipment to Qatar. A later inspection showed extensive damage to the fuel nozzles and the power take-off turbine stage, both expensive to repair. Larry Hanson replaced Steve Dean as the truck driver for the Jacksonville trip because Steve had been in the truck almost non-stop for the better part of two weeks and he needed some much deserved rest.

The Oberto team was scheduled to fly to Doha on November 13th, a day before most of the other teams were planning to arrive for the race. The "set-up" day for the race is normally on Wednesday before the race, when the boats are reconfigured from their transport mode to race mode. The team opted to begin the set-up activity on Tuesday, for the last two years in order to give us another day in case problems are encountered. Nate Brown's Our Gang Racing Team also arrived in Doha a day early for exactly the same reason. When we arrived at the pits on Tuesday morning, most of the boats, trailers and trucks were not in their final parking places. Greg Jones of the Spirit of Qatar Team arrived in Doha several days earlier to get all the trucks, trailers and boats parked, but there was a



Jim Simpson photo

glitch. Ken Muscatel and Steve Webster's boats had been shipped from the United States earlier than the rest of the fleet so that they could be displayed (and possibly participate in an exhibition) in Abu Dhabi. These two boats had also been displayed at the U. S. Army base in Qatar as an advertisement for the upcoming Oryx Cup. Greg Jones was not able to transport the two boats from the Army base to the pits until late Monday evening, causing a snag in his schedule to have everything in place for Tuesday morning. Fortunately for our team, our boat and truck were properly parked so that we could at least begin unpacking the race spares from the truck until the balance of the other teams' equipment was situated. Set-up proceeded normally and by 4:00 P.M., we were ready to return to the hotel. That evening, the Oberto Team traveled to the Doha City Center Mall to eat, relax and see the sights. The City Center Mall was as magnificent as ever. After eating, the team browsed the mall's many stores for souvenirs and gifts for family and friends back home.

On Wednesday morning, the activity in the pits was in full swing. All of the teams were actively setting up their boats and getting things "just right" for the upcoming Oryx Cup. The Oberto team had arrived a day early and completed most of the required set-up activity on Tuesday so there really wasn't much to do except trailer fire the engine and double check important systems. By 2:00 P.M., our work was completed, so we returned to the hotel to clean up and relax. The Doha Marriott Hotel has theme restaurants on the premises, one of which features Mexican food, so Larry Hanson and I decided to dine there. The food at *Salsa's* was actually quite good and authentic. As a matter of fact, we ate there several more times before the week was over. We turned in early on Wednesday evening because crew chief, Michael Hanson wanted the team to be at the pits early on Thursday morning for testing and qualifying.

Testing for the Oryx Cup began on Thursday morning. All the teams were ready to begin their test sessions except for the Leland Unlimited entry. Only one or two of the Leland crew had arrived by Thursday, so they weren't quite ready to test. As a matter of fact, they also missed the afternoon qualifying session. The first boat in the water was the U-17 *Miss Red Dot*, piloted by Kip Brown. Other boats were soon to follow. The first test session for *Oh Boy! Oberto* indicated that the fuel flow setting was a little too high, so Hanson made an adjustment to the engine's fuel control and we tested it again. Obviously, it's important to get fuel flow and N2 (high speed turbine) limits set during testing so that qualification runs won't result in disqualifications because of over-limit infractions. Finally, the engine was "dialed in" and the Oryx Cup qualifications began.

Several teams opted to pass up the first round of qualifications, probably with the hope that the water would settle down later in the afternoon. The wave action on Doha Bay did in fact diminish so results improved as the qualification session continued. The final result was that *Spirit of Qatar* earned the top qualifier position, *Oberto* was second, and *Valken.com*



Chris Denslow photo

Oberto's Steve David and Jimmy Gilbert, U-96 crewman David Heye, and U-22 owner/driver Mike Webster arriving at the Qatar pits for work.



Chris Denslow photo

Jimmy Gilbert, walking away on the dock, and Trevor Hanson (Mike Hanson's son) prepare *Oh Boy! Oberto* for a test run Thursday.

driven by Scott Liddycoat was third. Only a few miles-per-hour separated the top three qualifiers. With qualification completed, the Oberto team performed an inspection of the boat to make sure everything was in order and the team departed for the hotel to shower and clean up.

In support of the United States troops stationed in Qatar, H1 Unlimiteds arranged to have service personnel serve as “honorary crew” on each of the unlimited teams. The Oberto team was somewhat short of crew in Doha, because of the travel distance and the fact that we were there for a week, so the two U. S. Army assignees, Tony and Nicole, became more than just honorary – they were pressed into active service on the team. Tony’s normal job in the Army is in motor pool maintenance, so he immediately was assigned deck duty on *Oh Boy! Oberto*. Nicole, an assistant to the base chaplain, was assigned to helping Steve David with his driving equipment and getting the H1 “black box” that monitors engine performance to the officials following each run. Both Tony and Nicole are from Missouri. Tony is from the southeast near Charleston and Nicole is from Saint Louis. They performed valuable services for the team during the Oryx Cup and we sincerely thanked them both. Hopefully the work and responsibility we requested of them won’t scare them off from hydroplane racing. We could certainly use the two of them again.

On Thursday evening, the unlimited teams were in for an interesting, yet very unusual evening — a visit to the Pearl Man. The Pearl Man is a merchant who deals in pearl jewelry from his tiny shop in the heart of Doha. Buses and taxis were arranged to transport the teams to and from the hotel to the his shop. The shop conjured up images straight from the stories of Scheherazade and her *Tales of 1001 Arabian Nights!* The Pearl Man, draped in a thob, complete with a typical Arab head dress, was bargaining with customers to sell his pearls at a very low cost primarily from a two-room shop. He was the only employee, serving as the cashier, entertainer, barterer, etc., operating from a disheveled drawer that was filled with loose Qatari Rials and U. S. Dollars, all askew. An American ex-patriot named Scott MacCracken and his wife Donna live in Doha and they escorted us to the Pearl Man’s shop and it really was a fantastic tour. The shop was in a souq (pronounced “sook,” that’s what they call their shopping areas), that appeared to be fairly new and modern ... but the actual pearl shop itself looked to be fairly weather-worn and quaint. I’m guessing that the shop was intentionally built to look that way — it probably was fairly new, but it sure didn’t appear to be. I was able to buy two sets of pearl stud earrings for \$22.00! I learned later that I could have bought matching necklaces for less than \$80 each, depending on the number of pearls in the strand, but almost everything was a bargain. There were also a lot of things in the Pearl Man’s shop that can’t be imported to the U. S., such as tanned leopard hides, ivory, etc. Scott and his wife escorted several groups of the hydroplane teams to the souq after attending the racing activities during the day. The MacCracken’s son, Mike, was even pressed into



Above: A couple of the U.S. Army’s best, Tony and Nichole with Larry Hanson. Below: Steve David and the two new Oberto crewmen in Oh Boy! Oberto colors.



Chris Denslow photo

Chris Denslow photo

service selling H1 souvenirs and other merchandise near the entrance to the pits. Scott and Donna seemed to enjoy being with the boat teams while serving as superb hosts. I cannot imagine how many trips they made with the teams to the Pearl Man during our week in Doha. We can never thank them enough for their generous hospitality. The visit to the Pearl Man was a unique highlight of our Oryx Cup trip and we will all long remember the experience.

Before the actual Oryx Cup heat racing began Friday, an early morning test session was on the schedule. The Madison Team installed a second engine in the boat for the session to ensure that the engine's fuel flow and N2 would meet the H1's race criteria. The test was successful. The draws for heat 1A, 1B and 1C took place Thursday evening, with *Oberto* matched in 1B against Brian Perkins in the *Tapout MP*, Jimmy Shane in the *Formula* and Ryan Mallow in Ken Muscatel's *Oryx Cup II* entry. Heat 1A's draw matched Kip Brown in *Red Dot* with Jeff Bernard in *Graham Trucking*, Greg Hopp in the U-100, and J. W. Myers in *Peters & May*. The heat 1C match up featured Dave Villwock in *Spirit of Qatar*, Scott Liddycoat in *Valken.com*, J. Michael Kelly in *Degree Men*, and Mike Webster in *Oryx Cup*.

Kip Brown in *Red Dot* led the field in 1A, getting the win over Bernard and Hopp. In 1B, Steve David in *Oh Boy! Oberto* beat Brian Perkins in *Tapout MP* with Jimmy Shane in *Formula* taking third. *Valken.com* gave close chase to *Spirit of Qatar* in 1C but Villwock was able to get the win. J. Michael Kelly finished third in 1C driving *Degree Men*. Unfortunately Ryan Mallow, Mike Webster, and J.W. Myers weren't able to finish in their heats so they received no points for the first round of heat racing.

Because of the UIM World Championship format of the Oryx Cup, there was a second round of heat racing held on Friday. In 2A, Dave Villwock was able to get the win over Greg Hopp (second), Scott Liddycoat (third), and Kip Brown (fourth) in a closely contested heat. The top three boats finished within four miles-per-hour from each other. In 2B, Steve David was able to come from an outside starting lane to get the win over J. Michel Kelly (second) and Brian Perkins (third). Ryan Mallow in Muscatel's *Oryx Cup II* entry wasn't able to start the heat. Heat 2C featured another closely contested race between Jeff Bernard and Jimmy Shane, with Bernard winning by just over one mile per hour. J. W. Myers and Mike Webster were unable to start the heat.

After the final heat race on Friday, all of the unlimited teams checked and double checked everything on their boats before adjourning to the hotel. The Spirit of Qatar crew made a change to a gearbox so they worked late into the evening before they finished their final race preparations. The Oberto team turned in early on Friday evening as did a lot of the other unlimited teams.

Sheik Hassan scheduled a special surprise for the Oryx Cup, a flight demonstration by the French Air Force. It was held before the heats began on both Friday and Saturday. There were precision aerobatics, high speed crossing maneuvers and precision formation flying. While the flight demonstration was somewhat similar to the U. S. Navy's Blue Angels, the French flight program was conducted without the



Jim Simpson photo

J.W Myers and *Peters & May* are towed in as *Oh Boy! Oberto* and *Tapout MP* do battle in 1A on Doha Bay.



Chris Denslow photo

extremely noisy afterburners that normally are used by the Blue Angels. It was a very pleasant and enjoyable experience. Thanks to Sheik Hassan and the Qatar Marine Sport Federation for an entertaining show, courtesy of the French Air Force.

Doha Bay was relatively calm on Saturday morning, foretelling a fast race. A brief test session was held before the start of the ensuing rounds of heat racing that would lead up the Oryx Cup final. The Oberto team elected not to test, but several of the other teams did. The third round of heat racing was conducted in a slightly different format in that there were to be only two heat sections per round instead of three as on Friday, with six boats assigned to each section. The draws for the heats were conducted and the boats prepared for racing. In heat 3A, Dave Villwock



Chris Denslow photo

took the win over Greg Hopp (second), J. Michael Kelly (third), Jeff Bernard (fourth), and J.W. Myers (fifth). Mike Webster in the U-22 entry did not make the start.

In 3B, Kip Brown appeared to win the heat but he received a penalty for being early at the start. Steve David thus got the win over Scott Liddycoat (second), Jimmy Shane (third), Brian Perkins (fourth), and Kip Brown was relegated to fifth because of the penalty. Ken Muscatel substituted for Ryan Mallow in the U-25 entry but he wasn't able to make the start. When returning to the pits following 3B, Jimmy

Shane's engine failed to shut off, causing a potentially disastrous incident. When Shane realized that his engine wasn't responding to his fuel cut-off commands, he attempted to steer the slowly moving craft away from the dock back out towards the race course. Unfortunately, Brian Perkins was also approaching the dock and the two boats collided, but both boats were going very slowly. Still Shane's engine continued to run, with his sponsons now up on the side of Perkin's boat. On the side of every unlimited there is a manual fuel cut-off switch. Perkins realized what was happening and freed himself from his cockpit and jumped from his boat onto Shane's to try to stop the engine. Apparently the external switch didn't function either because the turbine continued to run, albeit at idle speed. The two intertwined boats continued to make large circles until coming to rest against the bulkhead of the pits. Crewmembers were able to jump onto Shane's boat and eventually get the engine stopped. It was a tense moment in the pits to say the least. The first thing that each of the unlimited teams did following the incident was to test their external engine fuel cut-off switch. Fortunately, not much damage was suffered by either boat and they were able to continue to the next rounds of racing.



Formula and Tapout MP had a slight collision after 3B when Shane's turbine wouldn't shut down. There was no injuries or serious damage done.

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So far in the first three rounds of racing, the top two qualifiers, *Spirit of Qatar* and *Oh Boy!* Oberto hadn't faced each other. The same situation would occur because of the luck of the draw in the fourth round of heats. Heat 4A was won by J. Michael Kelly in *Degree Men*. He led the field from start to finish. Steve David and Oberto was second and Jeff Bernard in *Graham Trucking* was third. Kip Brown and Jimmy Shane unfortunately failed to finish the heat. Heat 4B provided some real excitement. Scott Liddycoat and *Valken.com* just nosed out Dave Villwock in *Spirit of Qatar* in a photo finish. Brian Perkins in the *Tapout MP* was third, J.W. Myers in *Peters & May* was fourth, and Greg Hopp in the U-100 finished fifth. Ken Muscatel failed to start 4B. The stage was now set for the final, the UIM World Championship

Oryx Cup. The seven boats (six, plus a trailer), with the most points awarded in the heats were being prepared for the big finale.

The time just before any unlimited final is when all teams are at their most intense. Every minute detail must be addressed, with nothing overlooked. Drivers become introspective and the nervous energy of the crews seems to get stronger with every passing moment. Crew chiefs worry over the “right” propeller/gearbox combination as well as which particular engine just might lead the team to victory. Strategy is discussed by the crew chiefs and drivers and rehashed many times. Finally it was time to put the boats in the water and determine the 2011 UIM Oryx Cup World Championship.



Because of the saltwater environment in Doha Bay, lanes were assigned by luck of the draw to the boats in all the heats (as well as the final). Scott Liddycoat drew the cherished lane 1 for the final. Steve David drew lane 3. Dave Villwock was assigned lane 5. During the milling before the start, all the boats jockeyed into their assigned positions and closed fast toward the starting line. At the starting gun, it appeared all boats were behind the start/finish line in keeping with a legal start. Later photograph evidence would show that three boats, *Oberto*, *Spirit of Qatar* and *Degree Men*, were in fact over the starting line the instant the gun sounded. Because it takes time to review the start, and since only the event referee has the authority to make judgment calls in a UIM sanctioned event, the problem with the start wasn't subject to any ruling until the race was long completed. In the absence of any call regarding the validity of the start, a very exciting race was unfolding, even though it was later overturned (properly, I might add), by an official's ruling. Steve David moved out three or four boat lengths over Liddycoat on the first lap only to be caught in the turns. Villwock managed to get sufficient overlap over the boats trailing him to move into lane 3 by about the second lap, but he wasn't making up much distance on the two leaders. By lap 3, Steve David had managed to get a roostertail lead on Liddycoat, who was hanging on doggedly in lane 1. Still David remained in lane 2. By the fourth lap, it was evident that David might (apparently) win the race. Villwock wasn't making up any ground and Liddycoat was doing a great job securing what appeared to be second place. That's the way the group came across the finish line — Steve David first, Liddycoat second, and Villwock third. There was much initial

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It was a close battle for the front spot, not the actual lead, with *Valken.com* trailing close behind *Oh Boy! Oberto*.

celebration in the Oberto pit. Other teams came by to offer their congratulations and the Madison team adjourned to the awards stage. It was at the awards stage that the Madison Team first sensed that something might be awry. An inordinate amount of time passed before any sort of official announcement was made. Almost immediately after the completion of the race we had received notification that all of the official monitoring data from the *Oberto*'s engine was within



Jim Simpson photo

allowances so we couldn't fathom what otherwise might be causing a delay in the presentation. A group of four or five officials passed by with rather grim expressions on their faces. It was then that we learned that *Oberto* had been called for the violation at the start of the race. The first legal starter, Scott Liddycoat in the *Valken.com*, was the winner of the race. Jeff Bernard in *Graham Trucking* was second, Greg Hopp in the *U-100* was third, and Jimmy Shane in *Formula* was fourth. Of the three "jumpers" at the start, *Oberto* was fifth, *Spirit of Qatar* was sixth, and *Degree Men* was seventh. There was much celebration in Ted Porter's camp ... first, second and fourth in the Oryx Cup. But for the Oberto team, alas, *C'est la vie*. That's boat racing.



Chris Denslow photo

Steve David gets a hug from Cindy Shirley after believing he had won the race. It was a happy moment for the team that didn't last.

The trip from the pits back to the hotel began on a somber tone for the team. All that was about to change. The bus driver buoyed everyone's spirits with a most unusual bus ride. He drove the bus around most the traffic circles at least twice before exiting and on the straight sections of roads he rocked the bus from side to side, all to the cheers of the now lively teams. Other vehicles in the vicinity of the bus noticed the rollicking and began to give the bus wide berth. Oberto teammates Larry Hanson and Eric Bell shouted encouragement to the driver and it wasn't long before the entire bus joined in the cacophony. The bus arrived at the hotel to the cheers and laughter of the passengers while several folks generously tipped the driver for a most entertaining ride. While it probably wasn't the safest journey we'd ever



Chris Denslow photo

Sometime later, much later, the real winner Scott Liddycoat gets paid back for dumping a drink over Steve David's head when it was thought he had won the race.

undertaken, the bus ride did divert our attention from the disappointment of the day. Following the spirited bus ride, it was off to the showers to clean up and prepare for Sheik Hassan's gala Oryx Cup Awards Presentation and Dinner.

A problem arose at the dinner. H1 Unlimiteds management had invited several members of the military stationed in Qatar to the Oryx Cup Awards Banquet, certainly a well intentioned endeavor. However, seating began to run in short supply because of the extra guests. Since the Oberto team was one of the last teams to leave the pits following the day's racing, we were the last ones to arrive at the banquet. By the time the team arrived, there were no seats left whatsoever. The only team member (other than the two honorary crew members) to get seated was Larry Oberto, who had managed to leave the pits before the rest of the crew. Faced with the situation, the Oberto team elected to dine in the nearby steak-house restaurant that's part of the Marriott Hotel. Owen Blauman of the Degree Men team and a few others dined with the Oberto team because they also weren't able to get seating at the banquet. It was disappointing that we missed the ceremony because in the past, it's been one of the highlights of the Qatar experience.

We later explained the situation to H1 management and they expressed their apologies for the problem.

On Sunday, most of the unlimited teams returned to the pits to pack their trucks and trailers and to configure their boats for shipping back to the United States. Because of the saltwater environment, extra washing and care had to be exercised. It probably will not be until February of 2012 before the equipment arrives back in the States, so every effort was made by the Oberto team to get the salt off and out of everything. Electrical

systems were washed with fresh water and thoroughly dried. Bare metal parts of the boat like the skid fin, drive shafts, rudder, propellers, engines, and gearboxes were washed, dried, oiled, and greased. All the batteries in the boat were disconnected, washed, wiped clean, and stowed for trip home as were all other boat systems.

Later at the hotel, all the unlimited teams packed their suitcases and made arrangements for transportation to the airport for their flights back home. A few of the teams were waiting until Tuesday before returning, while some were scheduled to depart even later in the week. On Monday, the day of the Oberto team's flight, all the departure lines at the airport were fairly short and the exiting process fairly brief. The Qatar Airways flight to Houston was an hour late in leaving but managed to arrive on time. The flight was uneventful, although quite long.

Again, all of us in the sport of unlimited hydroplane racing would like to express our gratitude to Sheik Hassan and the Qatar Marine Sport Federation (especially Mona Nasser), for their immeasurable support and contributions



Chris Denslow photo

The Oryx Cup winner, a smiling Scott Liddycoat, shows off trophy with second place Jeff Bernard and third place Greg Hopp beside him.



Chris Denslow photo

The Oberto crew cleans the saltwater off *Oh Boy! Oberto* and buttons everything up Sunday for the very long trip back to the United States of America.

STAT BOX

ORYX CUP UIM WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Doha, Qatar, November 18-19, 2011

2-mile course on Doha Bay

QUALIFICATION (1) U-96 *Spirit of Qatar*, Dave Villwock, 153.547, 100 points; (2) U-1 *Oh Boy! Oberto*, Steve David, 148.023, 80; (3) U-7 *Valken.com*, Scott Liddycoat, 147.031, 70; (4) U-88 *Degree Men*, J. Michael Kelly, 146.657, 60; (5) U-5 *Graham Trucking*, Jeff Bernard, 145.181, 50; (6) U-17 *Red Dot*, Kip Brown, 144.630, 40; (7) U-21 *TapouT*, Brian Perkins, 141.916, 30; (8) U-11 *Peters & May*, J.W. Myers, 137.265, 30; (9) U-57 *Formula*, Jimmy Shane, 132.758, 30; U-100 (no name), Greg Hopp, 130.000, 30; U-22 *Oryx Cup*, Mike Webster, DNQ, 0; U-25 *Oryx Cup II*, Ken Muscatel, DNQ, 0.

HEAT 1A (1) *Red Dot* [1] 134.448, 400 points, 440 cumulative points; (2) *Graham Trucking* [4] 127.398, 300, 350; (3) U-100 127.129, 225, 255; (4) *Peters & May* [3] DNF — , 0, 30. Fast lap (1) *Red Dot* 135.371. **HEAT 1B** (1) *Oh Boy! Oberto* 131.008, 400, 480; (2) *TapouT* [1] 127.575, 300, 330; (3) *Formula* [3] 122.260, 225, 255; *Oryx Cup II* [4] DNF — , 0, 0. Fast lap (2) *Oh Boy! Oberto* 133.876. **HEAT 1C** (1) *Spirit of Qatar* [3] 138.447, 400, 500; (2) *Valken.com* [1] 137.839 (flagrant fuel violation, lost points), 0, 70; (3) *Degree Men* [2] 117.560 (flagrant fuel violation, lost points), 0, 60; *Oryx Cup* [4] DNS — , 0, 0. Fast lap (3) *Spirit of Qatar* 141.958.

HEAT 2A (1) *Spirit of Qatar* [2] 132.489, 400, 900; (2) U-100 [1] 129.015, 300, 555; (3) *Valken.com* [4] 128.404, 225, 595; (4) *Red Dot* [3] 116.618, 169, 609. Fast lap (1) *Spirit of Qatar* 134.854. **HEAT 2B** (1) *Oh Boy! Oberto* [3] 131.720, 400, 880; (2) *Degree Men* [1] 122.196, 300, 360; (3) *TapouT* [2] 104.088, 225, 555; *Oryx Cup II* [4] DNS — , 0, 0. Fast lap (2) *Oh Boy! Oberto* 132.758. **HEAT 2C** (1) *Graham Trucking* [1] 126.790, 400, 750; (2) *Formula* [3] 125.058, 300, 555; *Peters & May* [2] DNS — , 0, 30; *Oryx Cup* [4] DNS — , 0, 0. Fast lap (2) *Graham Trucking* 127.609.

HEAT 3A (1) *Spirit of Qatar* [3] 131.309, 400, 1300; (2) U-100 [2] 129.294, 300, 855; (3) *Degree Men* [4] 128.409, 225, 585; (4) *Graham Trucking* [5] 122.224, 169, 919; (5) *Peters & May* [1] 84.607, 127, 157; *Oryx Cup* [6] W/D — , 0, 0. Fast lap (3) *Degree Men* 132.236. **HEAT 3B** (1) *Oh Boy! Oberto* [3] 130.624, 400, 1280; (2) *Valken.com* [4] 129.438, 300, 595; (3) *Formula* [1] 127.082, 225, 780; (4) *TapouT* [5] 116.413, 169, 724; (5) *Red Dot* [2] 96.942 (penalized one lap for jumping the gun, converted to one minute), 127, 736; *Oryx Cup II* [6] DNS — , 0, 0. Fast lap (1) *Red Dot* 133.759.

HEAT 4A (1) *Degree Men* [1] 128.726, 400, 985; (2) *Oh Boy! Oberto* [4] 124.015, 300, 1580; (3) *Graham Trucking* [5] 116.021, 225, 1144; *Red Dot* [2] DNF — , 0, 736; *Formula* [3] DNF — , 0, 780. Fast lap (2) *Degree Men* 133.642. **HEAT 4B** (1) *Valken.com* [1] 130.563, 400, 995; (2) *Spirit of Qatar* [2] 130.292, 300, 1600; (3) *TapouT* [4] 112.987, 225, 1144; (4) *Peters & May* [3] 87.933 (penalized one lap, fined \$250 for lane change without overlap, converted to one minute penalty, returned to pits after three laps), 169, 326; (5) U-100 [5] 86.894 (penalized one lap for jumping the gun), 127, 982; *Oryx Cup II* [6] DNS — 0, 0. Fast lap (2) *Spirit of Qatar* 133.876.

FINAL (1) *Valken.com* [1] 131.499, 400, 1395; (2) *Graham Trucking* [2] 120.143, 300, 1444; (3) U-100 [6] 117.821, 225, 1207; (4) *Formula* [T] 112.040, 169, 949; (5) *Oh Boy! Oberto* [3] 110.376 (penalized one minute for jumping the gun), 127, 1707; (6) *Spirit of Qatar* [5] 105.576 (penalized one minute for jumping the gun), 95, 1695; (7) *Degree Men* [4] 103.578 (penalized one minute for jumping the gun), 71, 1056. Fast lap (3) *Oh Boy! Oberto* 137.633.

COMPILED BY ALLEN STILES

to our sport. Hopefully we have provided the level of excitement that Sheik Hassan anticipated when he commissioned the unlimited races in Qatar.

Our writer Jimmy Gilbert is retired NASA senior scientist. While at NASA he worked on the onboard computers on the Apollo missions, computers on the Command Module, and later on the Lunar Module guidance computer. He also worked on Skylab and before retiring worked on the data processing system in Mission Control that monitored the Shuttle's flight (trajectory, energy management, and system telemetry). Now he is in charge of the Madison Team's computer systems, electrical, radios and is his 5th year with the team. His NASA experiences are a great value to the team. Jimmy Gilbert has also worked for Ken Muscatel's Superior Racing, Lori and Mike Jones' U-9 Jones Racing, Bernie Little's Miss Budweiser, and Fred Leland's U-100 team. He is an avid runner who lives in Houston with his wife Sue. They have one daughter Laura, and two grandchildren, Rhett and Madeleine.

This is the third Qatar report he has written for *UNJ* and we are looking forward to reading next year's.



Sheikh Hassan bin Jabor Al-Thani, who is responsible for bringing our unlimiteds to Qatar, takes a group of children on a tour of the unlimited pits. ~ Chris Denslow photo

Doha Damage Report

by Michael Prophet
photos from Jim Simpson

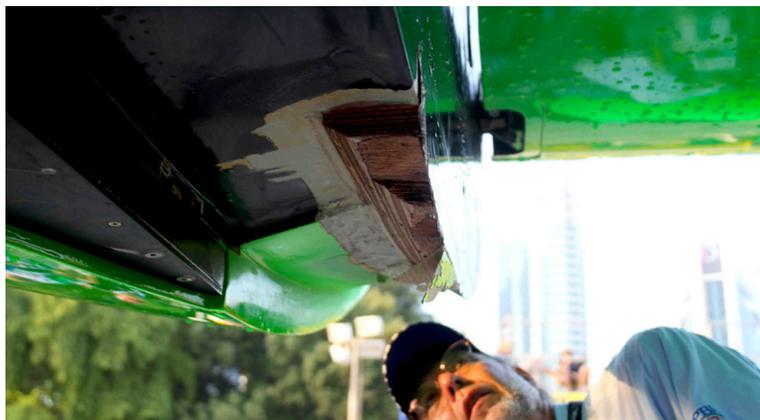
Fortunately, there was not much damage to report from Qatar this season, which is a good thing. One boat team did garner all the damage, though it was nothing very serious. Sponson damage and being plowed into.

U-21 TapOut MP

On Friday, Brian Perkins damaged the underside of the left sponson in the salty water of Doha Bay. As you can see, there was a little wood showing on the bottom. Might have been some residual damage from earlier in the season or he hit something and it started to separate. From the photo, this hints that something was starting to come apart from wear or a quick repair job if they had worked on the sponsons making some adjustments.

All it took was a little bondo and sanding and they were ready to go for their next heat.

Brian Perkins and *Tapout MP* were cruising into the pits after 3B when Jimmy Shane and *Formula*, who came puttering in first, missed his berthing spot because his turbine failed to shut down. As soon as Shane realized the engine fuel cut-off wasn't working he attempted to steer the slow moving *Formula* away from the dock and back out to sea. Unfortunately, Perkins and *Tapout MP* were also approaching the dock and *Formula* plowed into the right side of Perkin's boat. Luckily, both boats were going



One of the Greg O'Farrell's crewmen holds his head as they watch Shane and *Formula* smack into their boat. It could have been much worse than it turned out to be.

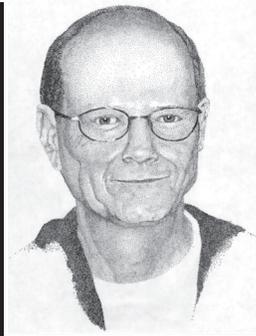
very slowly. After locking together, *Formula*'s turbine continued to run, with the sponsors now up on the right side of Perkin's boat. Every unlimited has a manual fuel cut-off switch on the side. When Perkins realized what was happening he unhooked himself from his seat and climbed out of the cockpit and onto Shane's boat to try to shut down the engine. Apparently the external shut-off switch wouldn't work either because the turbine continued running, though at idle speed.

The two tangled boats continued making large circles until finally coming to rest against the pits bulkhead. Crews charged into the shallow water to separate the tow boats.

At right, Formula people were then able to jump onto *Formula* and shut the turbine down before it hit the dock. It was a very tense moment in the pits. It could have been a disaster. Right after this incident each of the unlimited teams tested their own external engine fuel cut-off switches.

Fortunately, neither *Tapout MP* nor *Formula* suffered any serious damage in the collision. As you can see, TapoutT Mp needed a little paint was all, and were both ready to go for their next heat of racing.





Chris Tracy

Race Site Recap. Positive news is that the **Madison** event organizers are on record saying the event made money in 2011. Unfortunately, due to the accident at the race, *UNJ* sources indicate there could be some insurance issues for the 2012 race; most agree insurance will likely be obtainable, but at a steeper price. Indiana and Kentucky media outlets have reported that multiple lawsuits have been filed as a result of the accident. Despite a smallish crowd for the 2011 Gold

Cup, the good news in **Detroit** is that the Detroit Yacht Club has inked a multi-year presenting sponsor agreement, but Detroit needs a title sponsor and/or additional funding or sponsors for secure financial footing for the 2012 Gold Cup. The Detroit River Racing Association (DRRA) has already scheduled a fundraiser for April 27, 2012.

It was pretty much a record crowd at the **Tri-Cities**, Wash. race in 2011; quite likely the largest 3-day crowd on the beach of all races in the Air National Guard series. The Dash for Cash on Friday of race weekend, offered some racing incentive, though it wasn't during actual heat competition. KNDU TV covered the race live all day on Sunday, too. Title sponsor Lamb-Weston again sponsored the extremely popular "Free Fries Fryday" at restaurants throughout Richland, Pasco and Kennewick. Lamb-Weston returns in 2012 as the title sponsor.

Albert Lee Appliances returned as the title sponsor for **Seattle's** race in 2011. A glimpse of actual prize money for both the winning driver and owner showed up at Seafair, brought about by Albert Lee Appliances, LG brand appliances, AT&T and Seafair. KIRO TV covered the race from wire-to-wire on Sunday, too. While the beach crowd was only average for the 3-day event, Seattle claimed the largest total attendance of all races, due to the large number of spectators on boats on the log boom. The Air National Guard (AG) not only was the H1 Series title sponsor but also the title sponsor for the **San Diego** race; Degree Men was also a primary San Diego sponsor. *UNJ* sources indicate that it is doubtful that AG will return as title sponsor for the San Diego race in 2012, which could leave this site in jeopardy.

At press time, the unlimited boats were in transit back from the race in **Doha**, Qatar. The race was renewed for 2012, but *UNJ* sources report conflicting information about the renewal: some say the race will continue on a year-to-year basis, others report a 3-year renewal. Two exhibitions took place during the 2011 season. A successful exhibition was held in **Sacramento**, Calif., and likely there will be a race there in 2012. The exhibition in **Washington, D.C.** was less successful as the weather was horrible and the pits were primitive; a race in 2012 in Washington, D.C. is not likely, but 2013 is a more likely possibility. H1 is looking at the possibility of racing in **Coeur d'Alene**, Idaho in 2012, but *UNJ* contacts report that a possible exhibition is a more realistic scenario. A **Houston** race is almost certainly off the table for 2012, as the water level at Clear Lake remains too low. It looks like a **China** race may happen in 2012. One boat owner reported to the *UNJ* that the 2012 plan is to go to **Shanghai** after Seattle, then on to Qatar.

Series Information. While the **Air National Guard** has not formally renewed the title sponsorship for the H1 series for 2012, boat owners have reported that they are cautiously optimistic that AG will renew. A glaring absence all season was any word whatsoever from or about **Bulldawg Marketing**, or any visibility by them anywhere. Maybe they were doing something "behind the scenes" that some the fans didn't see, but who knows. *UNJ* sources say that Bulldawg Marketing is no longer working for H1.

Other Highlights in 2011. Dave **Villwock** had a record setting season, passing Bill Muncey's all-time wins and earning a 10th driving title. More and more, Dave Villwock has become the articulate and visible spokesperson for the sport. The Spirit of Qatar hydroplane became the sport's most winning hull, as well.

Dave Villwock Steps Into the Public Speaking Spotlight

by Chris Tracy

For the second year in a row, Dave Villwock was the guest speaker at the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum's combination Christmas party and annual business meeting. Museum Director, David Williams, introduced Villwock saying that there are three kinds of drivers: some have courage and take risks, some are successful due to their skills, and some are smart and find a better answer for how to go fast. Williams classified Villwock as one of the smart drivers. As an example, Williams explained that Villwock showed him how to enter a racecourse so he did not cause rollers that slowed his speeds when attempting to qualify a boat.

Villwock spoke to the crowd and he was clearly at ease and in his element, much as he was when he spoke at the Seafair press conference. Many noted that Villwock's natural personality is different than Dave Villwock, the racer, on race day. He was relaxed and displayed great humility as he thanked those that gave him driving tricks. He said that 2011 had been a tremendous season for the Spirit of Qatar team, even though had to "strap on the toolbelt" and help fix the boat after the first race of the season when their boat was in an accident with the Oberto. Villwock thanked Ed Cooper for lending their team his Indiana shop to do the repairs before the Gold Cup in Detroit. He remarked that the Cooper shop was top notch and although different from the Budweiser shop, it had comparable resources. Villwock said he and the crew worked three 20-hour days to repair the hull, which made the win in Detroit so very special. When the boat returns from Qatar, their crew plans to "saw the boat apart" and do a major rebuild.

Villwock was asked how long he planned to stay in the sport. Villwock was remarkably candid in his reply; his timeline had been to assess how many races it would take to have 62 or 63 wins and for Eric Ellstrom to have the boat with the most wins. With those goals achieved, Villwock says he may continue to drive as long as he is healthy and strong enough to drive. He then told a story about the Tri-City race. After the final heat of the race, the drivers were loaded into limos and taken a couple of blocks away for the awards presentation. He was in a car with a few younger drivers and one driver remarked the he was exhausted after the final heat and could not have gone on for one more competition lap. The driver turned to Villwock and said, "You must be exhausted." Villwock wasn't tired, though. Like Steve David, Villwock works out regularly and apparently many younger drivers don't. Typically Villwock works out 3-days a week for four hours, including playing basketball, conditioning and using weights. Then Villwock revealed one of his racing strategies that dates back to the time when he worked with Chip Hanauer, which is, "Let's wear them out." Hanauer went to Gold's Gym almost every day and Villwock continues the workout tradition, and then the strategy is to press the competition every single heat and there will not be as much fight left in them in the final heat, as a result.

When asked about all the controversy about starting procedures and what start he preferred, he remarked, "Any kind of start, as long as they don't bitch after the race." He went on to explain that he was intrigued with a practice being used in some Canadian boat races. One qualifies for lane position for first heat, the lanes are inverted in the second heat, the first four boats draw for lanes for the third heat, and for the final the first and second high point boats draw for lanes, third and fourth points draw, etc. But in the end, Villwock said, "I don't care. The fast teams will win the races. This will not change."

Refereeing questions were asked and Villwock noted, "They (referees) make the call and must have a procedure. We don't have a good (written) procedure for the race starts." He recommended that infraction calls be made during the lap that they occur and said, "Officiating after the race is a black eye for the sport. Once you give the trophy out, it's done. The sport needs to be professional and orderly to grow." The crowd at the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum agreed.



Karl Pearson photo



Chris Tracy photo

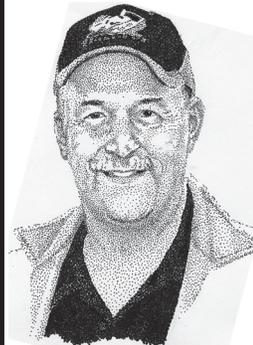
The H1 Unlimited fleet of 12 boats, equipment, and haulers are now en route back to the United States. **Dave Holley**/Peters & May has updated us with information that confirms the details of the shipping logistics. The boats and majority of the equipment is on-board the vessel *Saudi Diriyah*, with an expected U.S. arrival date of approximately Feb 13th, dependant on the final U.S. port chosen. Due to scheduling changes, some teams have air-freighted engines back to the U.S. for an earlier arrival and to begin off-season maintenance.

The H1 Unlimited Series 2011 Awards Banquet and Meetings will be held in Seattle, Feb. 25-26 at the downtown Westin Hotel. For details and reservations see the information posted on the H1 Unlimited website. There will also be a no-host social event held on Friday evening, Feb. 24th at the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum.

U-5, U-7, U-57. Precision Performance Engineering LLC Racing's biggest development in the unlimited ranks involves **Ted Porter's** team of Precision Performance Engineering, LLC. The first week of January brought news that **Mark Hooton**, team manager was leaving the team to concentrate on growing responsibilities at his "day job" with General Motors, then news came that U-5 driver **Jeff Bernard** was parting ways with Porter's team, and the next day Ted Porter announced that his family was leaving the sport and his entire operation was being sold. This includes (7) unlimited hulls, (4) race trucks, (8) boat trailers, (8) T-55 turbine engines, (6) Fairlane gearboxes, more than 40 propellers, and (1) P4 OPA Offshore hull. Porter said he hopes to sell the equipment as race ready sets rather than individual parts.

U-9. **Mike and Lori Jones** are excited about running the whole season, as is their driver **Jon Zimmerman**. It will be his first full season of racing. Jones Racing hasn't run a full season since 2003. With the only active team and their equipment in their shop in the U.S., Jones Racing has continued to work on upgrades to their hull, including replacing the old driver's capsule with a new state of the art safety capsule and cockpit.

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Lon Erickson

U-22. Webster Racing, LLC has announced that **Eric Bell** has joined their team and will be taking on the role of crew chief in the upcoming 2012 season. Eric has been in the sport for 20 years and comes from the Madison/Oberto team where he has held numerous positions over the years. He has worked with the Madison and the Formula teams as a crew chief in the past. Eric has an extensive background with the hull

that Webster Racing acquired from the Madison team last year and they hope to use that experience to improve in the coming season.

88. Degree Men driver **J. Michael Kelly** will be racing again this spring in New Zealand. He will be competing in their Grand Prix class of hydroplanes at three different events, the A.E. Baker Championship on Lake Taupo January 28-29, UIM World GP Championship on Lake Karapiro, February 3-5, and at the 100th Anniversary E.C. Griffith Cup also at Lake Karapiro March 3-4.

J. Michael has competed in New Zealand in previous years driving Peter Knight's GP class hydroplane, "The Boss" which he will be driving again this spring.

U-1.96. Based on comments made by **Dave Villwock**, upon the return of the *Ellstrom* boat from Doha, the team will do some upgrades to the hull before the 2012 season gets underway. In his words, they will be "sawing the boat apart" and doing a major rebuild.



U-9 Al Debby Dodge in 2003, last full season of racing.

IN THIS JANUARY 2012 ISSUE

2011 UIM World Championship Oryx Cup by Jimmy Gilbert	1
2011 Oryx Cup Stats by Allen Stiles	9
2011 Qatar Damage Report by Michael Prophet	10
Around The Circuit by Chris Tracy	13
Dave Villwock Steps into the Public Speaking Spotlight by Chris Tracy	14
HydroFile News by Lon Erickson	15

NEXT MONTH: 2011 Season Review & SST

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Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

Next Meeting of Unlimiteds Unanimous & RC Hydro Show

-everyone welcome!-

Saturday, February 11th
12 pm to 4 pm

Hydroplane & Raceboat Museum
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