



2012 Madison Regatta

Villwock First Again

by Craig Fjarlie

Ron Harsin photos



The Ellstrom crew with the Madison trophies. Dave Villwock wins number 67 in the National Champion U-1 Qatar

Dave Villwock made the most of a flying start to push *Qatar* to first place in the 2012 Lucas Oil Indiana Governor's Cup. Villwock timed the start perfectly and led the field into the first turn. By the time he was at the exit buoy the race was his. Steve David finished second in the hometown *Oh Boy! Oberto*.

Testing and Qualifying

The regatta was held under a blazing sun that pushed temperatures well past the 100 degree mark both Friday and Saturday. There was a short testing session Friday morning. *RedDot*, driven by Kip Brown, blew an engine.

Qualifying was supposed to open at 3:00, but finally began at 3:35. Boats ran in reverse order of 2011 season standings. First out was the U-13 *Tubby's* (#8700), with Cal Phipps driving. His best lap was 132.564 mph. The 88 *Degree Men* (#9501) passed so U-9 *Bello's Pizza* (#9210) was next. Driver Jon Zimmerman was unable to start. *Bello's* was towed in, then *Degree Men* ran. Matt Gregory watched nervously from the judge's stand. Driver Scott Liddycoat turned a lap of 142.520. As *Degree Men* returned to the pits, word came over the radio that *Tubby's* had a fuel flow violation.

The U-22 *Matrix System* and 37 *Beacon Plumbing* (#1188) both passed, so U-11 *Peters & May* took to the course. J.W. Myers turned a fast lap of 142.616. Next up was U-100 *Xtreme Precision Products*. Greg Hopp's second lap was his best at 136.410.

Jimmy Shane put the U-5 *Graham Trucking* (#0001) through three quick laps, the best was his third at 145.636.

Steve David and the U-6 *Oh Boy! Oberto* came out next and ran a lap of 143.417. The nose lifted at the start of the lap. The second was better at 145.088 and the third was 146.564. The nose lifted again as David completed the third lap.

Dave Villwock took to the course with the U-1 *Qatar*. His laps were rock solid. The first was 146.845, then 147.031, and finally 146.192.

The U-57 *Formula* went in the water next; Mark Evans only ran two laps in the mid-90s.

Graham Trucking took the course and Shane turned a best lap of 146.377. He was followed by *Matrix System*. Mike Webster's first lap was his best at 137.717. *Degree Men* made another run, Liddycoat turned 143.061. *Red Dot* followed and Brown's best lap was 140.660.

Oh Boy! Oberto was back in the river and everyone knew David would be shooting to slip past Villwock's best mark. The first lap was 147.221, the second 146.797. The partisan crowd watched anxiously as David ran his third lap. A cheer erupted when the speed was announced, 148.543.

A few minutes later Villwock was back on the course. His first lap was 145.639. The second was 146.192. He seemed to be pushing *Qatar* as hard as he could. One had to wonder, maybe the boat just didn't have the ability to surpass *Oberto's* speed? Villwock gave it everything he had. His third lap was an eye-blink faster than *Oberto*, 148.837. The crowd groaned.

Beacon Plumbing left the pits and J. Michael Kelly started his qualifying run. In the



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first turn the engine hood blew off. Kelly brought the boat in. Course workers found the hood and hauled it back. The last boat on the water was *Bello's Pizza*. Zimmerman's best lap was 139.047.

Friday afternoon former referee Don Melillo was overcome by the heat and was taken to King's Daughter's Hospital. His family later arrived and took him home. Melillo had been slated to run the corral. In his absence, Pastor Jim Riley agreed to run the corral.

The drivers' meeting was Saturday morning. Head referee Mike Noonan went over the course rules. Between the five minute gun and the one minute gun for each heat, boats would have to pass the start-finish line at speed. Any driver who failed to do so would have to start in the outside lane.

The score-up buoy was the exit buoy to turn 1. The commitment buoy for lane choice would be the entrance buoy to turn 2.

The draw was held. Heat 1A would feature *Red Dot*, *Bello's Pizza*, *Peters & May*, and *Tubby's*. Heat 1B would have *Degree Men*, *Graham Trucking*, and *Oh Boy! Oberto*. Heat 1C would consist of *Qatar*, *Xtreme Precision Products*, and *Matrix System*. An open test session was scheduled for 11:00 to 12:00. The two unqualified boats, *Beacon Plumbing* and *Formula* would have a chance to qualify during that period. The first to qualify would go in 1B, the second in 1C. If a boat was unable to reach the minimum qualifying speed, the owner could take a Commissioner's Option.

During the test session, *Formula* made a lap of 130.427, giving it a place in 1B. *Beacon Plumbing* was unable to start. The boat floated down the river toward the first turn and was towed in. Schumacher Racing took a Commissioner's Option. The biggest item of interest was the long saltwater cowling on *Oberto*, a change to try to improve the boat's balance.

Heat One

Tubby's stayed on the trailer for heat 1A. *Peters & May* took the inside with *Red Dot* in lane 2 and *Bello's* in lane 3. *Peters & May* led into the first turn with *Red Dot* a half-length back. *Bello's* was a half-roostertail behind and losing ground.

Peters & May and *Red Dot* had a side-by-side duel for the entire heat. *Peters & May* was slightly ahead at the end of both laps 1 and 2. In the final turn, *Peters & May* bobbled a bit allowing *Red Dot* to do a sling-shot on the outside and win the drag race to the finish line by a length-and-a-half. *Bello's* was a roostertail behind the leaders.

Just before the five minute gun for 1B sounded, someone announced on the radio that the temperature had reached 103 degrees. *Graham Trucking* took lane 1, *Oberto* settled into lane 2, *Degree Men* went into lane 3, and *Formula* was left on the outside. *Graham Trucking* led into the first turn but was overtaken on the backstretch by *Oberto*. The field strung out after that. *Oberto* won by half a buoy length. *Degree Men* was two buoy lengths behind *Graham Trucking*. *Formula* hit the apex buoy in turn 2 on its third lap and had to run an extra lap.

Beacon Plumbing went in the water for 1C but was unable to start. *Matrix* ran a couple warm-up laps, then went dead in the water just



past the entrance buoy to turn 1, two minutes before the start. That left *Xtreme Precision Products* to challenge *Qatar*. *Xtreme Precision* took lane 1, *Qatar* was in lane 2. *Qatar* led into the first turn. *Xtreme Precision* pulled even at the apex but after that it was all *Qatar*. Villwock was two buoy lengths ahead at the finish. Webster was overheated in the cockpit of *Matrix* and course personnel rushed water to him as soon as the heat ended.



A test session was scheduled after 1C. *Tubby's* was unable to start. *Oberto* ran a few quick laps. A short time later, Billy Schumacher walked up to the shade of the lower level of the judges' stand. He was pale and having problems with the heat. Medical personnel attended to him. At the other end of the pits, *Qatar* crew chief Dan Walters was having similar problems. Both Schumacher and Walters spent the night at King's Daughters' Hospital. *Beacon Plumbing* ran a late test lap, turning a speed of 141.437. Again, the engine hood blew off.

As trucks were being closed up for the evening, *Red Dot* crewmember Justin Weymouth was overcome by the heat and needed medical attention. He, too, was transported to King's Daughters' Hospital.

Sunday morning Scott Patton, who runs the H1 tech truck, was overcome by the heat and was taken to King's Daughters' Hospital. He arrived shortly before Schumacher and Walters were discharged. In Patton's absence, Mike Noonan oversaw tech truck duties.

Heat Two

The draw put *Degree Men*, *Peters & May*, *Tubby's*, and *Xtreme Precision* in 2A; *Graham Trucking*, *Beacon Plumbing*, *Bello's*, and *Red Dot* in 2B, and *Oberto*, *Qatar*, *Matrix*, and *Formula* in 2C.

Starting 2A, both *Peters & May* and *Xtreme Precision* passed the score-up buoy too soon and had to run an extra lap. *Degree Men* led into turn 1 and slowly pulled away. *Peters & May*, on the inside, stayed a roostertail ahead of *Xtreme Precision*. *Tubby's* never went in the water and after the heat withdrew for the day.



Graham Trucking passed the score-up buoy too soon before the start of heat 2B and had to run an extra lap. *Graham* physically led but actually was a lap down. *Beacon Plumbing* stayed close to *Graham* for a lap, then Kelly played it safe, backed off, and took an easy win. *Red Dot* started last but passed *Bello's* in the final turn to take second.

Heat 2C had the battle everyone was waiting to see. *Oberto* took the inside with *Qatar* in lane 2. *Oberto* led into turn 1, *Qatar* was a length back. *Matrix* was next, and *Formula* was several lengths back. *Oberto* and *Qatar* ran



deck-to-deck for two laps with *Oberto* holding a slim lead at the end of the first and second laps. In turn 1 of lap 3, *Qatar* lifted and Villwock had to back off. *Oberto* then extended its lead and took the heat win. *Matrix* was third and *Formula* was a distant fourth.

Heat Three

The draw put *Red Dot*, *Bello's*, *Oberto*, and *Graham* in 3A; *Xtreme Precision*, *Beacon*, *Formula*, and *Qatar* in 3B, and *Peters & May*, *Degree Men*, and *Matrix System* in 3C. The local weather service reported a storm system was approaching from the west and probably would arrive around 4:00.

Red Dot took lane 1 and crossed the starting line first in 3A. *Oberto*, in lane 2, surged ahead in turn 1. *Graham* slowed in turn 1 and was way behind when Shane resumed full speed. *Oberto* ran just fast enough to win, with *Red Dot* second, *Bello's* third, and *Graham* a distant fourth.

Beacon Plumbing came out of the pits but went dead in the water just past the exit buoy of turn 1, as the one minute gun for heat 3B sounded. *Qatar* took lane 2 and led into the first turn. *Xtreme Precision*, on the inside, tried to challenge but to no avail. *Formula* trailed throughout.

Peters & May and *Degree Men* went to the first turn of heat 3C together. *Matrix* was two buoy lengths back of the leaders at the finish.

Final

There was no Provisional heat. The final would have *Oh Boy!* *Oberto*, *Qatar*, *Degree Men* and *Red Dot* on the front line, with *Peters & May* the trailer. *Xtreme Precision Products* was the alternate.

As the time for the final drew closer, wind picked up and dark clouds appeared to the west of town. Within a few minutes there were sporadic rain drops and the temperature fell noticeably.

The wind, from the west, kicked up white caps. Officials, driver Scott Liddycoat, and owner Nate Brown toured the course in the H1 rescue boat. They returned saying the backstretch was too rough for a safe race, and the final was put on hold. A lightning strike flashed to the west.



At about 4:30, the same group made another tour of the course. Conditions were better but the backstretch was still very rough. Referee Mike Noonan instructed crews to put slings on their boats but not to go in the water.

The wind began to calm, the river settled, and a 5:10 start time for the final heat was announced. Boats went in the water.

Oberto took lane 1, *Qatar* was in lane 2, then *Degree Men*, with *Red Dot* outside. *Peters & May* had to start five seconds behind the front row.

As the boats came down the front straightaway *Qatar* had two lengths on the rest of the field. Dave Villwock had made a perfect start. *Oberto* almost pulled even in the first turn, but that's a close as Steve David could get. Villwock led up the backstretch and from that point it was a matter of counting the laps. *Peters & May* passed an outside course marker in turn 2 of lap 1, receiving a one lap penalty for the infraction. *Red Dot* came unhooked in the first turn of lap 2 and slid into *Degree Men*'s roostertail. That put the fire out and *Red Dot* went dead in the water. Brown was able to restart promptly. *Oberto* moved out to lane 3 as David tried to find smoother water, but it made no difference. *Qatar* continued to extend its lead to the finish. *Degree Men* was third, *Red Dot* fourth, and *Peters & May* fifth.

"He (Villwock) had momentum all the way from the start line to the first turn," explained Steve David. "I think that made all the difference."

"We knew we needed to adjust," Villwock said. "We changed the prop and gearbox for the conditions. The brain trust got into the truck and came up with the right answer."

The high heat and humidity took a toll on the 2012 Madison Regatta. Attendance was down at the Regatta, the Friday parade, and Saturday evening fireworks as people stayed in air conditioned homes to avoid the sweltering temperatures. Those who made it to the river saw several heats of good racing. The best news is that, unlike 2011, there were no mishaps and all boats left town in one piece. And that bodes well for 2013.





Above; Our Madison race reporter Craig Fjarlie, all by himself. Below, Allen Stiles our statistic man. Not alone! Lucky fella.



STAT BOX

INDIANA GOVERNOR'S CUP

Madison, Indiana, July 7-8, 2012

2-mile course on the Ohio River

QUALIFICATION (1) U-1 *Qatar*, Dave Villwock, 148.837, 100 points; (2) U-6 *Oh Boy! Oberto*, Steve David, 148.548, 80; (3) U-5 *Graham Trucking*, Jimmy Shane, 146.377, 70; (4) U-88 *Degree Men*, Scott Liddycoat, 143.372, 60; (5) U-11 *Peters & May*, JW Myers, 142.616, 50; (6) U-17 *Red Dot*, Kip Brown, 140.660, 40; (7) U-9 *Bello's Pizza*, Jon Zimmerman, 139.047, 30; (8) U-22 *Matrix System*, Mike Webster, 137.717, 30; (9) U-100 *Xtreme Performance Products*, Greg Hopp, 136.410, 30; (10) U-57 *Formula*, N. Mark Evans, 130.427, 0 (achieved speed outside qualifying period); (11) U-13 *Tubby's*, Cal Phipps, 130.000 (fuel flow violation), 0; (12) U-37 *Miss Beacon Plumbing*, J. Michael Kelly, Chairman's Option (DNQ — fuel flow), 0.

HEAT 1A (1) *Red Dot* 136.385, 400 points, 440 cumulative points; (2) *Peters & May* 135.755, 300, 350; (3) *Bello's Pizza* 130.022, 225, 255; *Tubby's* DNS — unable to start, 0, 0. Fast lap (3) *Red Dot* 138.807. **HEAT 1B** (1) *Oh Boy! Oberto* 136.884, 400, 480; (2) *Graham Trucking* 133.965, 300, 370; (3) *Degree Men* 126.953, 225, 285; (4) *Formula* 86.345 (penalized one lap for dislodging buoy apex of turn two, lap two), 169, 169. Fast lap (2) *Oh Boy! Oberto* 140.402. **HEAT 1C** (1) *Qatar* 137.607, 400, 500; (2) *Xtreme Precision Products* 134.383, 300, 330; *Matrix System* DNS — fuel flow, 0, 30; *Beacon Plumbing* DNS — fuel flow, 0, 0. Fast lap (2) *Qatar* 139.846.

HEAT 2A (1) *Degree Men* 133.178, 400, 685; (2) *Peters & May* 97.792 (jumped one-minute score-up buoy), 300, 650; (3) *Xtreme Precision Products* 96.691 (jumped one-minute score-up buoy), 225, 555; *Tubby's* DNS — unable to start, 0, 0. Fast Lap (1) *Degree Men* 134.932. **HEAT 2B** (1) *Beacon Plumbing* 134.592, 400, 400; (2) *Red Dot* 128.250, 300, 740; (3) *Bello's Pizza* 127.669, 225, 480; (4) *Graham Trucking* 101.692 (jumped one-minute score-up buoy), 169, 539. Fast Lap (2) *Graham Trucking* 138.586. **HEAT 2C** (1) *Oh Boy! Oberto* 135.782, 400, 880; (2) *Qatar* 130.341, 300, 800; (3) *Matrix System* 122.335, 225, 255; (4) *Formula* 114.068, 169, 338. Fast Lap (1) *Oh Boy! Oberto* 139.635.

HEAT 3A (1) *Oh Boy! Oberto* 135.769, 400, 1280; (2) *Red Dot* 132.363, 300, 1040; (3) *Bello's Pizza* 127.504, 225, 705; (4) *Graham Trucking* 122.174, 169, 708. Fast lap (1) *Oh Boy! Oberto* 138.214.

HEAT 3B (1) *Qatar* 133.759, 400, 1200; (2) *Xtreme Precision Products* 127.704, 300, 855; (3) *Formula* 121.594, 225, 563; *Beacon Plumbing* DNS — fuel flow, 0, 400. Fast lap (1) *Qatar* 138.961 **HEAT 3C** (1) *Degree Men* 137.574, 400, 1085; (2) *Peters & May* 134.184, 300, 950; (3) *Matrix System* 128.962, 225, 480; *Tubby's* W/D — multiple problems, 0, 0.

FINAL (1) *Qatar* 136.105, 400, 1600; (2) *Oh Boy! Oberto* 132.132, 300, 1580; (3) *Degree Men* 127.780, 225, 1310; (4) *Red Dot* 105.785, 169, 1209; (5) *Peters & May* 93.099 (penalized one lap for driving outside outer course marker), 127, 1077. Fast lap (4) *Oh Boy! Oberto* 150.933.

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