



April 2020

How to start a hydroplane.

During an event at the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum late last year, Kip Brown entertained the gathering with his impressions about what it's like to start both a turbine engine on an Unlimited hydroplane and how to start a Rolls Merlin engine. Brown has experience with both, having driven the U-17 for six years as well as the Qatar in 2014, and also being the driver of one of the museum's old Atlas Van Lines hydros when it makes exhibition runs at the Tri-Cities and Seattle. His explanation was so well received, we asked him to put his talk into written form. It lacks the great sound effects that he made to simulate the noises of the engines and their components, but your imagination can do that.

TURBINE:

Crew on the dock. Hans device and helmet on. Lid open.

"Here, hold my mask."

Slide into custom-poured seat, but don't sit on the belts. Make sure the windshield is clear and the Rain-X was applied properly.

"I'll get my own lap belts on, thanks very much."

Slide the shoulder belts over the Hans device and clip into the cam lock. Tighten the lap belts first. Once they are tight, then crank down on the shoulder belts. Make sure the Hans release tethers are not under the belts.

Now for the air mask. This is a pain, 'cause you can't move. Once it's on, you plug the air line into the mask and purge it to make sure air is flowing. Next, plug



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Kip Brown in the cockpit of the U-17 Red Dot.

in communications and ask for a radio check with the dock radio, then truck radio, then radio corral.

Now we can wait for H1 to get its act together and give us a countdown. Turn on 12-volt system to get the Racepak data acquisition system online.

Countdown to five-minute gun comes. At 5:06, turn on 24/48-volt power switch. Turn on fuel boost pump. Make sure throttle is on stop for ground idle. If it's not, it won't light.

Turn igniters on. Spool engine with the starter switch. Wait for the turbine to light. You can tell when it does by watching the exhaust temp on the Racepak. If the engine doesn't start, it's possible that the fuel system wasn't primed correctly or that a trailer fire wasn't performed. If that's the case, you need to prime the engine with the start-fuel switch. Too much start fuel, and you get the Leland fireball out the exhaust at the dock.

Once the engine fires, the temp rises to almost 900 degrees. Keep the starter rolling until the temp stabilizes and drops back down.

Idle away from the dock. Slowly apply throttle to be easy on the propeller blades and keep the bow up to keep water out of the inlet. Keep the igniters on

in case of spray into the inlet that could put out your fire.

As the prop starts to bite, increase throttle to get the boat cleanly on plane.

Once on plane, turn igniters off.

Go win the heat.

MERLIN:

Mosey down the dock without a care in the world. Want to wear your helmet into the boat? Go ahead. Don't want to so you can wink at the hotties? Leave it off.

Hang out with the wind in your face and chat with the crew guys and

gals. They are more nervous than you are.

Radio guy comes onto the dock to say that we are good to go.

Toss on the helmet. Fuel pump and mag switches are already on. Kill switches are hooked to the jacket. Turn on power switch and you'll hear the fuel pump humming. Make sure the fuel handle is in the start position.

Crack the throttle, but not too much. Just off idle. Crank the engine over and tickle the primer button to introduce fuel into the carbs. Keep the engine rolling and watch for any black smoke out of the exhaust stacks. If smoke comes out, ease up on the fuel primer.

When the engine starts to pick up rpm, keep tapping the primer or it will die and be hard to restart.

As the engine picks up momentum on the primer, push the fuel handle forward, but not too quickly. Once the handle is forward, the engine will be ready to take throttle. You need to be easy on the throttle, though.

The boat is narrow and requires some touch to get it on plane without swamping the engine and driver. It's kind of a "feel" thing, but once you're on step, the boat ride is dry and easy.

Ride to glory. ❖



Kip Brown prepares to take the "Blue Blaster" Atlas Van Lines for a run on Lake Washington.

LATE-BREAKING NEWS:

Guntersville race canceled.

Just as we were wrapping up the production of our April issue, the officials for the Guntersville Lake HydroFest announced that this year's hydroplane race on Lake Guntersville, Alabama, has been canceled. The event was scheduled to be held on Saturday and Sunday, June 27 and 28.

"Due to the impact of COVID-19 on our nation, we have made the tough decision to cancel Guntersville Lake HydroFest 2020," the organization said in a press statement. "We will miss hosting this exciting weekend of racing on the lake, but we are already looking forward to next summer. We hope you will mark your calendars for June 26-27, 2021, and join us for the Race for the Southern Cup."

There is no word yet on the fate of other events on the 2020 calendar. The organizers of the Gold Cup, which is scheduled for July 3 to 5 in Madison, Indiana, announced recently that because of Indiana's stay-at-home mandate, the April membership meeting of the Madison Regatta has been canceled. The group holds membership meetings on the first Wednesday of each month.

Natalie Green, the secretary of the Madison Regatta, told the *Madison Courier* that they hope things will return to normal and that the group can hold its next scheduled meeting on May 6. "We are closely monitoring the situation and working with state and local officials in regard to our event," she told the newspaper.

In Seattle, Seafair released a joint statement with the Seattle Seahawks, the Bite of Seattle, the Seattle Mariners, Sounders FC, the Seattle Storm, and the Washington State Fair asking their followers to cooperate with efforts to limit

the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

"We, the organizers and teams of some of the Northwest's favorite summer events, sports, and activities, implore you, our fans and patrons, to follow local government calls to stay at home," the statement said. "What you do over the next few weeks can either help or hinder the return of some of your favorite events. We don't know how long it will take to flatten the curve,

a long period of isolation, our communities are going to need live interaction, connection, and celebration more than ever. Help us flatten the curve that could help your favorite event and sport return."

The organizers of the Guntersville Lake HydroFest said they have already started planning for an event in 2021. "We appreciate our committee's hard work and we will continue to plan next



but what you do now could help save celebrations and entertainment for the Puget Sound Region."

The organizations urged their followers to heed the guidelines of government officials to stay home and to only venture from their home for food, medicine, or defined essential work. Seafair and the others suggested that people follow social distancing guidelines to stop the spread of the virus, to wash their hands often, and refrain from touching their face.

"When the emergency has passed and our social interaction returns to normal, all events will be an important part of the recovery, providing people with a sense of community, local pride and the opportunity to return to the kinds of social interaction that build and maintain strong neighbors and communities," the statement said. "After

year's event," they said. "We are thankful to our sponsors who are staying with us, already committed to 2021, and the racing organizations—H1 Unlimited and Powerboat Nationals—who are supporting our decision. All those involved understand the financial challenges and the travel restrictions have all but halted our planning process."

Those who have already purchased a ticket for the 2020 race will receive a refund. "We want all of our supporters from across our nation to have the opportunity to come and enjoy the weekend—stress free and healthy," the Guntersville organizers said. "So, stay well and stay positive. And, join us for 2021 Guntersville Lake HydroFest—an extreme event on the South's Fastest Water!" ❖

Wrapping up our conversation with champion Billy Schumacher.

In the first three parts of our interview with Billy Schumacher, he talked about his years driving race boats, from outboards to inboards to Unlimited hydroplanes, then a detour to tunnel outboards, and finally with a return to Unlimited cockpits. In the conclusion of the interview, Schumacher talks about his years as an owner. He offers some thoughts about the state of Unlimited racing and evaluates the skills of some current drivers. The interview was conducted on May 29, 2019, by Craig Fjarlie.

UNJ: Perhaps we can talk with you about the boats you owned and raced?

Schumacher: OK.

From the time you stopped driving in 1976, until you got into it as an owner in 2006, you didn't really have that much to do with boat racing in terms of sitting in a cockpit or anything.

No, I didn't. You know, the sport's always been this way and it is today as well. Once you've done it, been there, they don't want to talk to you anymore. It's hard to even get a pit pass. I went to a few races to say hi to friends and it was difficult for me to get in and all that. I finally decided the heck with it. I'm not gonna go anymore. And I know several others, including some *Bardahl* people that felt the same way. We just didn't go. I didn't want a whole lot to do with it.

Yeah.

But the bug kinda bit me later, and when Bernie died, I started thinking about it a little bit. I had remarried to Jane. I made the mistake of taking Jane to Detroit. It was her first race to see in person. I mean, when I won the Seafair race with *Miss Bardahl* and it was the Gold Cup that year, Jane's mother was watching the race. Jane was out at the swimming pool with her sisters and friends.

The final heat, when I was in second place, they were announcing that I would win the race if I stayed there. [The winner was determined by total points at the time – Ed.] So, Jane's



Chris Denslow



Larry Dong

mother ran out to her. Jane's 11 years younger than me, so I was 24 at the time. That made me the youngest Gold Cup winner ever. I beat Lee Schoenith by a few months. Jane's mother went running outside to her saying, "Jane, Jane and girls come in and watch. Billy Schumacher's about to win the Gold Cup." So that's all that Jane remembers about boat racing before I took her. Well, she'd watched a couple other races, but that really stuck in her mind that I, being as young as I was, was gonna win the race in Seattle.

Then I took her to the race in Detroit. We're walking down the dock. One of the heats was already on. We're walking down the dock at the Detroit Yacht Club. We're about half-way down and there's this yellow boat flying through the air upside down, and I said, "There's one of the wrecks right there." She saw that and said, "Oh, my God!"

We got out to the end of the dock and he had landed about, I'd say 20 feet, but it might have been closer, it might have been farther away, but it looked like 20 feet away from a cabin cruiser that had about 10 people on the top deck. Had it landed on that it would have been a terrible disaster for everybody. And, you know, we weren't sure what kind of shape Evans was in. I think it was Evans that was driving the boat. I believe he broke his leg or something. I hadn't been around the sport in a long time either and I didn't know who was driving what. But that yellow boat turned out to be the boat that we bought.

And that had been the Bud T-4.

Yeah. Before that boat, my interest was back into it. That's why I went to the race in Detroit and asked Jane if she wanted to go. We weren't even

married at the time.

Oh.

And she fell in love with the sport, needless to say. But before that I'd talked to Les Rosenberg, who owned the *Weisfield's* and the *Olympia Beer* boat, and *Valu-Mart*, about buying one of Bernie Little's boats, because he'd passed away and they were for sale.

He had the money. So, we went down there and talked to the guy running the shop. He showed us around a little bit. Les sat in the boat. He didn't like it because you sat different than we did in our boat. And, uh, it was hard for me to talk him into it. Les is one of those guys who says, "OK, sure," until it's time to dig out the wallet. Then he says,



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

ABOVE: Jean Theoret and the U-37 *Miss Beacon Plumbing* on their way to victory in Seattle during Schumacher's first season as an owner.

BELOW: Theoret and Schumacher celebrate at the 2006 Gold Cup awards banquet.

"But I saw that he was pretty fast, and I thought, you know, if Theoret can get a good start we can win this race. And that's what he did. So, Cahill's sitting there watching Beacon Plumbing win the race in Detroit, the Gold Cup."

"Aw, I don't know, I gotta think about this some more."

But, anyway, he thought about it, thought about it, never did make a move. I was telling Jane about that. We kind of dusted it off because it was a little too much money. Then we were over at Sun Valley. She had a house over there. We were married now, and we were there in the summer because we were driving around and there was no snow. Scott Raney called me and asked if we would be interested in buying Bill Wurster's boat.

Mmm.

I said, "Well, what's the number on that?" It was considerably less than the *Budweiser*. I said, "Does that include everything?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Why don't you come down and take a look." I said, "Well, we're in Sun Valley. I'll talk to Jane about it and if we think we want to look at it we'll do it."

So, to make the story shorter, I talked to Jane. She said she'd go take a look at it and we did look at it. Talked to Scott some more and talked to Bill. He was willing to take payments on it and take a big, healthy sum down. Which it was. The rest was on contract to pay over time for, I think it was for a year. So, Jane and I thought about that. She told me, "If you can get a sponsor for Seattle, we'll go ahead and do it."

So, I wound up getting a sponsor through some friends, and it was Bill Cahill's Beacon Plumbing. He agreed to Seattle. At that meeting Jane and I talked him into Tri-Cities as well. I said, "C'mon, it's gonna do you some good in Seattle. We need to race the boat before Seattle just to get it ready." And so, he said OK. Then he gave us the money for both races and we decided all right, let's do the whole circuit. We'll just run it as *Miss Seattle* in Madison and Detroit, then when we get to Tri-Cities we'll have Beacon Plumbing.

Mm hmm.

So, we went to Madison. Jane couldn't go because she had a wedding to go to in Sun Valley. So, she wished me luck and off I went with the boat to Madison. Jean Theoret was driving, and the boat was fast, and I thought, well, won the race the year before, I think it was in Seattle, so I liked the boat and I liked Scott. I liked John Walters who was doing the engines and so I thought, well, we have a good shot at this.

We got there in Madison and it caught on fire on the trailer. I have a photograph of that. Huge flames comin' out the back of it. They hooked up a line wrong, so it was spitting fuel into the exhaust pipe. It was late at night so it was really pretty, but I was afraid the boat was gonna burn down.

They fixed that problem and the boat didn't get burned too badly. Some of the paint got blistered, but in the race Theoret proceeded to blow the motor. So, it comes into the pits broken up a little bit and under water. People were saying, "Welcome to unlimited racing." [Laughter.] I thought, oh, jeez, this is the way it's gonna go? [Laughter.] So, we went to Detroit and fixed it in Detroit. Scott was amazing, his ability to fix things quickly. They stayed up all night a couple nights in a row. Got it done. We had a shop there to work in, so they were able to work late at night, too.

We weren't doing too well at the race there but I called Bill Cahill and said, "You know, we don't have a sponsor for Detroit. What do you think I just put Beacon Plumbing on it in Detroit? You against that?" And he said, "Heck no. As a matter of fact, I'll come back and watch the race if you do that." And I said OK. We didn't charge him for it, we just put his name on it, *Beacon Plumbing*.

And, uh, Theoret had enough points to get into the final heat just barely. But I saw that he was pretty fast, and I thought, you know, if Theoret can get a good start we can win this race. And that's what he did. So, Cahill's sitting there watching *Beacon Plumbing* win the race in Detroit, the Gold Cup. So his name is going on the Gold Cup and all he spends is the



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Schumacher's *Miss Beacon Plumbing* during a test run on Lake Washington in Seattle.



The Miss Bello's Pizza at Madison, Indiana, in 2009.

money to get there to watch it. So, he was really happy with us.

We went over to Sindbad's the next day. It's a restaurant as you know, next to the pits, and he was congratulating us and all that stuff and just happy as he could be. And to go into Tri-Cities and Seattle as the Gold Cup winner was really good for him. He had sponsored boats before in Seattle and never won anything.

So here he is as the Gold Cup winner. And he said, "Well, who you gonna have run the boat, sponsor the boat in San Diego?" And Jane said, "You are." And he chuckles and started laughing and looked down at the table for a while—this is at Sindbad's—and he said, "OK." So, he gave us money for that, too. Well, we didn't win Tri-Cities but we did wind up winning Seattle.

Won Seafair, yeah.

And I don't know what happened to us in Tri-Cities. I don't remember. And then we won the World Championship in San Diego.

Yeah.

So, he got the trifecta that year. A lot of people thought it was because of our skid fin, which was curved. It slowed the boat down in the straightaway, but it made it go around the corners a lot faster. And it was easy to drive. I mean, you could steer it in the turns. Very little effort. It would do it. Not a problem. It was

a big safety factor issue.

It wasn't faster in the straightaway, it was slower. But they still outlawed it. We even told 'em who'd build skid fins for you guys. They still outlawed it 'cause they were afraid they couldn't get what we had. It's still outlawed today and it's stupid. It should not be outlawed. It's a safety feature and it's, uh, elapsed time it is faster.

Mm hmm.

Anyway, that year was really good to us. Part of it was the skid fin. The other part was we had a really good engine that was built by John Walters. It was way better than any of the other engines we had. It just happened to be. We would use it in the final heat and that won us some of the races it won. And then I think the next year we won in Evansville or Madison. I think it was Madison.

My notes, in 2007 you didn't win anything, your best finish was third at San Diego.

No, we won.

You won Evansville in 2008. First race of the year.

So, 2007, I don't know. I'd have to look it up. Seems like we won one race that year. It was Evansville that I remember.

You won Evansville the next year, 2008. That was the year the Gold Cup in Detroit was declared no contest

because of weather.

We did win the Seattle race and they took it away from us...

Yeah.

...because they said Theoret was going too slow before the start of the race. We proved to them that we were going faster than anyone else out there and [Mike] Noonan said, "That doesn't matter, I've already made my decision." So, they took the race away from us. I remember winning that one hands down. That was with that good engine. And then Theoret broke it in one of his flips. We tried to fix it.

It was Miss Bello's Pizza at Madison in 2009. He flipped it there.

He flipped it in Evansville, too.

Yeah. He got hurt.

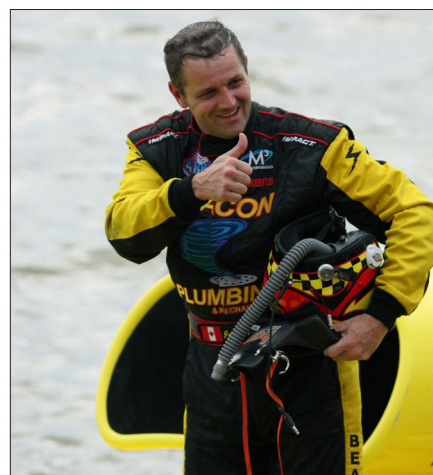
I don't know where it was that the engine got hurt but it did, and one main wheel in the hot section we had to replace. And it was never the same engine. So, we didn't have our super good engine after that.

In 2009 in Detroit it was Miss DYC and J.W. Myers, rookie driver, took over while Theoret was healing.

He almost died in that accident in Madison. He drowned. He was dead when they brought him back in the patrol boat. He was out of commission pretty bad for a while.

Yeah.

We had to get somebody else to



Theoret celebrates his 2008 victory in Evansville, Indiana.

drive. I always liked J-Dub and Scott was real close with J-Dub. So, he drove for us until Theoret got better.

Yeah, uh...

The boat wasn't the same. We didn't have the engine, they took away our skid fin, and we were having trouble making it compete well. Some of the other boats were really fast. You know, later on when we got our new boat running really fast, it took a year to get it there, but we weren't being treated fairly, and I don't mind saying that. The Commission treated us really poorly. And we got slowed down regularly by saying we had too much fuel...

Oh.

...which was absolutely not the case. You can put that on the record.

Theoret was out in 2010. The boat was *Peters and May*, and J.W. Myers drove it again at Madison and Detroit. That's where he hit the wall. The skid fin came off?

Yeah.

Lucky he didn't hit it head-on, but the boat was pretty-much totaled after that.

Yeah, it was. I mean, Scott could've fixed it, but we already had a new boat started and the decision was made to use the old boat for parts and build a new boat, finish building the new boat.

You got the former *Xnetix* hull for the remainder of the 2010 season. They had to work all night to get that one ready just to finish out the year.

Yeah. That was our introduction to Degree Men.

Jane was quoted somewhere saying Scott Raney really did a great job to get that boat ready.

Well, he did. We did a lot of work to the boat. I mean, we improved that boat tremendously. Scott did.

Yeah.

And it looked good in...

Which it never did before.

You know, it ran like its normal self. Couldn't get out of its own way, but it showed well enough to influence the Degree Men people to move forward for the next year.

Jon Zimmerman did some driving. Jamie Nilsen tested a couple times.

Yeah, Zimmerman drove it and I think he did a decent job. And they wanted us to help get Nilsen qualified, so I agreed to do that. That's normally not something I would do, but because it wasn't a winning boat, anyway I thought, "Why not?" Give him a chance.

Sure.

Anyway, he went, as I recall, he went faster than Zimmerman did. I was pretty impressed with him. Then he had some bad luck later with...

Blew a boat over backwards.

...Greg O'Farrell's boat.



Karl Pearson photos

The U-37 *Miss Peters & May* hits the wall at Detroit in 2010.
TOP: The boat's skid fin has broken off. **MIDDLE:** A fraction of a second before hitting the wall. **ABOVE:** The damage. The left sponson and part of the cockpit were demolished. Driver J.W. Myers suffered a broken foot.

He blew a boat over backwards at Seafair just a buoy length from the finish line, or something.

Yeah.

I've known Jamie from outboards, from the time he was driving J, so I saw him coming up. His dad's still involved with Seattle Outboard Association, too.

I think he's a tremendous driver. I tried to talk him into—the year that Villwock was involved with us—but Dave didn't think he had enough experience. I had to agree with Dave. He didn't have a lot of experience. He's driving for Scott Pierce now, I understand...

Yeah, in the Grand Prix.

...getting that experience he needs. You know, he made a couple bad errors in the boat that he flipped over. That flipping it over was a second bad error, and the first one was not be-



Karl Pearson

ing at the starting line at all. He was on the wrong side of the turn, and even as an outboard racer you should know better than that.

That's right.

So I don't know what was going on there and I never did talk to him about it, but I agreed with Dave that he needed more experience, and I think he's getting it now. I think someday he's going to be a terrific driver. And who knows who he'll end up with. [The interview was conducted before Nilsen was chosen to drive Raney's U-11 last summer – Ed.]

In 2011 you had the new boat and J. Michael Kelly driving it...

Right.

...with Degree Men, and that's the boat you finished out your ownership with.

Yeah, and it...

You had a good driver with J. Michael.

Oh, the best there is. I can't speak highly enough of J. Michael as a driver. He is, you know, he makes fewer mistakes than anybody I've ever seen. He's an attentive driver that wants to win extremely bad. You know, I think he's a very talented race boat driver. The problem we had with Degree Men is that there wasn't enough sponsorship to complete making that boat run as fast as it has the potential to run. Degree Men went a different direction. Some of our competitors decided that they would race that boat for half of what we were racing it for.

Mmm.

We got a decent amount of money from them to not only go racing that first year but do im-

ABOVE: With J. Michael Kelly in the cockpit, the brand-new *Degree Men* wins the first heat it ever entered, edging out *Valken.com* in Heat 1A of the 2011 Gold Cup in Detroit.

BELOW: In the 2012 Detroit Gold Cup, the boat finished third as the *Miss Beacon Plumbing*.

"I can't speak highly enough of J. Michael as a driver. He is, you know, he makes fewer mistakes than anybody I've ever seen. He's an attentive driver that wants to win extremely bad."



Lisa Courneya/H1 Unlimited



Chris Denslow

provements to the boat that we couldn't finish. There were other things I wanted to do, which we eventually did do. J. Michael did as good as he could do with that boat. It was really too bow light initially. We needed to make weight changes and other changes, which we did. Being a new boat, that happens occasionally.

Oh, yeah.

There have been boats, brand new, that can go on the water and be good right from the beginning. That wasn't one of 'em. There were changes made to that boat while it was being built that I didn't know were taking place, which upsets me to this day, that I think held it back. And it now, because of its low profile, I do believe, and that was something I wanted. Because of its low profile I believe it has the ability to be one of the best boats still today on the circuit. I'd like to see somebody prove that.

And if they don't get penalized with fuel violations all the time, it will prove that. I'm convinced of it. When we had the right amount of fuel in Coeur d'Alene when it was *Beacon Plumbing*, orange boat as *Beacon Plumbing*, we could have blown everybody away. And we were

told that we jumped the gun in the final heat so Villwock told J. Michael to slow down, you've already been disqualified. He said, "Well, I can take him. In the next half-lap. I'll get him." And he said, "Don't bother. Don't risk the boat for that."

And we were extremely fast, the boat was riding on the water the way it was supposed to ride on the water. He slowed down and took a second place in the final heat, I believe. We saw the film

the next day, of the start. He was not at the starting line when the gun went off. He had about a foot. [Laughter.] He was about a foot and that was on film so that was probably three feet before the gun went off. He did not jump the gun.

Yeah.

That was one of their ways of telling us we weren't gonna win the race again. Anyway, after that, when Villwock was involved, we got penalized I can't tell you how many times for being over on fuel. Every time we'd make the boat go fast, they'd come back to us saying you're over on fuel. No. And I can tell you how they did it, but no sense going into it. It's water under the bridge. I hope that the next time that boat races it gets the same amount of fuel as everybody else, and everybody's going to see what potential that boat has.

Just one last thing from 2013, they had a race, one time, in Sacramento, in June. Do you remember anything about that course? You had *Performance Chevrolet* on the boat. J. Michael was still driving it.

Yeah, that had to have been.

Villwock was a paid consultant.

That had to be J. Michael. At that point I don't think we had the weight distribution right. We had come up with some other things after that race. It was



Chris Denslow

The U-37 Miss Beacon Plumbing on the Detroit River in 2013.

fast there, but it wasn't as fast as those two boats that beat us. Later we got it going as fast as they were going. And then we got slowed down.

At Madison that year, it was canceled again because of conditions.

Yeah.

Madison had a little problem with that at times.

Yeah, it was pretty bad, but at least the people there seemed to really enjoy looking at the boats up close. You know, it appears like we didn't lose a lot of fans on account of that, that year. They understood why the race was canceled. If they hadn't have canceled it, I wouldn't have run our boat anyway. It would have been the second time I said no.

Well, in 2014, you had Dave Villwock drive it. You just ran Tri-Cities and Seattle. And that was the last time you had a boat in a race.

Dave got blamed for stuff that he didn't do. I don't think we were quite as fast as *Oberto* was there, yet. That could be because we were slowed down on fuel, too. I don't remember. It might've been because we were constantly, constantly gone after for that. And it wasn't, we didn't change anything with the motor. Nothin'. We changed the boat. As soon as the boat went faster, they came back, said

we were over on fuel. So then, you know that little device they put in there that measures fuel supply supposedly?

OK.

There's something with that they call the K factor. The regulator they put in the boat to measure the amount of fuel shows up on their computer, whether you're over or not. They can come back and say you were over on fuel. We have to give you a new regulator. Well, that happened to us a couple of times. The first time they said we have to change your regulator 'cause the K factor is wrong. Well, the referee can change the K factor on that, on that device. So, before we went fast, we weren't over on fuel. But Dave changed the gear ratio and the propeller...

Mmm.

...and all of a sudden we were fast. We found a combination that made us fast. They came down and said we were over on fuel. We didn't change the motor. We didn't do anything to that. So, we said, "Well, OK." And they gave us another regulator. We put it in the boat, we were way over on fuel. So, they said, "You gotta turn your fuel down." So, we turned our fuel down. Dave made some more changes. Guess what? We went faster again. We went as fast as the top

boat. They came back down, said, "We got a new regulator for you, something's wrong with that one."

Oh!

I said, "We didn't change anything when we were legal again." And, uh, gave us a new one. Guess what? We were over on fuel again. They slowed us down one more time. This happened, I don't know how many times, but the K factor was wrong several times. The other times they just said we were over on fuel. I had gotten to the point where I just gave up. I didn't even want to race with them anymore.

Yeah.

And Villwock got disgusted as well, but he laughs things off. You can do that when you don't have all the money in the boat and stuff. When you have all the money in the boat and you're risking your driver's life and you and your sponsor have big hopes and all that and they get you like that, and you can't win a race because of it, it's disgusting. And I totally got disgusted with the sport, people in it, and that's when the boat went up for sale. Jane felt the same way.

I'm encouraged right now, quite frankly, with the new changes that have been made recently...uh, I heard about the possibility of some new money com-



The U-37 Miss Beacon Plumbing at the dock in Seattle in 2014.

Chris Denslow



Schumacher's boat made its final appearance named the *Miss Seattle* at the 2014 race in Doha, Qatar, and with Dave Villwock in the cockpit.

ing into the sport with national sponsorship.

Yeah.

If that happens that'll change the sport. If they have the right leadership that doesn't play games with owners and drivers. I think it'd be, once it's a fair sport again so that everybody's running equally on fuel, and in disqualifications like going too slow and you weren't, or like jumping the gun when you didn't. I think when it becomes more of a fair sport, I think people will start racing their boats again.

So, the sport has potential and in particular if they get money into it. I don't know who this sponsor is that supposedly is coming in with some money, don't know who that is, but I've heard it. And if that does happen, that'd be great. Our boat is still for sale.

Would you race it yourself or are you trying to sell it?

Still trying to sell it. That's all I can say at this point. I'm trying to sell it.

Well, we've talked a long time. We're pretty much out of questions unless there's something we haven't covered.

No, there's a lot of stuff in what we talked about, including the U-95 that some people might find hard to believe, but it's the truth.

Mm hmm.

I got off my chest what happened to us in the last few years of our racing. I

mentioned the fact that the boat that is still for sale right now is probably the best boat on the circuit. There's no doubt in my mind. There's actually no doubt in Dave Villwock's mind and he's driven a lot of boats.

Oh, yes.

And I think deep down J. Michael knows the potential that boat has. And I've always wanted to tell people that I thought Jamie Nilsen needs another shot at it.

If he wants to do it.

If he wants to, yeah. Who knows? Uh, the Grand Prix guys think they're gonna take over boat racing and it just ain't gonna happen.

No, it's not the same.

You can't beat the weight, the speed, and all that. And I hope, for the sake of the sport that they allow piston engines. There was a time when I had the opportunity with sponsorship and all to get a big piston motor out of Detroit that's been tried and proven quite well. And according to Villwock, it is built properly also. And the spare parts are available also.

That's important.

I heard, second or third hand, that somebody in the sport said, "That motor will never be allowed." But that's a shame.

Why do they call it Unlimited?

Yes. Well, you can say that, too, in their fuel regulation, but it's a shame that those people that say things like that can

control the sport enough to get away with it. First of all, there's already a piston engine running.

Yeah.

And secondly, why not let something new in, even if it's on a one- or two-year trial period. I'm sure that engine manufacturer would go along with it. The sport needs that. If anybody ever asks me, I'm gonna say absolutely, the sport needs piston engines, even if they compete with the turbines. Beat the turbines. Who cares? But get some noise back in the sport. Let the progression begin on piston motors that can compete. I think that's vital, not only to the sport but to those people building those engines.

Yeah.

There are uses for them. And that would be one of my big hopes that the sport does bring...let that happen. I might even be interested in helping build a new boat with piston engines.

Now, the boats that you owned, you never took a ride in them, did you? Never drove them?

Never did. I'm a little bit like Les Rosenberg. I don't feel comfortable in it. I've been in a cockpit. I've never even started a turbine. I don't want to let myself get, well, I'm too old now anyway...

Yeah.

...but I don't want to get interested in it. And, you know, even driving it. I always want to go as fast as I think I can safely, and the boat, if it's capable of doing it. Next year I'll be 77 and I'm not gonna go do it...because I'm afraid I might like it.

Yeah. [Laughter.]

As a driver you always think you can do it better than the next guy.

That's right.

If you don't think that, you shouldn't be doing it.

That's true. All right, well, thank you very much.

My pleasure. ❖

NOTICE ANYTHING NEW?

Did you notice something different on the cover of this month's issue of the Unlimited NewsJournal? Our nameplate has changed! We thought it was time to freshen-up our look so, thanks to the talent of Ron Tully, a highly respected graphic artist who also has a passion for hydroplane racing, we were able to accomplish the task. We hope you like the result. And, look for the changes that will come with the seasons. Lon Erickson did a quick interview of Tully so you could learn more about him and his work. Here's what he says:

UNJ: I think most people in the sport probably became aware of your talent through your artwork at the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum. Is that accurate or have you done other hydroplane work in other venues or custom work?

Tully: Like you said most people became aware of my artwork through the Seattle museum. They get a lot more foot traffic through the museum than I do in my studio. It's been a good partnership for both of us. Before that I advertised in Bob Senior's "Hydro Collector's Corner" and did quite well. Bob was responsible for telling the museum about me. I've done other custom work in various media, from acrylics, pencil, ink, and the versatility of digital painting. I enjoy doing custom commissions.

Tell us about your background and how it connects with the sport of unlimited hydroplane racing.

I grew up in Seattle during the '50s and '60s. I was introduced to this new sport when Seattle didn't have any professional teams. We had the Huskies and Rainiers then the unlimited hydroplanes came to town. A real thrill to see these boats racing across the water.

What was your first race or early memory of hydroplane racing? All-time favorite boat? Same for all-time favorite driver?

My early memory of hydroplane racing, other than watching the time-trials on TV, was the 1958 Gold Cup that *Hawaii Ka'i* won. Favorite boat was the

Ka'i with Jack Regas and later the *Miss Bardahl* and Ronny Musson.

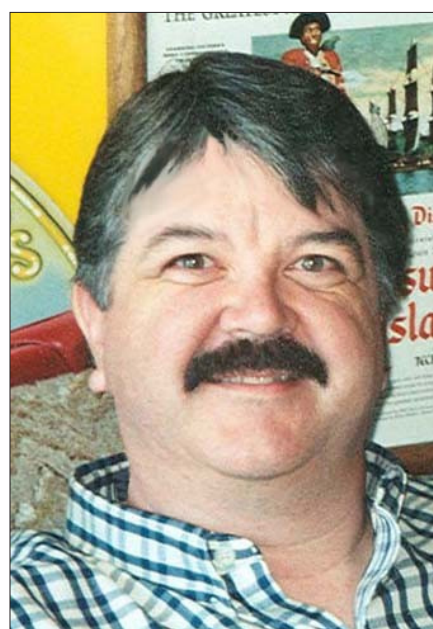
You told me before that your list of prints is getting near 700 boats, and you research them extensively. How and what do you do when you're starting a boat you have never done before?

First thing is Google Images for that boat, look through my programs and scrapbooks. Leslie Fields is always a good source. My hydro friends are more than willing to lend their expertise and knowledge of the boats. Believe me, they know more than I do. People like yourself [Lon] also help with your sharp photography when it comes to figuring out some of the sponsors on the tail and cowling.

When it comes to your hobby of creating your prints, what boat is the most popular? Of course, we have to ask, what boat is the hardest to do or the one you "hate" to do?

The most popular boat has been the *Miss Bardahl* (mainly the '65) and also the *Miss U.S.* fleet of boats. The hardest boat to do was the 1961 Boeing Aqua Jet, which the co-driver Martinn Mandles commissioned me to do. It contained over 1,050 separate pieces to draw. A real project but I learned all about the history of that boat and made a great friend along the way. I don't "hate" any request. I relish the challenge.

What is your best memory related to your experiences with hydroplane racing?

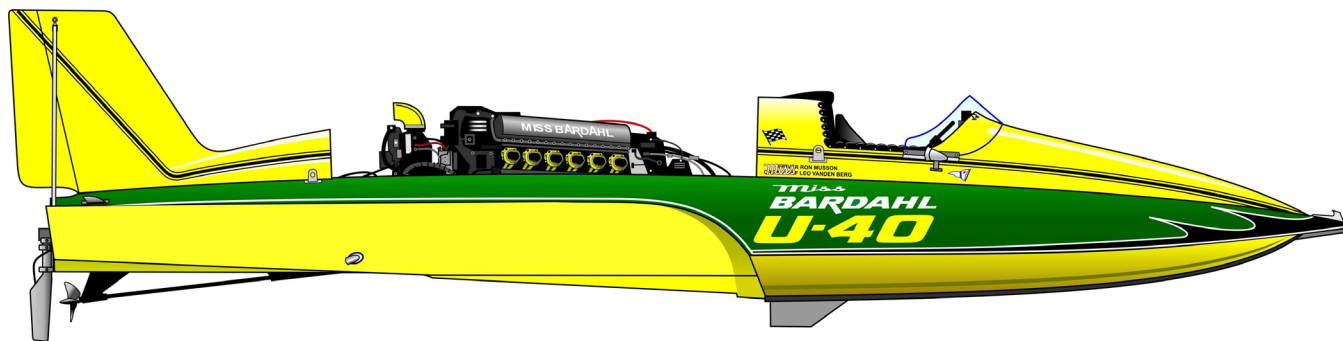


Ron Tully

My best memory of the hydros is meeting Jack Regas in the pits during the time trials of the 1958 Gold Cup. He handed me a *Hawaii Ka'i* button. Boy, was I the envy of the neighborhood. My older brother spent years trying to trade me for that button. I still have it.

You are definitely a hydro fan. If you were to try and explain to a novice or someone who had never watched a hydroplane run, what is the appeal to you or what do you see?

The appeal is mainly about three things: the speed, the noise, and the roostertails. The best part of any race or heat is the start, roostertails flying and boats jockeying for the inside lane and the sound of those engines.



Tully's illustration of the ill-fated cabover *Miss Bardahl*. A blueprint of the boat, hand-signed by Ron Jones, is in his extensive collection.

Changing gears, tell us a little about yourself. Where you are from, upbringing, school, home, family, etc. Whatever you want to share.

I grew up in West Seattle during the '50s and '60s near the Fauntleroy ferry dock. Went to high school at Sealth. Graduated from Central Washington State in 1970 with a BA in art. Took a road trip with my college roommate down the coast from Seattle to Redondo Beach, where my brother lived. He worked at a software defense company and they needed a graphic artist. I applied and got the job. Flew back to Seattle on Friday, was getting married on Saturday, and flew back to LA that night. After nine years in Torrance we still couldn't afford a home, so a friend referred me to a graphic illustrator job at ITT Defense Company at Vandenberg AFB. We've been in Santa Maria ever since. I retired in 2015 after 35 great years as their senior illustrator.

Outside of your interest and support of hydroplane racing, what are your other interests, hobbies, activities?

Spent many years camping at Yosemite, visiting family in LA and Seattle. My favorite hobby is autograph collecting. I have over 6,300 signatures. NFL, MLB, NBA, PGA, NCAA, Olympics, Indy/NASCAR, politics, entertainment, Academy Awards, coaches/owners, music industry, and of course the hydros. I have all the Gold Cup winners from Lombardo to present except for Musson and Chenoweth. Half the fun is the search. I go through a lot of stamps. Among my favorites are President Reagan and John Wayne.

What would be on your hydroplane "bucket list"? Attending a specific race? Or all the races? A ride in a hydro? Talk with anyone in the sport?

I'd like to see a race at Madison.

They seem to have a tight-knit community that really supports their race. Sandy Ross said it wasn't the cleanest of rivers. David Williams and I made a deal. He could sell my prints at the museum for a ride in a hydro. Don't know when I'll get back up there, just glad my artwork makes a small difference in helping out the museum. Chip Hanauer has been kind enough to sign some of my prints. It would be nice to have a good conversation with him. I had such a visit with Ron Jones, Sr., about five years ago. He had so many interesting stories to tell about his boats and people. Great story about Ole and the cabover *Bardahl* after the accident. I did some artwork for Ron. In return he sent me hand-signed blueprints of the cabover *Bardahl* and, of course, he had some good tales of ol' Bernie Little. Ron should've written a book.

Anything else you would like to share with the readers of the *Unlimited NewsJournal*?

I try to lend my talents to other groups that need a little help. The Coeur d'Alene boys and Idaho museum, Unlimiteds Detroit, the folks on Madison, and of course my good buddy Bob Senior who is always challenging me with his latest project. Other than drawing the hydros, I did one of the Blue Angels and my next project will be Seattle's iconic ferry the *Kalakala*. I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts and memories with all the UNJ readers. You guys do a great service to the hydro community keeping the sport alive. Thanks again. ❖



A glimpse into Ron Tully's "Man Cave."

What is the oldest boat to win a hydroplane race?

BY ANDY MUNTZ

In last month's issue of the *News-Journal*, we examined which hydroplanes in history have won the most races. In response, we received a note from Roger Lippman asking a follow-up question. "Nice work on the question of the winningest boat. Next question: What was the longest-lived hull to win a race?"

Great question, Roger. But, before I can answer that, I need to set the stage with a little philosophy.

In the story about boats winning the most races, we set ground rules that defined both what a race is (an event with at least three starters) and what a boat is. We established that if a boat was extensively rebuilt to the point that its center section was replaced, it would become a new boat.

But, let's consider a thought experiment about identity that is known as the Ship of Theseus paradox, a puzzle that has been debated by philosophers since ancient times. It goes something like this:

Theseus was a great hero who fought gallantly on faraway seas and, upon his return from those battles, was honored by having his ship preserved for all posterity. But, over time, the ship began to decay. A rotten plank was replaced by a new plank, and then another was replaced, and another, until many years later all of the ship's planks, its masts, its sails, and all of its parts had been replaced. So, the question is: Is the ship now preserved still the Ship of Theseus?

If you say no, it's not the same ship, then there naturally comes a follow-up question. At what point did it cease to be the Ship of Theseus? Was it when the

first plank was replaced? The second? The third? The one hundredth? The last?

With that paradox in mind, therefore, we can proceed to an answer to Roger's question, because as you might expect, when discussing hydroplanes that are old enough to be considered among the oldest to win a race, we're talking about boats that have likely had most if not all of their component parts replaced. So, in answering this question, we open ourselves to the argument that a hydroplane that won the race many years after its debut was no longer the same boat.

Nevertheless, here we go:

1) U-9 Delta Realtrac (Hull #9210), 2018

The clear champion in this game is a boat that made its debut as the U-2 *Cor's Dry* in 1992 and, more than 26 years later, won the 2018 HomeStreet Bank Bayfair event in San Diego with Andrew Tate at the helm. But, like the Ship of Theseus, the boat that won in 2018 has virtually no resemblance to the boat that appeared in 1992. So, was it the same boat? Ask Plutarch, Aristotle, or Heraclitus what they think.

2) U-80 Miss Bahia (Hull #6708), 1986

One of the things we find when talking about boats that have a long career is that hydroplanes built during the last 40 years last a great deal longer than boats built during the 1950s and '60s. That's because they're now built with material that can withstand the battering of competition much better than those old wooden boats. We have only two exceptions to that rule on this list, and our second-place boat is one of them.

When Ron Armstrong drove the *Miss Bahia* to victory in the 1986 Miller High Life Thunderboat Regatta in San Diego, he was at the controls of a hydroplane that was more than 19 years old. The boat first saw action in 1967 as the U-8 *Parco's O-Ring Miss* and over the years carried many names, most notably as *Miss Van's P-X*. One side note: The victory in 1986 was the only race the boat ever won.

3) U-12 Graham Trucking (Hull #0001), 2019

We talked about this boat last month, as only one hydroplane in history has won



Andrew Tate pilots the U-9 Delta Realtrac to victory at the 2018 HomeStreet Bank Bayfair event in San Diego. The hull was 26 years old at the time, the oldest boat to ever win an Unlimited race.

Chris Denslow



Jon Osterberg

The U-80 *Miss Bahia* and Ron Armstrong surprised everyone at the San Diego race in 1986.

more races than the craft that was christened as the *Miss Budweiser* in 2001. Known as the T-6, the boat won last year's final race with J. Michael Kelly at the controls. That victory came 18 years and 41 days after it made its debut.

4) U-13 *Miss Al Deeby Dodge* (Hull #8700), 2005

This is another boat that appeared in last month's list of winningest hydroplanes. The boat, then named the U-00 *Miller American*, entered its first race at the start of the 1987 season in Miami and won its last race, the 2005 Gold Cup in Detroit, with Terry Troxell driving and while carrying the name *Miss Al Deeby Dodge*. That victory came 18 years and 33 days after its debut.

5) U-6 *Oh Boy! Oberto* (Hull #8806), 2005

The boat entered its first race at the 1988 Columbia Cup as the U-6 *Miss Madison* and with Ron Snyder driving. It would win only three races during its career, the last coming at the 2005 Chevrolet Freedom Festival race in Evansville, Ind., while named *Oh Boy! Oberto* and with Steve David driving. The victory came more than 17 years after its debut.

6) U-10 *Miss DYC* (Hull #9010), 2004

The hydroplane saw its first action in Miami at the start of the 1990 season while named the U-10 *Winston Eagle* and was driven by Jim Kropfeld. It had a long career that ended in 2016 and that

included many names, such as *EMCOR*, *Grand Central Casino*, *Formula*, *Miss DiJulio*, and *Miss Spirit of Detroit*, but in that time won only one race, the 2004 Gold Cup. Nate Brown was the driver that day, its name was the *Miss DYC*, and the victory came 14 years and 45 days after its debut.

7) U-37 *Miss Beacon Plumbing* (Hull #9401), 2008

When this boat first appeared, the *Budweiser* team would bring two boats to each event and, after the qualifying was done, would then decide which one would compete in the race. As a result, while the T-4 *Miss Budweiser* made its debut and qualified for the 1994 Gold Cup, it actually didn't start a race until midway through the following season. For this exercise, however, we'll count its career as starting when it first appeared and qualified. Its last victory, meanwhile, came at the 2008 Thunder on

the Ohio race in Evansville, Ind., while named *Miss Beacon Plumbing* and with Jean Theoret driving. The win came 14 years and 25 days after its debut.

8) U-6 *Miss Madison* (Hull #6079), 1971

This is the other wooden boat on the list. Three weeks after the *Miss Madison* and Jim McCormick had their stunning victory in the 1971 Gold Cup at Madison, Ind., an event that inspired the movie *Madison*, the pair won again at the Atomic Cup in the Tri-Cities, Wash. That victory came 11 years and 30 days after the boat debuted as the U-79² *Nitrogen Too* in 1960.

9) U-1 *Miss HomeStreet* (Hull #0706), 2018

Another from last month's list of winningest hulls and, like Hull #0001 above, another hydroplane that is still active. The boat first appeared at the 2007 Thunder on the Ohio race in Evansville while named U-6 *Oh Boy! Oberto* and with Steve David in the cockpit. Its most recent victory came 11 years and 8 days later at the 2018 Governor's Cup in Madison with Jimmy Shane driving.

10) U-2 *Miss T-Plus* (Hull #8200), 1993

This is the boat that replaced Bill Muncy's *Blue Blaster* after his death in 1981 and that has since been restored and is part of the fleet operated by the Hy-



Chris Denslow

When J. Michael Kelly won last season's San Diego race aboard the U-12 *Graham Trucking*, his boat was the third oldest to ever win an Unlimited race.

droplane and Raceboat Museum in Kent, Wash. It made its debut at the 1982 Champion Spark Plug Regatta in Miami as the U-00 *Atlas Van Lines* and with Chip Hanauer driving. After a career that included two national titles, 12 race victories (including two Gold Cups), and names such as *The Squire Shop* and *Oh Boy! Oberto*, its final race victory came at the 1993 Texas Hydrofest in Lewisville, Texas, with Steve Da-

vid at the controls. That win came seven days short of the 11th anniversary of its debut.

11) U-1 *Spirit of Qatar* (Hull #0116), 2012

Because the margin is so tight between the 10th and 11th on our list, I'll also mention the latter. As we learned last month, this boat stands as the winningest hydroplane in history. It made its

debut as the U-16 *E-Lam Plus* at the 2001 Budweiser Columbia Cup in the Tri-Cities, well into that year's campaign. The last of its 27 race victories came at the 2012 Gold Cup in Detroit, just 14 days short of its 11th anniversary. Dave Villwock was in the cockpit on that day. ♦

We love to hear from our readers

[Editor's Note: The following letter is offered here exactly as it was received and includes no edits.]

There are two pet peeves that I have never tolerated, as a long-time fan, when it comes to Unlimited(which it has not been that way, unlimited, for decades. Why not rebrand it as "The Gold Cup Class of Boat Racing"?). Hydroplane Racing:fictional folklore, misinformed statements, inaccuracies, and mistake-ridden publications(for example, some of Doug Ford's books, and Dave Johnson's single volume) by so-called "historians" of the sport. The only person that I would trust at all in this day-in-age, is a member of your own staff, Craig Fjarlie. Other than him, I don't have any use for. There are plenty of resources available, so there should NEVER be any mistakes. Just take your time, double/triple check your information and statements. Don't embarrass yourself! The late-CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite was once known "as the most trusted man in America". Craig is the same when it comes to documenting the sport of boat racing. A person we can trust that his work is correct.

Now, on the first subject. Folklore: 1)once, and for all, the second Miss Thriftway DID NOT SINK a Coast Guard cutter during the running of the 1958 Gold Cup race in Seattle. It was a utility-type craft, not a cutter! 2)the Pay'N Pak and the Miss Budweiser DID NOT run side-by-side, all day long, during the 1973 "Race in the Rain" at Seattle. Only in the opening stanza did that occur. The Beer Wagon was several seconds in front, after the third lap, when it flamed-out in the second match-up. In the finale, it was the Pak well ahead, most of the way, until the final front straightaway when Dean Chenoweth just about caught Mickey Remund. Please, check out that race on UTUBE to refresh your memory!

Next up:misinformed statements. When I saw that the lead story, in the March issue of the Unlimited News Journal, was going to be a rundown on the winningest hulls in unlimited history, I thought, great!, something to read while I'm having breakfast. I guess, as the author brought up, two of Guy Lombardo's victories were in events, in 1949 and 1953, that should not be included in his race victory totals because a current passage in the rule book(which is about as laughable as the opening monologue on Saturday Night Live) that specifies you have to have three starters for a race to be called official. My question is..... why three boats? Why not four? Why not five? Why not a full heat of six? Who thought that one up, and why? The oldest media guide that I have is from the 1975 season. On the inside front cover, listed for "Statistics/ Historian", is the name, Fred Farley. I believe that Phil Cole(at that time, the Executive Secretary of the Unlimited Racing Commission) gave Fred

the title of Official Unlimited Historian in mid-1974. So the contents of that publication would have had Fred's "stamp of approval", so to speak. Every item in it would be "official", right? If the "official historian" says it is true, then it is correct? According to that media guide, those races won by Mr. Lombardo, in 1949 and 1953, ARE INCLUDED, among others, as races won! That makes those races OFFICIAL. There wasn't any "foot-notes" to be seen, anywhere, dealing with the three starters rule. So, what happened? DO NOT cheat those who won races when rules were, not doubt, different way back then. You CANNOT go back and erase, from the record books, results from years ago because people(one person?) have/has the right to do so.....that's horse dump!

Anyway, we had a pretty good story going on there until we got down to fourth place on the hull list. A tie, involving the "Blue Blaster". I just about gagged, on my third spoon full of Cap'N Crunch cold cereal, when I read ".....one of the most dominate boats of the late 1970s". ".....ONE OF THE MOST DOMINATE BOATS....."! Are you kidding me? My good God man, it was THE MOST DOMINATE BOAT, at least in the modern-era(beginning in 1946). PERIOD!

Mr. Muntz, take a seat. School is in session!

Our class begins with a nod of the head by Pay'N Pak owner Dave Heerensperger to proceed with the next step in hull advancement. Name me another owner, past or present, we could count on to do that, except Mr. Heerensperger? Bill "Stormy" Knight(Seattle P-I boating, and Seattle Totems hockey writer) broke that story to the public on October 17, 1974. With it's new owner/driver Bill Muncey now paying the bills, the light-blue Atlas Van Lines was off to the opening race of the 1977 racing season at Miami.

With paint still drying, that boat came home in front in it's first three races(a side-note.....the third victory was in The Motor City, were it would also win the next two years. Detroit was the only major race site that it's original owner never won at. Timing is everything!). The last first-year hull to string together that many race wins, right out of the shop, was the 1956 Shanty I in it's short-lived career. With three more first place trophies along the way, it pulled even with the last boat to win six races in it's initial campaign, the 1967 Miss Bardahl. Plus, it was the first hull to win the Gold Cup three consecutive times in it's first three seasons.

For the year, it's win/loss record was 6 up and 3 down.

Bigger and better things were yet to come in the following two years.

During it's second season, 6 more checkered flags in 7 races. The one race it lost was in the Tri-Cities while briefly leading in the final heat.

It's motor decided to transform itself into a hand grenade, without the pin attached, a quarter lap in. With that single loss, that hull matched the 1962 Miss Century 21, and the 1972 Atlas Van Lines with one defeat in a single year. The jockey on all three of those mounts?.....one Bill Muncey.

For the record, 16 races were on the schedule in those first two campaigns. 12 victories for the Blue Blaster, while the Miss Budweiser won the other four using two different drivers.

To be totally objective, there really wasn't that much serious competition in 1977-78, but, as a counter-balance, it did set numerous course, distance, and world records along the way. In other words, it just didn't putt-putt around race courses at slower speeds racking up easy victories. It was winning races at a record pace.

Times were changing as the curtain was coming down on the third and final season of the Jim Lucero-era with the Norm Berg built hull. Three new desperado's (The Squire Shop, Miss Circus Circus, and the Griffon-powered Miss Budweiser) came to town looking for a fight with the fastest gun in the country, but the man wearing a cowboy hat and dressed in white stared down all new-comers, during that final year of the decade, to keep law and order intact. With the chambers of his sidearm kept full at all times to fend off rivals at certain weekends, Bill Muncey carved seven more notches into his steering wheel that year, to bring the total number of kills to nine straight over two years, until being outdrawn and shot, only in the trigger finger, by a much younger gunslinger in an area of the Western Frontier, the State of Utah. From that showdown, with Chip Hanauer, on the main street in Ogden, and another slow draw against Steve Reynolds in the far-southwestern town of San Diego, "the old man" would have to concede, over the next two years, that a new/old outlaw had returned to town, with a much more lethal weapon than his smaller firearm. That man would be short on stature, quiet, an unassuming Southern bootlegger who grew-up in the heartland of America, Dean Chenoweth.

Before losses in the final two events on the 1979 race schedule, ".....ONE of the most dominate boats....." was victorious in 13 of 14 events during one stretch over a two season span. Chew on that one for a moment, or two.....1 loss in 14 races!!!! Total domination by one hull! According to you, Mr. Muntz, I guess that just wasn't good enough. I gather, according to you, it had to win ALL RACES to fit into your summary of ".....ONE of the most dominate....." am I right?

Final tally under the supervision of it's Hall of Fame crew chief? 19 wins against only 6 losses.

NO HULL HAD EVER been that dominate before that 1977 season, or since, in that short period of time. Overall career record stood at 24 race wins with 19 loses in 5 seasons of hard racing. Three straight Gold Cup victories, one World Championship, a President's Cup win, and back-to-back national titles. Took home the first place trophy four consecutive years at the same race site (1977-80 Seattle, Lake Washington) with the same driver in the cockpit. Speed records abound. A true testament for both chief wrench twisters on that hull, Jim Lucero and Dave Seefeldt, and, of course, their fellow crew members..

Sure, other boats have won more races since the Blaster's final season of 1981, but they also competed in more seasons to surpass that win total of 24. Number one on the list has only three more victories while racing longer than the five seasons the Atlas competed in.

In-a-way, that is NO record, in my way of thinking, if it took A LOT more seasons to surpass that mark. One person's opinion!

Your statement ".....one of the....." is way off base. It is a slap in the face to every person involved with that boat. That would deprive anyone associated with that hull the enjoyment (if you want to call it that) of, years/generations later, telling their children, grandchildren, and so on, of being a member of the MOST dominate/winningest hull in the history of the sport, especially over that 3-year time period.

By the time it's racing career was over in October of 1981, that boat scored points in every race THAT WAS SCHEDULED in it's five-year career. It didn't miss a beat. It didn't miss a race. Other big piston winners of the past never achieved that standard. Not the 1959 Miss Thrift-

way, the 1962 Miss Badahl, or the 1973 Pay'N Pak. Some missed races all-together (Thriftway/Bardahl), while all three went scoreless at one time or another. But, for a single hull to tally points for a racing team, at every stop on the schedule, over a long period of time, at record-breaking speeds, with the same sponsor/name/owner, and driver, well, that's unheard of, except, of course.....you know who!

And just think, all four of those hulls are still seen today. Lucky for us!

On down the list to the tie for eighth place involving the 1973 "Winged Wonder" Pay'N Pak. You stated ".....was a winner pretty much right out of the box." PRETTY MUCH RIGHT OUT OF THE BOX!!!! Mr. Muntz, Mickey Remund swept all three heats to win it's first race in competition, after qualifying at a mind-boggling 119 mph on Friday morning (up from the previous Miami course record set just a year earlier at 112), plus a national title thrown in for good measure. Even the day before, Mickey ran a lap of 118 mph. The last time a new hull won it's first race in battle, and a national title in the same year was the 1967 Miss Bardahl.

Mr. Muntz, class is over. You are dismissed!! I truly hope that you have learned something today. History, and.....misinformed statements can come back to bite you!

Words, of course, can make, or brake a story that the author(s) is/are trying to convey. In this case, it was the latter. The words that I am referring to are: one of/pretty much. The three adjectives, and a lone preposition should never have been used in the 1977 Atlas Van Lines and the 1973 Pay'N Pak hull summaries.

And just think, at one time, we had a pretty good story going on there.

In conclusion, a sincere and heartfelt THANK YOU TO ALL volunteers at the Kent, Washington-based Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum (that David Williams-run gem is THE ONLY GOOD THING that, shall I say it?, "unlimited" boat racing has going for it right now!) who, with their gentle and caring hands, brought life back into this treasured artifact from it's tragic demise. To some of us (I was lucky enough to be at it's "coming out party" on a damp, chilly afternoon on that March 15 day in 1977) it would rekindle memories from so long ago, and spawn fresh memories for fans who never saw it run during it's prime (1977-81). Once again, THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH. WELL DONE, by all concerned!!!!

Michael Groves, "the Lilac City" (Spokane)

To the Unlimited Unanimous Editorial Board: In past issues, of your monthly publication, you have printed "positive" feed-backs to stories that have appeared. Let's see if you will be fair and include this "negative" one. In other words, constructive criticism. Several persons have already read this. It was sent to hydroplane writers of years gone by, Bill "Stormy" Knight and Craig Smith, plus a copy was emailed to the Hydroplane Museum (David Williams), so we will see if you have the "stomach" to let all your readers "digest" it all, IN FULL!

Regards, Michael

[One more editor's note: The late Fred Farley was a good friend to those of us at the Unlimited NewsJournal and was a very careful record keeper. His statistics still stand as the best ever compiled for this sport. In fact, as we will explain in more detail in an upcoming issue, we have recently taken it upon ourselves to continue his work and to serve as a resource for the sport's statistical data. In Farley's 1980 Media Guide, he corrects the totals that were in previous versions of that publication and no longer includes some driver race wins in his tally. Guy Lombardo's total, for example, went from 15 in the 1979 Media Guide to only two in the 1980 publication. Bill Cantrell's total drops from 20 to 13, Danny Foster's drops from 20 to 15, Chuck Thompson's drops from 16 to 15, and Dan Arena's total drops from six to three, among others. Farley explains in a footnote, which says, "Victory total does not include secondary or Free-for-All wins, which are not included in modern records."]

HYDROFILE

Race Team News by Lon Erickson



Go3 Racing

Ed Cooper's Evansville, Ind., shop has been relatively quiet during the winter months, but there is always work to be done on the Allison powerplants in the engine shop. The hull awaits some of the crew to arrive this spring to complete repairs of damage suffered in Tri-Cities last summer and to do routine maintenance heading into the 2020 season.



Go3 Racing

U-12 Graham Trucking Racing

Work continues in the Graham Trucking shop in Milton, Wash., with the U-12 hull having been stripped down and extensively gone through. The hull has recently been upside down to make repairs to its bottom. The U-12 and U-98 crews have been building up their inventory of back-up parts and making upgrades to the shop for the two-boat race team.



Rob Graham

Bucket List Racing

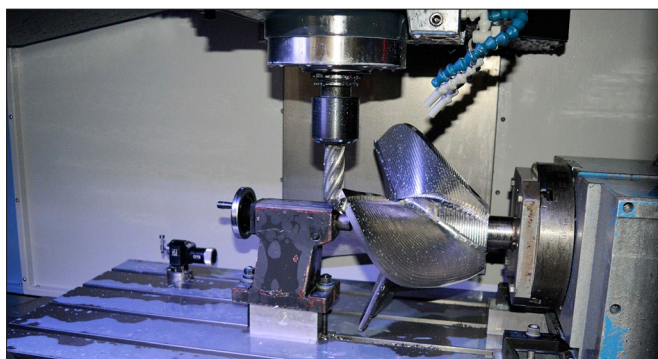
The Bucket List shop was a busy place the last month, with the acquisition of the U-99.9 hull and getting the 440 hardware and hull repairs done. The major focus is now on making necessary changes to the 99.9 hull and engine bay, and modifying the running gear, such as engine-gearbox mounts. The team is manufacturing props (bottom photo) and is in the process of formulating 2020 season plans for both hulls. With the recent announcement from Dustin Echols that he's stepping aside from his driving duties, the next question for the BLR team is: Who will be in the cockpit of the 440 and the 99.9?



Michael Lemler



Michael Lemler



Michael Lemler

MY \$0.02 WORTH

Editorial Comment by Andy Muntz



There must be a special place in heaven for youth sports officials. They earn that esteem when they take the abuse of parents who yell at them for calling their child out on a third strike—a pitch that was obviously outside—and therefore cause the ruin of an 8-year-old's happiness, not to mention his chance for a D-1 scholarship and a major league contract.

There also ought to be a particular fluffy cloud in paradise for H1 officials, a group of volunteers that also is regularly blamed for all things that go wrong. Yet, amazingly, despite those complaints, some mysterious force still compels them to spend hours of their own valuable time to make sure that the sport's fans have something fun to watch and enjoy.

An incident last summer brought this topic to a head. We've talked about it many times, that while officials were determining the winner of the Seattle race, the trophy was being presented to

a driver who ultimately would be penalized. The optics that resulted from that gaffe were terrible; nobody could say otherwise. But there are two sides to this story, one of which that has been largely overlooked.

The forgotten story is the one that says the driver deserved the penalty, that the decision that went wrong was the one by race organizers who insisted that the awards be presented before a winner had been determined.

One can't help but wonder what was going through the head of the guy who accepted the trophy, knowing full well that he had come to a full stop before the start and had surely violated the minimum-speed rule. While hoisting that trophy over his head, was he saying to himself, "It looks like I got away with this one"?

H1 officials have since made a change in procedures that should make such an embarrassment less likely. A monitor will be placed on the boats to

record the speeds.

Drivers who once thought they could get away with a violation, hoping the officials were watching someone else, will now know that their boat comes equipped with an electronic tattletale.

Now, with the COVID-19 pandemic underway, H1 officials will be forced in the weeks and months ahead to make some important decisions regarding the 2020 season. They face a dilemma like that confronted by the leaders of Major League Baseball, the NBA, the NHL, March Madness, the Kentucky Derby, the Summer Olympics, and many other organizations.

Whatever happens, it won't be an easy decision to make. What's more, those unpaid volunteers also will clearly not deserve the abuse that some fans will heap upon them no matter what they decide. Instead, perhaps now more than ever, our H1 Unlimited officials will need our support. ❖

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Letters are welcome, but may be edited for clarity and space.

PLEASE JOIN US AT THE NEXT MEETING OF UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS.

The April meeting has been canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Check our website for more information.