



Madison Governor's Cup was worth the wait.

by Craig Fjarlie

The Madison Regatta was different this year. There were only four unlimiteds, no APBA points were awarded, and most of the racing was done by boats in the Grand Prix class. The final heat, however, made up for less-than-thrilling preliminary match races. Andrew Tate, driving *Delta Realtrac*, and Jimmy Shane, at the wheel of *Miss HomeStreet Bank*, put on a duel that reminded spectators what a great show unlimiteds can offer if the reins are loosened and horsepower is set free. When the checkered flag flew, Tate claimed the win.

A few GP boats were in the pits on Thursday evening. The unlimiteds all moved into position on Friday morning. First in was U-1 *Miss Homestreet*. It was followed by U-11 *Miss J & D's*. Next came U-27 Wiggins Racing. The boat, owned by Charley Wiggins, had no name on the hull. Last in was U-9 *Delta Realtrac*.



Kirk Duncan

The U-1 *Miss HomeStreet Bank* (left) and the U-9 *Delta Realtrac*.

GP boats featured a number of participants who had previously competed in the unlimited class. Jerry Hopp, Greg Hopp, Jamie Nilsen, Scott Pierce, and Dave Warren were all involved with GP rigs.

Buoys were in position by 12:30. The unlimiteds would run on a 2-mile course. Grand Prix boats used a 1-1/4-mile course. They shared the second turn, which was just downriver from the bridge. The first turn for the unlimiteds was

almost even with the smokestacks for the powerplant.

MISS HOMESTREET WAS the first boat on the water at 1:59 p.m. Shane ran three strong laps before he returned to the pits. He made a second run at 2:45. Several GP boats tested before *Realtrac* made a run just after 3:30. *J & D's* had no power, no fuel, and no water until late in the day and never left its trailer. U-27 also stayed in the pits.

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My \$0.02 Worth

Editorial Comment



Andy
Muntz

In my most recent comments, I talked about the decision of KIRO TV in Seattle to no longer broadcast the hydroplane races live to viewers throughout the Pacific Northwest. The reason, they said, is that the companies that purchase the advertising time on the broadcast (and pay the bills) are hoping to reach an audience of people between the ages of 25 and 54, but they've found that not enough people in that age group are watching the races.

The sport needs to pay attention to the lesson here, because that group of consumers is not only important to the companies that are considering the purchase of advertising time on TV, but also to those companies that might be interested in sponsoring a hydroplane. And, the sport simply can't survive without sponsors.

This coveted group of people falls into categories that marketing people call Generation X and the Millennial generation. For the sport of unlimited hydroplane racing to be successful and have a bright future, the people who make the decisions must have a clear under-

standing of who those people are and what they want.

The marketing folks define Generation X as those people who were born between the early 1960s and the late 1970s. In other words, they are now between the ages of about 40 and 55. When they were teens, they watched MTV and liked grunge music.

The number of Generation X people is relatively small compared with the big bulges in population they are sandwiched between. Much more numerous are the Baby Boomers, the children of those who lived through World War II, and the next big bulge in the population that resulted when the Baby Boomers started to have children. That group, the younger people in that segment of the population that advertisers want to reach, is known as Millennials.

They were typically born between the early 1980s and the late-1990s, therefore making them about 25 to 40 years old.

The Millennials grew up in a world of personal computers and video games. They are very famil-

iar with communications, media, and digital technologies and have little recollection of a time when the Internet didn't exist. In just a few years, the Millennials also are expected to make up half of the workforce in the United States.

There are a few things the sport should understand about those in Generation X and especially about Millennials. According to one recent study, more of them tend to watch sports online using streaming video on their phones or tablets. What's more, many of them have cut the cable and rely on getting their entertainment through streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime.

The way to attract Generation X people and Millennials to boat racing is through livestreaming and social media. How the events themselves are run also needs to be considered through the lens of what interests people in those age groups. Only then can the sport put itself in a position to have a successful future. ❖

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Letters may be edited for clarity and space.

Sponsoring an unlimited hydro makes sense to HomeStreet Bank.

Why does HomeStreet Bank sponsor an unlimited hydroplane? Our intrepid reporter Clint Newman caught up with Michael Brandt, HomeStreet's director of marketing, during this year's Madison Regatta to find out more about the company's involvement in the sport. It was an event where the bank got maximum bang for their buck. In addition to sponsoring the hometown boat, the Miss Madison, the team's driver, Jimmy Shane, was available to fans numerous times along the riverbank, signing anything and everything. He even handed out cases of light-blue HomeStreet "rally towels" that fans were to wave to cheer on Madison's favorite boat. The fans loved it!

UNJ: How long have you been interested in Unlimited Hydroplane racing?

MB: I grew up in the Bellevue area of Seattle. I have been a fan for quite a while. I grew up watching hydroplanes at Seafair. I have gotten involved professionally since I became marketing director at HomeStreet Bank.

How long have you been marketing director?

For all of two months. The bank put in place a great sponsorship with the Miss Madison team. I've come on and I enjoy a lot of the work they have done today. This is my first Madison Regatta and I have really enjoyed my time here. I got to enjoy the parade yesterday; it's a great community. The weather has held out here. We've been very fortunate.

HomeStreet Bank has gotten heavily involved with unlimited hydroplane racing at a time when other national sponsorships are dwindling. What do you see for the sport and why are you interested from a marketing point of view?

The Miss Madison team was really a perfect opportunity for us

from a sponsorship perspective. We have a rich heritage of sponsoring local sports in Seattle. When we took a look at unlimited hydroplane racing, we found the opportunity to be a strong regional sponsor. This boat hits three of our large markets—Eastern Washington, Seattle, and San Diego—markets where we are located. Last year was our first year. We really did get great traction from our sponsorship, from current customers, from prospects, and from fans of the sport over all. We have doubled down on our sponsorship. We have continued to increase the length of the term of our contract and we also sponsor the racing shop, which is now HomeStreet Racing in Tukwila, Washington. We have seen a highly engaged community of fans throughout the sport and we are a community bank. Our values are really aligned with a lot of the fans and customers. We just want to continue and grow that relationship.

How do you measure your marketing results?

We measure in many different ways. In addition to sponsorship in

the events themselves, with social media now, you can actually measure people taking pictures, people messaging, that sort of thing. Just yesterday, somebody reached out and thanked us for our sponsorship and involvement in the sport. That customer support is invaluable. We have a lot of metrics that tell us that this is the place to be.

HomeStreet has sponsored the old Budweiser shop in Tukwila. That has to be a sizeable investment. I look at that as a step in the right direction toward saving something that is essential to the sport.

Yes, we saw that as an investment in the sport. First and foremost, we are a sponsor of *Miss Madison*. Once we dug a little deeper in the sponsorship and our relationship with *Miss Madison*, we found that the sport needed some engagement and sponsorship as well. So, we took the step to sponsor the old *Bud* shop. We hope that will encourage other teams and sponsors to ramp up their investment in unlimited hydroplane racing.

What does H1 need to do to grow the sport?

Adding more race sites, of course, particularly in the areas that our bank serves. Also, we need to find a way to attract more younger fans to our sport. We need to work with H1 to engage these younger fans.

HomeStreet has a lot of involvement at race sites. Your driver mingles with the fans, he signs autographs, and you have all sorts of souvenirs available. So many other teams have done very little, other than just running their

boat at the race site.

One of the reasons we were interested in our sponsorship is that we have an opportunity to bring communities together with the regatta, with Water Follies, with Seafair. These are great events that are endangered. It's not just our sport. These community events across the country are also in danger. We aren't just sponsoring the sport. We are promoting the community festivals and event.

What were you doing before you joined HomeStreet a couple of months ago?

I was at Capital One. Capital One is a great bank. One of the reasons I came to HomeStreet is their community focus. I wanted to join a company that really gave back to the local community.

You obviously have somebody interested in unlimited hydroplane racing up the corporate chain of command who approves HomeStreet's sizeable investment in your sponsorship.

Mark Mason, our CEO, is a big supporter and really enjoys the camaraderie of unlimited hydroplane racing. ❖

Madison Regatta: Worth the wait.

Continued from page 1

Miss HomeStreet was among the boats that went through the regatta parade. Just as the parade ended and the crowd was heading home, a loud and violent thunderstorm rolled through town. It only lasted about 15 minutes, but plenty of rain fell in that brief time.

SATURDAY DAWNED cloudy. The course opened for testing at 11 a.m. First boat out was GP-19, with former unlimited driver Dave Warren at the helm. While he ran his laps, U-27 went in the water. J.W. Myers took the boat out and ran four strong laps. In the first turn of lap five, the boat hooked. Myers did an admirable job of regaining control and avoiding a spinout. He returned to the pits at low speed.

Next on the course was *J & D's*. Tom Thompson ran one fast lap. In the first turn on lap two, the boat took a hop and the canopy popped open. Thompson slowed immediately and returned to the pits. *Miss HomeStreet* ran three quick laps; Shane swung wide on the final turn and came down the front straight-

away close to the pits, giving the hometown crowd a good look at the boat. *Realtrac* then ran four good laps.

Shane was asked about the course. He said the turns were tight, more in keeping with a GP course. Shane said he usually passes the exit buoy on most unlimited courses at about 125 mph. On the 2017 Madison course, his speed was down to 102 mph. Drivers would need to be careful to avoid problems.

Testing ended and there was a break for lunch. The sun was making a feeble attempt to break through the cloud cover. Heat 1A was scheduled for 2 p.m. and would feature *HomeStreet* and *Miss J & D's*. Heat 1B would go at 2:30 with *Realtrac* and U-27. Unlimited heats would be three laps with flag starts.

Thompson and *J & D's*, in lane two, led across the starting line in heat 1A. Shane made it look close for a lap-and-a-half, then pulled away. *HomeStreet* won by two buoy



Tom Thompson in the *Miss J&D's* led *Miss HomeStreet Bank* across the starting line in Heat 1A.

Kirk Duncan

lengths. U-27, in lane two, was first across the starting line in heat 1B. Tate ran close behind, keeping things interesting for the large crowd on the beach. On the final backstretch, he pulled away and reached the finish line first, about a length-and-a-half ahead of Myers. As the checkered flag flew, the sun finally broke through the clouds.

SUNDAY, THE SUN shone through broken clouds. The crowd arrived late and was slightly smaller than the throng that crowded the Ohio River shoreline on Saturday. There was open testing on Sunday morning, but not a single boat ran. Pairings for all the preliminary heats were announced early. *Miss J. & D's* would duel *Realtrac* in 2A; U-27 would go against *HomeStreet* in 2B. The match everyone was waiting for would occur in 3A, when *HomeStreet* and *Realtrac* would face each other. *Miss J. & D's* would meet U-27 in 3B. All four boats would go in the final.

Thompson had lane one in *J. & D's* and led Tate and *Realtrac* across the starting line for heat 2A. The two put on a show for the fans, running side-by-side through most of the heat. Just past the apex buoy in the first turn of lap three, *J. & D's* did a big hop, but came down flat. The two boats did a drag race up the backstretch. Tate went wide through the last turn, while Thompson hugged the buoy line. *J. & D's* reached the finish line about a half-boat length ahead of *Realtrac*.

HomeStreet had lane one and the lead over U-27 across the starting line in heat 2B. The two boats went through the first turn together, then Myers took a slight lead up the backstretch. But, Shane regained the lead in turn two as Myers swung wide. In the first turn of lap two, *HomeStreet* bobbed and U-27 pulled even. *HomeStreet* moved ahead in turn two and gradually



Kirk Duncan



Kirk Duncan



Kirk Duncan

[Top] J.W. Myers was handling the steering wheel of the U-27, Wiggins Racing entry. [Middle] *Miss HomeStreet Bank* pilot Jimmy Shane receives some help getting ready for a race from his wife, Bianca. [Above] Andrew Tate was driving the U-9 *Delta Realtrac*.



Kirk Duncan



Kevin Hayworth



Kirk Duncan

[Top] The defending national champion U-1 *Miss HomeStreet Bank* leaves the dock for another race. [Middle] The U-11 *Miss J&D's* lost its horizontal stabilizer during the running of Heat 3B, but still took the checkered flag. [Above] The U-11 crew looks on as the boats scream across the starting line at the beginning of the final heat

extended its lead. *HomeStreet* was a full roostertail ahead at the finish as U-27 went very wide in the final turn.

Debris floated down the river and racing was put on hold as committee personnel swept the course. Grand Prix and unlimited heats fell behind the previously announced schedule as a result.

In the showdown between the two fastest boats, *Realtrac* had lane one and *Miss HomeStreet* was in lane two in heat 3A. The boats were side-by-side at the start. Shane kept the *HomeStreet's* speed up through the first turn and was slightly ahead as they started up the backstretch. Tate then closed the gap as they reached turn two. The crowd-pleasing duel continued for the next lap.

Realtrac was slow accelerating from turn one on lap three and Shane obviously waited so they could put on a good show up the backstretch. The boats were side-by-side going through the final turn. *HomeStreet* won the drag race to the finish line by about a length-and-a-half.

There was hope that *J & D's* and U-27 would have a good race in 3B. *Miss J & D's* had lane one while U-27 was in lane two. They were not lined up properly for the start, however, so officials sent them around again. On the second attempt they received the green flag. *J & D's* led through most of the heat as Myers ran wide in the U-27. Near the exit buoy of turn one, on lap three, *J & D's* bounced and the horizontal stabilizer wing broke. It dangled in a vertical configuration until the boat reached the half-way point of the backstretch, when it fell off. *Miss J & D's* still won by about three boat lengths.

The GP class ran its four-lap final heat next. Dave Warren jumped the gun. Greg Hopp took first, Jerry Hopp was second, and

Jamie Nilsen, driving Scott Pierce's boat, finished third.

THE FINAL HEAT would be four laps. A draw for lanes was held; Tate got lane one, Shane went in lane two, Thompson had lane three, and Myers was outside.

Realtrac, *HomeStreet*, and *J & D's* crossed the line together, while U-27 trailed. Shane in *HomeStreet* and Tate in *Realtrac* went up the backstretch together; *Miss J & D's* was a roostertail back and U-27 settled in fourth. Preliminary heats had been essentially a show for fans, but the final was a real race. Shane and Tate were locked in a battle for first and they made the most of it.



Kirk Duncan

Andrew Tate (left) enjoys his victory in the event's final heat.

HomeStreet held a slight lead at the end of lap three. As the front-runners charged through the first turn on the last lap, *HomeStreet* hit a hole and the boat went up on its side. Tate didn't wait to see how

HomeStreet came down. He stood on the throttle, pulled away, and won by a couple lengths. *HomeStreet* finished second, *J & D's* was third, and U-27 brought up the rear.

Tate returned to the pits to cheers and high-fives from his team. Crew chief Jeff Campbell was heard to tell a reporter, "That was pay back, I owed him one." He was referring to Shane's win in heat 3A.

Shane, meanwhile, was philosophical. "I think the skid fin was pointing straight up," he said about his near mishap. "I thought I was going over. By the time I got going again, Andrew was gone and I couldn't catch him."

At the trophy presentation, Tate reached out to hometown fans who were disappointed with the outcome. "I know I'm not the most popular driver here, but I grew up watching the parade, the fireworks, and the regatta," he said. He accepted the Governor's Cup from Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb, then received congratulations from his father, Mark Tate, who won the trophy in 1995 and 1996.

Spectators had to wait all weekend to see a real unlimited race, but Tate and Shane sent them home with a demonstration of unlimited action at its best. Let's hope the regatta's financial situation will permit Madison to play host to a full-fledged race in 2018. ❖

STATBOX

INDIANA GOVERNOR'S CUP
Madison, Indiana, July 1–2, 2017
2-mile oval on the Ohio River

NOTES: A non-points exhibition. No qualifying or timing, assigned lanes (noted below) except for the final. J.W. Myers was not a qualified driver, so had to start from the outside.

THE BOATS: U-1 *Miss HomeStreet Bank* (#0706), Jimmy Shane; U-9 *Delta Realtrac* (#9210), Andrew Tate; U-11 *Miss J&D's* (#9302), Tom Thompson; U-27 *Wiggins Racing* (#0717), J.W. Myers.

HEAT 1A (1) *Miss HomeStreet Bank* [lane 1]; (2) *Miss J&D's* [lane 2].

HEAT 1B (1) *Delta Realtrac* [lane 1]; (2) *Wiggins Racing* [lane 2].

HEAT 2A (1) *Miss J&D's* [lane 1]; (2) *Delta Realtrac* [lane 2].

HEAT 2B (1) *Miss HomeStreet Bank* [lane 1]; (2) *Wiggins Racing* [lane 2].

HEAT 3A (1) *Miss HomeStreet Bank* [lane 2]; *Delta Realtrac* [lane 1].

HEAT 3B (1) *Miss J&D's* [lane 1]; *Wiggins Racing* [lane 2].

FINAL (1) *Delta Realtrac*; (2) *Miss HomeStreet Bank*; (3) *Miss J&D's*; (4) *Wiggins Racing*.

COMPILED BY ALLEN STILES

A few minutes with Rob Graham.

The sport's newest team owner has been around hydroplane racing for many years.

Heading into the 2017 H1 Unlimited season, we have a new owner among the ranks. Not someone new to the sport, but a familiar face picking up a new challenge and moving forward. We wanted you to get a chance to learn more about the owner of the U-12 Graham Trucking Racing team, Rob Graham.

Interview by Lon Erickson

UNJ: I think most people in the sport are aware that you have been involved supporting and/or sponsoring both smaller classes of boat racing and unlimited hydroplanes for quite a few years. Tell us more about how you first got introduced or following hydroplanes?

RG: Back in the mid-80s, Jerry Hopp and several other lifelong hydroplane enthusiasts worked at Graham Trucking. In 1987, Jerry asked if the company would sponsor some 2.5-liter hydros he had, and we did. Later, we wound up sponsoring limited race sites and helped to pioneer in the Unlimited Light series. The company sponsored the Unlimited Lights at a number of race sites and in 1996 we began our sponsorship of "The Unlimited Lights Cup at Seafair." Since 1994, we have also sponsored a broad range of unlimited teams. We began with Bill Wurster and have also sponsored Ken Muscatel, Fred Leland, Mike and Lori Jones, Dave Bartush, Ed Cooper, Jim Harvey, Ted Porter, and others. Today, we sponsor both the F-1

and GP classes at Seafair as well as campaigning the Graham Trucking U-12.

What was your first race or memory of hydroplane racing?

My first memory goes way back beyond my involvement in racing. I finally got a chance to go to a Seafair unlimited race with some die-hard hydro friends and secured a great spot on the beach. I was very young and a little overwhelmed by the crowds and activity, I didn't last long and had to leave, but I still have and cherish the memory of those couple of hours.

I think I know the answer, but I will ask you anyway. What is your best memory related to your involvement with hydroplanes?

This is actually a very difficult question for me. I thought that winning in Seattle, the place I have loved my whole life, was as good as it would ever get. Then we won it three times consecutively. After the team won the national championship, I thought that was likely as good as it would ever get. Winning that Detroit Gold Cup last year was very special to our team. If people really knew what our team went



Karl Pearson

The first unlimited sponsored by Graham Trucking was this boat (#9701) in 1997. Driven by Jerry Hopp, the boat took two third-place finishes in preliminary heats at the Texaco Cup in Seattle and finished sixth in the final heat.



Rob Graham

through to win that thing they would be amazed. We don't have the fastest boat or the best equipment. What we have is a group of guys willing to work as long and as hard as it takes, to dot every "I" and cross every "T," and make what we do have the best it can be. We also have one hell of a driver who is also a good friend, son, husband, and father. I sponsored Jim Harvey's team in 2004 and 2005 when J. Michael was our rookie driver.

Have you ever had the opportunity to drive a hydroplane of any size or class? Do you want to?

I have been asked many times over the years and it may happen, it's just not that big of deal to me. One of the things I enjoy most in life is the diversity in people. If we're all alike and wanted the same things in life, it just wouldn't work. I was one of six natural kids and my parents also looked after a couple of kids who needed a family. We had eight kids in that house and not a lot of money, having my father's and my family name associated with a sport I love is far more thrilling to me than being inside the boat. Besides, I don't think it would be right for me to steal the job from JMK. LOL

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 starts on the beach before the race ever starts. The people associated with our sport are kind and giving people who put a huge value on family and friends. I like that. Once the boats are on the water, it's like a ballet for me. I see the boats dancing out in the water and my heart feels like it's going to pound right out of my chest. This happens every time the boat goes in the water.

Without playing the obvious favorites too much, what is your all-time favorite hydroplane?



Jim Collier

The first victory by a Graham Trucking sponsored boat came at the 2009 U.I.M. World Championships in Doha, Qatar.

Same goes for an all-time favorite driver? (We won't tell JMK.) Maybe try second favorite to both those questions.

The first boat and driver I was ever really passionate about was Chip Hanauer in the *Squire Shop*. I had received mostly hand-me-down clothes as a kid and at some point, I got a pair of Britannia jeans. I think part of the reason I associated with that boat was because of that pair of jeans. [Ed note: Squire Shop stores sold Britannia jeans] I talk to Chip fairly often now and know that wasn't his favorite ride, but that was the boat, and he was the driver I rooted for.

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

I was born in Glasgow, Montana, but moved to Seattle at a young age. My family lived in the Renton Highlands since 1972 and I attended Issaquah schools. I have four kids, three of which are also providing grand kids. I've been living with my wife on Mercer Island for some years now and really enjoy it.

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



Rob Graham (left) and J. Michael Kelly celebrate winning last year's Gold Cup.

I love to walk/hike. I've been doing it since I was a kid and it's therapeutic for me. I used to travel around the Pacific Northwest and beyond, just to explore. When I have any large block of time, I like to go around Mercer Island on my paddle board. It's really a treat, but does take more time than I often have. My kids and I also attend all of the Seahawks home games together, sort of tradition. My wife and I also love spending time with our friends, kids, and grandkids.

Since you have been involved with sponsorship, both at Seafair and directly with many different race teams, Graham Trucking is the name. Tell us more about the business of Graham Trucking and what you get in return for your sponsorship involvement.

When we began our sponsorships in hydroplane racing it wasn't ever really about promoting the company. I have never been a sales type person and Graham Trucking has never sold anything to the public. We are business to business. Our primary business is transporting heavy ocean containers between companies in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana, to and from Seattle and Tacoma ports. We do

also have local flatbed, refrigerated, and dry freight divisions. I do feel, however, that our company name being associated with the sport for so many years has helped with branding and just the way we are received and thought of in Seattle. A good number of my family work at Graham and I believe they all have a huge sense of pride in being a part of hydroplane racing. Everyone pitches in during the season and hosting our hospitality area at Seafair.

What ultimately led you to the decision to purchase a complete race team setup from Ted Porter when he decided to step away?

The group of people who are on our team are the most amazing people in the sport. Our team members are kind family people who are respectful of everyone. I

did not want this team to break up. This crew has just finished a complete rebuild of the race boat, every nut, bolt, and bracket has been replaced. We have all new systems in the boat and the crew did the majority of this work.

What would you like to tell people about the sport, where it's headed, and what we all should be doing to take that next step for the future?

I really have no idea where we are headed. That really depends on what we're all willing to do and give. I believe we need to continue to strive for parity so that our fans don't know who is going to win before the race starts. I have never seen hydroplane racing with so many boats so close together as we have these last few years, and that's really good for the sport. I also support any idea or gadgets that give fans a better idea of what is going on during every heat. It's difficult to be engaged in something you don't understand. The NFL had this issue many years ago, so they put people on TV and radio that could explain things in minute detail so that every man, woman, and child knew what was going on in every play, on every down.

Thanks, Rob. Looking forward to seeing you and the Graham Trucking race team and family at the races. The best of luck and to an exciting, safe 2017 season. ❖



The Graham Trucking while on its way to victory in last year's Gold Cup.

FROM THE UNJ VAULT:

Publicizing the race boats.

An interview conducted before there was Facebook, streaming video, and mobile apps shows the challenges are still the same.

In the June issue of the Unlimited NewsJournal we reported the death this past April of J Michael Kenyon at the age of 73. Kenyon was a former director of communications for unlimited hydroplane racing back in the mid-1990s, but was probably best known in the Seattle area as a sports writer for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer and as a feisty radio sports personality who never hesitated to express his strong opinions about things.

He was given the name Mike Glover when he was born, but that changed to J (no period) Michael Kenyon in 1968 to meet the demands of what turned out to be his second of five wives. They had honeymooned at the Indianapolis 500 where, as fate would have it, they roomed with a young man from California named Bill Doner, who would become one of Seattle's biggest sports promoters.

Meanwhile, Kenyon would enjoy a long career as a sportswriter. He began at the Yakima Herald and then was hired by the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, where he became the first beat writer for the Seattle Supersonics. He went to California for a while, was an editor of the Hollywood Citizen-News and of the Hollywood Reporter, then returned to the Seattle P-I as the beat writer for the Seattle Mariners and later as one of the city's first radio sports personalities.

Along the way, he remained friends with Doner, who would eventually become the chairman of the Unlimited Hydroplane Racing Association (UHRA). It was the long relationship between the two that would culminate in Kenyon's job as the sport's director of communications, a position he held for over three years.

Doner fired Kenyon from that job in June 1998, ostensibly to save the UHRA money. Steve David, then president of the American Power Boat Association, asked Doner to resign two months later. But, six weeks before Kenyon's departure, he sat down with the NewsJournal's David Speer to discuss the challenges of marketing and publicizing this sport. That interview was included in the August 1998 issue of the NewsJournal, but his comments back then still ring true nearly 20 years later.



J Michael Kenyon in the mid-1990s.

UNJ: When you came to the UHRA what was your initial media relations strategy?

JMK: I guess that I knew, inwardly, that the press didn't care about the sport. I don't know that I had any plan to overcome that, except that we were going to feed them Bill Doner. Of course, mitigating against that, the patient was a lot sicker than Bill ever imagined.

How long before the reality check?

I would say a month. All the people within the sport think they can see their own self interests, but of course can't. As a consequence the commission, teams, and race sites work at cross purposes to foul up any possible success. Nothing shall ever cause these three to work in harmony to sell this sport. And nobody with any single idea of what to do. It's fabulous.

You were essentially hired because of your career in sports media.

I don't really even know what my job is at the UHRA. If my job is to generate publicity, I've never had a chance to do that. I'm too busy doing other stuff. If my job is to improve communications, we don't have any money to improve communications. I was ready to quit last year; I thought Bill Doner would quit, but he double-crossed me, and I went back to work for him.

Is it reasonable to say that unlimited racing has lost print coverage over the years?

Looking at the Seattle newspapers from 1950 to now, over the course of a year the sport probably has as many stories as it ever did. I looked at a story the other day on Dave Villwock that went on for some length. There was nothing better when a new *Miss Thriftway* would debut. But we don't cover the minutia like they used to. The only time boat racing ever got bigger attention was when it was in the pages of the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, maybe the *Boston Globe*. Wherever a yacht club and prominent people ran big regattas, powerboat racing was on display. The people involved were moneyed people making news. It didn't make any difference if anybody even went to the damn things.

Is that your opinion or a conclusion based on what marketers call lineage counts?

It's my reasonable conclusion. Outside of Madison and Evansville and Tri-Cities, no one covers the whole series. Seattle has become a big-league city, and the new generation of reporters doesn't want to have anything to do with the boats.

"As a newspaperman myself, I think the sport gets the coverage it deserves, pretty much the way I would cover the boats as an editor."

It's not as much fun as going to the Sonic or Mariner games. In fact, they draw straws to see who doesn't have to cover the boats.

Seattle sports pages are among the poorest of any major city.

It was always a joke. It had to be a joke, because guys like Georg Meyers and Royal Brougham ran the sports departments. Georg "no-E" did the same column on the boats year after year. Which hull is which, the paint jobs. Brougham really didn't know what he had seen. It wasn't so much that Brougham was covering up, but he just didn't want to have to go to the trouble to find out the facts. So he had "Tony the Barber" say it. Meyers would correct him by putting a blind "Since You Asked" item in his column. Insiders knew that was a response to something Brougham had fumbled.

Television basically likes the boats.

Always has, as long as we get one of them upside down. I've never known a TV station that won't ultimately ask for the crash footage. They may phrase it another way; they say they're going to do a piece on safety. There's not a single piece worth anything if it

doesn't have a crash, because I don't think just showing a boat going 200 miles per hour is going to captivate a huge portion of the population. This sport historically did a horrible job of positioning itself for television. When I got here, TV was just something that happened. They did whatever they wanted. That's why every show looked

almost exactly alike. They talk to the drivers as soon as they get out of the boats—as if they have something important to say. Bad TV. Our broadcasts are lousy. Why would anybody watch them?

Is there any way to make TV better?

Not unless somebody puts up a million dollars and buys network infomercials. ESPN has told Doner they'll never do another live broadcast. Emphasis was on the word "never." "Never" tells a story, if you listen. We're on television by the grace of God; we're allowed to come in the servant's entrance.

It's a pathetic situation.

Why? Horseshoes aren't on any major network either. Are those people depressed? Does that make horseshoes any less than it is? Not having TV just cuts down the options. They'll just have to aim a little lower. Might be 7-litre boats running, but there will always be a Gold Cup.

Back to print, why did *Sports Illustrated* stop covering the sport?

Boat racing was no longer a sportsman's preserve. *Sports Illustrated* originally was designed to cover the friends that Henry Luce thought were sportsmen,

his rich pals golfing or hunting in Georgia. Some of them even drove their own boats. Few unlimited owners [today] have money, except Bernie Little. He's a businessman,

that a guy with a little imagination and nose for news could come up with a pretty interesting story. To start with, these drivers don't get that much practice. Even the guys

only thing that's ever going to get anybody excited again is to have a straightaway record run and threaten to kill somebody. We don't have to stage it out in the desert either; we can do it right in front of everyone.

"Boat racers are not very interesting people. ... They are just hardworking guys who happen to be in love with this silly thing."

not a sportsman. Bernie wouldn't do it if he didn't make money. He'd probably get a little more coverage except he's turned so many people off. It's like trying to kowtow to a crocodile.

How about the *New York Times*?

At the end of every year they call to ask who won the championship. We're part of the official record. I don't see how we'll get them back in a bigger way. We have cultivated USA Today to the point where you can follow our series.

How was it accomplished?

Steve Turcotte mostly had it in place when I arrived. The editor in charge covered baseball in Bellingham when I covered baseball in Seattle. I apparently was nice to him, and he's been nice to me.

How do you rate the overall quality of media coverage?

As a newspaperman myself, I think the sport gets the coverage it deserves, pretty much the way I would cover the boats as an editor. If we have an exciting show, have boats mount one another on the racecourse, we get huge pictures.

Have you actively pitched story ideas to reporters?

Oh sure. Whenever I go to a race, I cheat. I load their plates with things they would never find out themselves. There is enough non-sense going on at one of these races

who do it for a living screw up, so what do you expect of the guy that does it part-time?

Is the press lazy?

The basic reason the press doesn't embrace us is that we make it uncomfortable for them. We don't have the amenities so-called major league sports offer. At Madison, they put up a tent for the press, at Evansville a smaller tent. Seattle creates a little press room, one of

Chip Hanauer has provided some of the better copy.

Because he has something to say. And everybody likes Mark Evans, because he's got some sort of personality that hasn't been repressed. He's spontaneous. Great stuff. One little gene cluster spits out another interesting person once in a while.

Chip has feuded with Bill Doner, citing lack of leadership as a major problem in the sport.

Douglas MacArthur has never been seen leading this organization. Doner was not hired to be a leader; he was hired to sell our television. No one said they wanted him to lead everybody into the Promised Land. Chip's probably right when

"The real issue is that we don't have any control over the race sites. The race promoter is where the sport meets the public; that's our point of contact with the world. What the promoter does is what the world thinks the sport is."

the better situations. Las Vegas is the only site that hired a professional press guy. It could have been the World Cup.

Perhaps we need a scandal?

Not a single person in our sport has beaten a woman, as far as I can tell. Boat racers are not very interesting people. That's another generalization, but close to the mark. They are just hardworking guys who happen to be in love with this silly thing. I think the

he says we're just rearranging the deck chairs on the *Titanic*.

One might argue that any failure in leadership falls upon the UHRA Board of Directors.

You're making it sound like there's some sort of corporate hierarchy in this sport. Drunken gypsies have more order than this bunch does when they're sober. The board is not the sport; the board is Bernie Little. Bernie isn't the sport either, though he will tell you he is. The

sport was here before Bernie, and it will be here after Bernie.

Will the organization ever change?

The owners have warehouses and garages and houses and bedrooms and basements filled up with gear that's entirely useless in any other form of human endeavor. If anybody ever had a vested interest in keeping something going, if only from its own inertia, it's those guys. Why do you think Steve Woomer stayed in the sport? Couldn't sell, couldn't get out.

How would you build a new Titanic?

I'd start completely over. This thing would be run just like a NASCAR or CART. The real issue is that we don't have any control over the race sites. The race promoter is where the sport meets the public; that's our point of contact with the world. What the promoter does is what the world thinks the sport is. But the UHRA and race promoters are like warring Greek city-states moving along in some loose confederation. In Madison, it's a different sport than it is in Seattle; it should be the same sport.

How is the sport different in Madison and Seattle?

The primary function of Madison Regatta Inc. is to put on a regatta. Seattle is run by an organization that is not entirely devoted to a boat race. Seafair puts on other things with the idea of creating interest for the boat race. The Torchlight Parade is probably the major item; the boat race down about third. If the sponsoring group isn't even going to take it seriously, why should the public? Circumstances at the race sites are all so different. Madison begs, borrows, and steals all year around. Evansville is a little better off now. Detroit's fat. Seafair is relatively fat.

San Diego gets it done with paper clips and rubber bands. Las Vegas is an entirely different animal, not really a race site. Norfolk is put on with advertising cooperation of the state. Honolulu is a naval exercise, which isn't a bad model for a race. Kelowna is the only race where the promoters are personally at risk financially.

Your bottom line is that race sites are the villains.

That's my view. I don't think you'll get Bill Doner to say that. You're making it sound like they've made a conscious decision, but they just haven't been far-sighted. They only look at their own little

gold chains hanging around their necks.

I think they don't want to race boats. What is it about these boats anyway? They are obviously pretty dangerous things, yet only old men drive them. Our median driver age is around 42. I don't see any 22-year old kids showing up on the dock saying they're ready to go. This whole thing is crazy. It's the Mad Hatter's tea party. There are no sponsors, no Lipton tea bags, no little signs on the table for the Mad Hatter and the Door Mouse. Alice doesn't have any patches on her dress. I don't think America is in love with the idea of a boat going

"I don't think America is in love with the idea of a boat going very fast. You can't get very close to it, and chances are you're going to be uncomfortable. People with money don't want to sit in camp chairs and get their shoes dirty. We need sky boxes."

plate. Somehow they can't figure out that if all the other little plates aren't healthy then they aren't going to have anybody come to their house each year. A race should be free. If you've got 100,000 or more spectators 29 years of age or less, the sponsor buys your crowd. It's all about branding. You and I have more discretionary money than a 22-year old kid does, but we're set in our ways and won't change brands. The 22-year-old can be turned around until he doesn't even know what planet he's standing on anymore.

That kid is not coming to unlimited races. I think they don't want to watch old geezers with

very fast. You can't get very close to it, and chances are you're going to be uncomfortable. People with money don't want to sit in camp chairs and get their shoes dirty. We need sky boxes. Once you're past that, it's almost impossible to really race. These boats can't follow one another; they have to run side by side like the Charge of the Light Brigade. They can't dive into little holes and draft one another and do things that racers do at high speed. All they can do is crash. It's not a sport that's much fun to watch unless someone is crashing. They don't crash enough. ❖

HydroFile

Race Team News



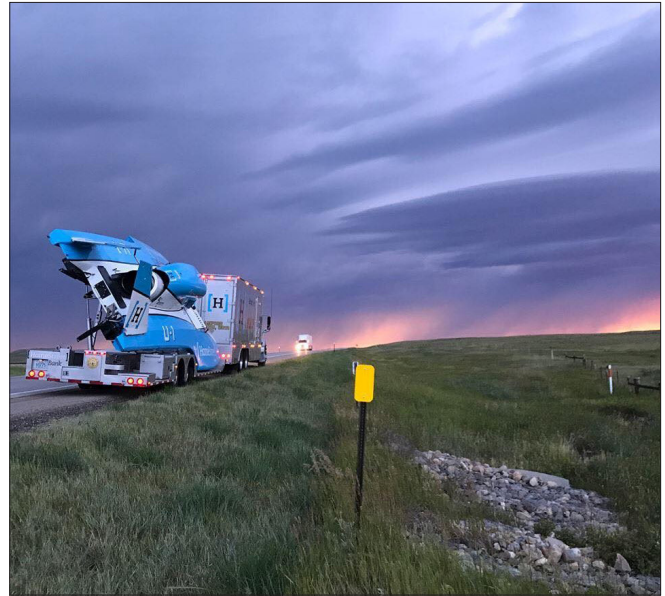
Lon Erickson

U-1 Miss HomeStreet Bank

The U-1 came out west early to the HomeStreet Racing shop in Tukwila (below left) for some engine work and display duty before heading back over the mountains to the Tri-Cities for the HAPO Columbia Cup. Below right, the boat heads across the plains going west.



Miss Madison Race Team



Dan Hoover

Go3 Racing

Ed Cooper's Go3 team will be racing in Tri-Cities with the support once again of Griggs Ace Hardware, Tri-Cities Insurance Specialists, KONA Radio, and more. Jimmy King will be behind the wheel of the Big Red Turbinator. In the photo at right are, from the left, Ed Cooper, Charlie Grigg, and John Venhuizen, the president and CEO of ACE Hardware, when the boat appeared in Yakima, Washington.



Go3 Racing

U-11 Unlimited Racing Group

Scott and Shannon Raney, owners of the U-11 Unlimited Hydroplane, announce the formation of STEMacceleration, a nonprofit whose mission is: "Racing to change the lives of students by providing hands-on STEM inquiry learning opportunities using the power of the extreme sport of unlimited hydroplane racing." For more information on this program, contact Shannon Raney at the U-11 team.

U-12 Graham Trucking Racing

The Graham Trucking team has been busy with all the final preparations and testing systems, in advance of their debut in Tri-Cities with the updated U-12 hull. Here's the boat outside of its shop in Milton, Washington.



Graham Trucking Racing



Graham Trucking Racing

U-16 Ellstrom Racing

While there has been no formal announcement from the Ellstrom camp to date, indications are that they will be racing at Seattle with the Oberto sponsorship again. Newly named driver J.W. Myers (right) traveled to the Madison Regatta earlier this month and drove the U-27 Wiggins Racing entry in anticipation of updating his H1 driver status. It is not clear if he was able to satisfy the H1 process of getting re-certified.



Kirk Duncan

U-27 Wiggins Racing

The U-27 Wiggins Racing team will not be racing in either the Tri-Cities or Seattle races this summer. In response to boats planning to appear at the Northwest races, owner Charley Wiggins shared this information recently, "Unfortunately the U27 will not make it to either Tri-Cities or Seattle."



Kirk Duncan



Leland Racing

U-99.9 Leland Racing

In the process of working some display appearances with the U-99.9 KISW/Miss Rock, driver Kevin Eacret suffered a torn Achilles tendon in his left foot and is expected to be out approximately six to eight weeks. He has already begun therapy and reports are very positive going forward. He is riding his knee scooter in the picture at left. This injury meant finding a driver to fill the seat during Kevin's recovery and they wasted no time with a very logical choice, naming Greg Hopp (on page 17) to fill in for Kevin. Greg drove the same Leland hull many years for Fred Leland, knows the Leland operation, and works with many of the same crew in the GP class.

Dues for Unlimiteds Unanimous.

Prior to 2010, the Unlimited NewsJournal (UNJ) was printed and Unlimiteds Unanimous (UU) charged club dues to cover the costs of producing and mailing the publication. In addition, occasional memorabilia auctions were held to cover other expenses, such as a slide scanner, publication software updates, and maintenance on the subscription database computer.

When the UNJ moved to the Internet, the club had financial reserves that were used to purchase domain hosting services, software, URLs, etc. Our website was built in-house by our webmaster and our editors and webmaster use their own technology hardware when putting the UNJ together. Over the years, we have continued to use UU club reserves and no dues have been charged, as our costs are dramatically less without postage and printing costs. Also, a club member funded an ad for his dental practice in our PDF and website for several years; he has since retired.

With our last renewal for hosting services and software updates, our reserves have dipped to a point where club leadership believes we need to replenish our reserves to ensure we have funds for future expenses. For the first time, the UNJ did not sponsor the 2017 RC show at the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum as we wanted to conserve funds.

So, here's the club's modest proposal. If you enjoy reading the Unlimited NewsJournal, please consider making a—one-time—financial contribution for UU club dues.

While donations for Unlimiteds Unanimous club membership will be accepted in any amount, UU club leadership suggests the following UU membership dues structure, kind of based upon hydroplane classes.

“Limited” Membership—\$10

“Vintage” Membership—\$20

“Unlimited” Membership—\$30

Thank you for your consideration. Please make checks out to Unlimiteds Unanimous and mail them to:

Unlimiteds Unanimous
1312 164th PL NE
Bellevue, WA 98008



Leland Racing

440 Bucket List Racing

Work continues at the Bucket List Racing team, developing an improved gearbox case (pictured below) and system to work with the T-53 turbine.



Bucket List Racing

NEXT MEETING OF UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS

Sunday, August 13, 2017
Meeting starts at 2 p.m.

Des Moines Public Library
21620 - 11th Ave. S.
Des Moines, Washington 98198

YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND!