

2010: Another Short, But Very Competitive Season The Swami



Karl Pearson photo



During the decade of the nineties there were 97 Unlimited races or an average of 9.7 per season. A respectable number that had the sport venturing into new places like Honolulu, Milwaukee, Norfolk and Kansas City. Some sites stuck around for a few years but others did not. At year 2000 the sport settled back into the six old established sites, and in the aughts (or whatever you want to call them), there were a total of 63 races for an average of 6.3 per year. Every now and then a one time event would pop up with adventures to Valleyfield, St. Clair and Lake Havasu which had a two year run beginning in 1999. Clearly this is not a good trend if the sport intends to grow.

What strikes me as strange is during that period in the nineties it always seemed like there were never enough boats to properly fill out the fields for those races. Now the opposite is true. The sport can bring 10-12 teams and a case could be made that half or more of them are capable of winning. Not just winning when the favorite breaks but out running the competition in a given heat when all is dialed in correctly. What is now needed is more than the 5 race schedule to showcase this increasing health in teams and competition. (As of press time Evansville, Ind. is not on the H1 schedule).

Those competitive teams, as usual have been favorites for the last few years. The two to beat again are the U-1 *Oh Boy Oberto*, the defending National Champion with Steve David the top dog from 2009 and Dave Villwock in the U-16 *Ellstrom* who won three of the six events last season. *Ellstrom* appeared to be on its way to win number four and the title when engine problems slowed them in the final heat at Doha, Qatar.

After the top two there are four boats that at any time could reach up and score a victory. Moving to the top of this list after a strong showing for a good chunk of 2009 is J. Michael Kelly in Ted Porters U-7, *Graham Trucking*. Showing great speed but suffering a setback after a blow over in Tri-Cities this boat could be the surprise of the season. The other boat on this team the U-5 *Formula* with Jeff Bernard has proven himself with three wins in the last two seasons. After a disappointing 2009 that began with a crash in Madison, Ind. the U-37 is coming back with a completely revamped hull, a new diver in J.W. Meyers and a brand new sponsor in Peters & May Shipping. This is another team completely capable of winning, not just picking up the pieces.

Of course we have teams that would be considered long shots if they won. Jimmy King driving the only remaining piston boat on the circuit in Ed Coopers U-3 still shows flashes of its winning form from 2003. Nate Browns U-17 "Our Gang Racing" out of Preston, Wash. has enthusiasm and a boat with speed that surprises at times. A true dark horse is the U-21 *Albert Lee* of Greg O'Farrell and driven by young gun Brian Perkins. This hull was formerly Freedom Racing's *All Access* and has yet to be turned loose to find its full potential. Early testing looked very encouraging. The Spirit of Detroit team makes a welcome return with Cal Phipps taking the wheel of Dave Bartush's U-13. Nice to have a solid Detroit team again.

Rounding out the fields will be Fred Leland's U-100 *Mirageboats* driven again by Greg Hopp which seems to have been off the pace in 2009. Ken Muscatel returns with the purple U-25 "Superior Racing" as does the Reading, Pa. team of Mike Webster who learned unlimiteds the hard way last season.

Question marks would be the U-787, owned by the Ellstrom family, and sporting Boeing colors for biofuel tests the last couple of years. Rumors have it as the teams number two boat with an eye on traveling to Qatar. Also out there is Mike Jones U-9 which sported a Hydro Museum logo at Seattle in 2009 at its only appearance. If you're interested in buying into this madness Greg O'Farrell has both the U-50 and U-48. The U-10 of the late Kim Gregory still sits needing some repair at the Bud shop in Tukwila, Wash.

The sport now has the teams to travel halfway around the world and put on a respectable show. What is needed are more promoters and sponsors to take a chance on them. And, of course bodies of water suited to the speed and spectacle.

The Swami speaks . . .

TITLE CONTENDERS

- 1) U-16 *Ellstrom*, Dave Villwock, driver 59 career wins
Ellstrom Family, owner 20 career wins.

It's really hard to go against this team with its three wins in 2009 and the championship in site at Doha, Qatar. Prepared well and Villwock sits just shy of that all time win mark giving this team a whole lot of motivation.

Swami Sez: The team title and 3 wins, fastest qualifier at four of the five races. It will be a short, tough season but this time they win it at the final heat of the year.



- 2) U-1 *Oh Boy Oberto*, Steve David 9 career wins
City of Madison, Ind. 10 career wins

Solid crew, led by Mike Hanson again makes this a contender that could pull off another title. Steve David's driving has not missed a beat.

Swami Sez: One race win, lots of heat wins, and in every final amassing plenty of points along the way.



- 3) U-7 *Graham Trucking*, J Michael Kelly, 1 career win
Precision Marine, 5 career wins

Winner in Qatar should be ready when the season opens. Young driver now knows what it takes to win.

Swami Sez: Will out-perform expectations. Will win one race and be in the thick of the title chase with its blazing speed.



- 4) U-37 *Miss Peters & May*, J.W. Meyers 1 career win.
Bill Schumacher, 4 career wins

Rebuilt boat will return it to proper form. It will be fast and consistent. The main thing is to avoid an early season mishap.

Swami Sez: Don't be surprised by a win, this craft will be fast right out of the blocks.



5) U-5 *Formula*, Jeff Bernard, 3 career wins.

Precision Marine, 5 career wins

Nothing slow about this former *Budweiser* hull which like the U-7 will be well prepared.

Swami Sez: Jeff knows how to win and will be in most of the final heats.



A (SMALL) STEP BEHIND

6) U-17 "Our Gang Racing," Kip Brown, 0 career wins.

Nate Brown, 5 career wins (driver), 0 career wins (owner)

Nate and crew will have the boat ready when its time to go.

Swami Sez: A solid contender that could play a spoiler role. See them with good finishes and at least two final heats.



7) U-21 *Albert Lee Appliances*, Brian Perkins, 0 career wins.

Greg O'Farrell, 0 career wins

The key here is early season performance and not breaking anything.

Swami sez: If young diver can get the maximum out of this untested hull, watch out.



8) U-3 *Master Tire*, Jimmy King, 0 career wins.

Ed Cooper, Jr., 4 career wins

The boat should show some good speed. Could move up if the engines hold together.

Swami sez: Some fast heats in '09 made them a contender again, as always the key is not to break at the exact wrong moment. A second or third is not out of the question.



9) U-13 "Spirit of Detroit," Cal Phipps, 0 career wins.

Dave Bartush, 1 career win

After a year off the lemon-lime boat returns as a solid player.

Swami Sez: Expect a solid campaign with rookie driver but not many finals.



10) U-787 “Ellstrom #2,” Ellstrom Family. 20 career wins

Rumors put this boat on the water in '09

Swami Sez: Another race boat is always a welcome addition. If it shows, expect solid speeds.



A (LARGER) STEP BEHIND

11) U-25 “Superior Racing,” Dr. Ken Muscatel, 0 career wins

Dr. Ken Muscatel, 0 career wins

The hull shows promise and some more testing could help this team.

Swami Sez: Needs a fast start. This team always seems to be playing catch up from an early season incident.



12) U-100 *Mirageboats*, Greg Hopp, 0 career wins.

Fred Leland, 20 career wins

Like most teams they need to be ready when qualifications open in Madison.

Swami Sez: Fred’s boat needs to pick up some mph somewhere, otherwise its done after the prelims but we do love the tavern sponsor.



13) U-22 “Webster Racing,” Mike Webster, 0 career wins

Webster Family, 0 career wins

The team broke through with a final heat appearance in Tri-Cities last season.

Swami Sez: In order to finish well in the standings they need to be ready to go at the opener. If not, it’s going to be a long season at the bottom of the point standings.



A (GIANT) STEP BEHIND

14) U-9 “Jones Racing,” Mike and Lori Jones Boat, as always is for sale.

Swami Sez: Would like to see another Seattle appearance.



THE HERE AND NOW

Part 2; Things not Easily Understood

Seafair is an organization I've always had a hard time understanding. A group that was put on the map by hydroplanes but at times seems to not want to embrace them. They've given us more airplanes than boats and are quick to forget the men and equipment who 'made' the event. Earlier this year was a perfect example. When it was time to sign up with H1, Seafair attempted to low-ball them with respect to the prize money by \$40,000. The claim was after having lost their big money sponsor in General Motors they just couldn't pay. Really? That's mighty interesting, considering I don't remember the prize money going up this same amount when they landed this big money sponsor. Shouldn't that have been the first place all that extra money should have gone? To those men and women who have risked their lives to make this event the yearly spectacle that it is. I wonder what they did with all that money anyway?

Note to Seafair: It would have been a whole lot more palatable to try and reduce the prize money package if you had increased it during the last few years.

The prize money was ultimately donated by Duke Moscrip of Dukes restaurants. I recommend everyone reading this make a special trip to any of his places to eat.

The next thing not easily understood would be the infamous point transfer rule as used and abused in Evansville during the 2009 race. Lets be serious here, I mean what sort of motorsport does anything like this? I was watching a NASCAR race toward the end of 2009 and favorite Jimmie Johnson who was in the "chase," which is NASCAR's version of playoffs, crashed out early. Strangely enough I didn't see the cars owner run to one of their opponents pit stalls, wave around some cash, and make a deal to count that other cars points as his. This silly rule has always been controversial and even this paper has taken shots at it as far back as 1980; see "Baseball Rule Changed" by Matt Devine in that year's October issue for his satirical view. The rule as it was originally intended was to allow an owner to lease a back-up hull if his needed to miss a race or two for repairs. It is just plain abuse to use it in the middle of a race. How about we go back to "hulls earn points" and "people earn points" and once heat 1A begins that's it. The point transfer rule needs to be eliminated.

Brian Anderson



Fantasy Sports — It's Not Just for Football and Baseball Fans Anymore!

Not only did the 2009 season usher in an international race in Doha, Qatar for hardcore hydroplane fans to get revved up about, it also provided the hydroplane community across the world an opportunity to participate in a free online fantasy hydroplane game called Deck2Deck Fantasy Hydros.

The game was developed by three Seattle-based hydroplane fans some five years ago, and played among a small group of hydroplane enthusiasts in West Seattle, WA ever since. Deck2Deck was released to the public a week prior to the 2009 season on a lark. To the delight of the developers, over 200 hydroplane fans registered to play, and the site received hits from 48 states and some 31 countries.

The game is entirely FREE to play and the game concept is easy to understand. Simply choose one hydroplane per race for each race of the season. But here is the catch: you can only select any given hydroplane once per season. The points that your selected hydroplanes earn are tabulated over the course of the season on the web site. The fantasy player with the highest point total at the end of the year is the winner!

Got questions? Drop us a line at admin@deck2deck.us!

We hope you come race Deck2Deck with us in 2010!

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Lon Erickson

U-1. The major deck replacement and internal repairs needed as a result from the Doha 360 degree flip on the *Oh Boy! Oberto*, have been completed. A new re-fresh of the “shark” paint scheme is done and systems are being re-installed to be prepared for the upcoming 2010 season. **Mike and Larry Hanson** were out west with some motors recently to put them on the dyno at Hydros Inc.

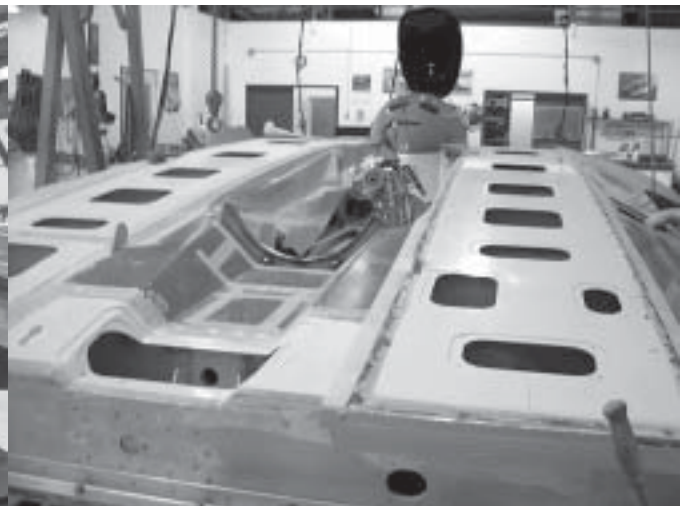
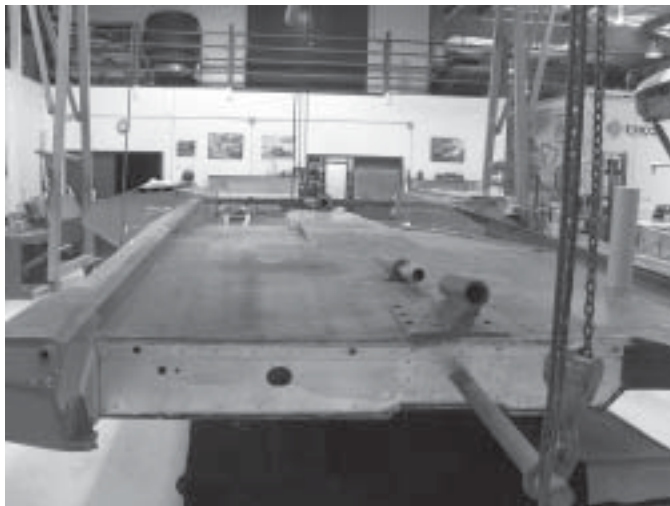
U-3. Activity has been pretty quiet around the Go3 Racing shop for most of the winter, but things are really picking up now to be ready for the first race of the season. The majority of the off-season work is already

completed. The hull is now right side up, transom repairs have been finished, modifications to running surfaces done and new paint is being applied. **Ed Cooper, Rick Bowles**, and all the guys in the shop are busy putting together the finishing touches on the “Turbinator.” ~~ Kirk Duncan photo

U-5. With the major repairs from the Doha accident completed, usual off-season work has been going on with the U-5 *Formula* in Decatur, IN. The hull had been stripped down, wiring and other systems removed, and the cockpit & hull maintenance work wrapped up. Motors and gearboxes were sent west with the U-7 to Hydros Inc. to be worked over and re-built. ~~ U-5 photos below from Kirk Duncan



U-7. *Graham Trucking* spent the last couple of months at Hydros Inc. getting an “extreme makeover.” Decks were removed and the rear bulkhead replaced along with other interior hull maintenance. The hull was reset and straightened on the jig to correct some accumulated issues that time didn’t allow for more thorough repairs to be done in the past



Jim Collier photo

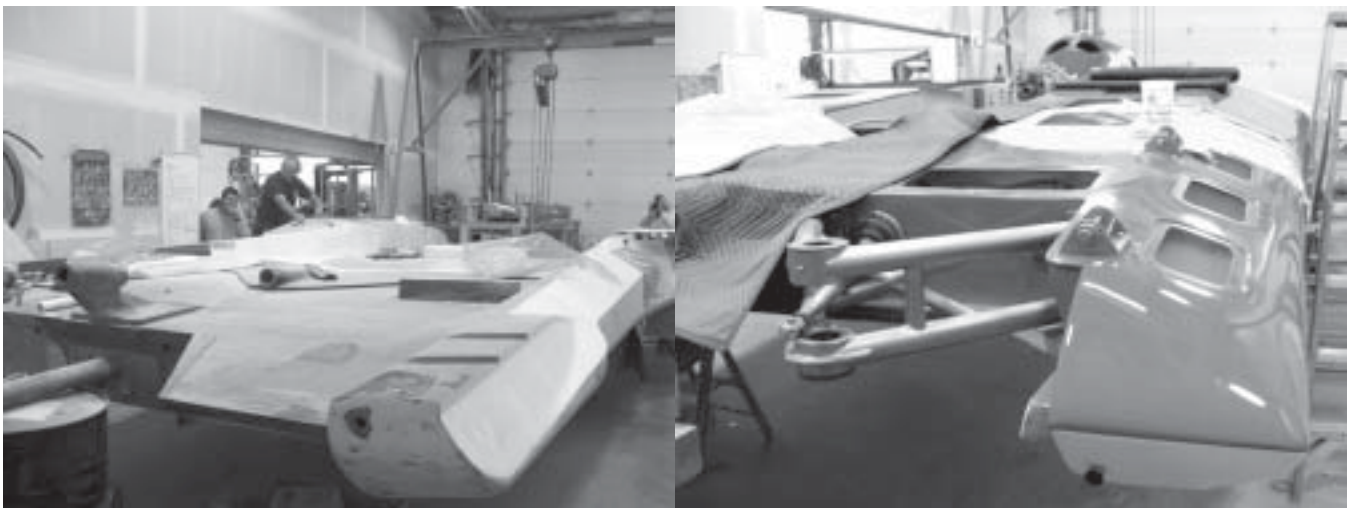
on. In addition to hull work, **John Rice** and crew were also busy working on additional parts, test carts, motors, and gearboxes for both the U-7 and U-5. The repairs have wrapped up at Hydros Inc. in Tukwila and the U-7, hauler, and equipment are headed back to Decatur for final preparations for the 2010 season opener. -- U-7 photos from John Rice

U-13. Scott Allen, team manager for The Spirit of Detroit team, tells the *UNJ* that a thorough inspection of the hull was done, no major failures were found, and a few minor issues were addressed. They have been working on some adjustments to enhance speed and handling. The look of the boat will be very similar to the 2008 paint scheme and updated with several new sponsors on board. The new sponsors signed on are; Allegra Print & Imaging, BMT Aerospace and Ambassador Magazine for the 2010 APBA Detroit Gold Cup. For the Gold Cup the U-13 will be titled "Ambassador Magazine presents Miss Detroit Yacht Club" and carry the DYC burgee and sponsorship. **Dave Bartush, Cal Phipps, Scott Allen**, and the balance of the U-13 team have received overwhelming support from the local Detroit area and the team's plans include competing in all the races for 2010. -- U-13 photos from Roger Schaaf



U-16. Erick Ellstrom informed the team recently that last year's primary hull (#0116), will be running the entire circuit this year. Since returning from Doha, the hull hasn't seen much attention; they have been moving the race shop to a new location and recently have been working on getting the hull prepped for the upcoming season, including a new paint scheme and some other changes. The team's other hull (#9516), which had been leased by Boeing as the U-787 *Dreamliner* is expected to be returned as the lease expires at the end of May. The boat has been on display at H&RM. The #9516 hull will be the Ellstrom back-up hull, as needed.

U-17. Nate Brown and the Our Gang Racing team have completed the changes to the rear wing structure and running surfaces. The hull has received a fresh paint scheme similar to last years. Nate told the *UNJ* some other modifications were made to some hardware and systems. The Our Gang Racing team made several exhibition runs at the annual Tastin' 'n Racin' event, June 12-13 on Lake Sammamish to test the out new changes made to the boat and a shakedown before hitting the road for Madison. Our Gang Racing plans on competing on the entire circuit again in 2010. -- Lon Erickson photos



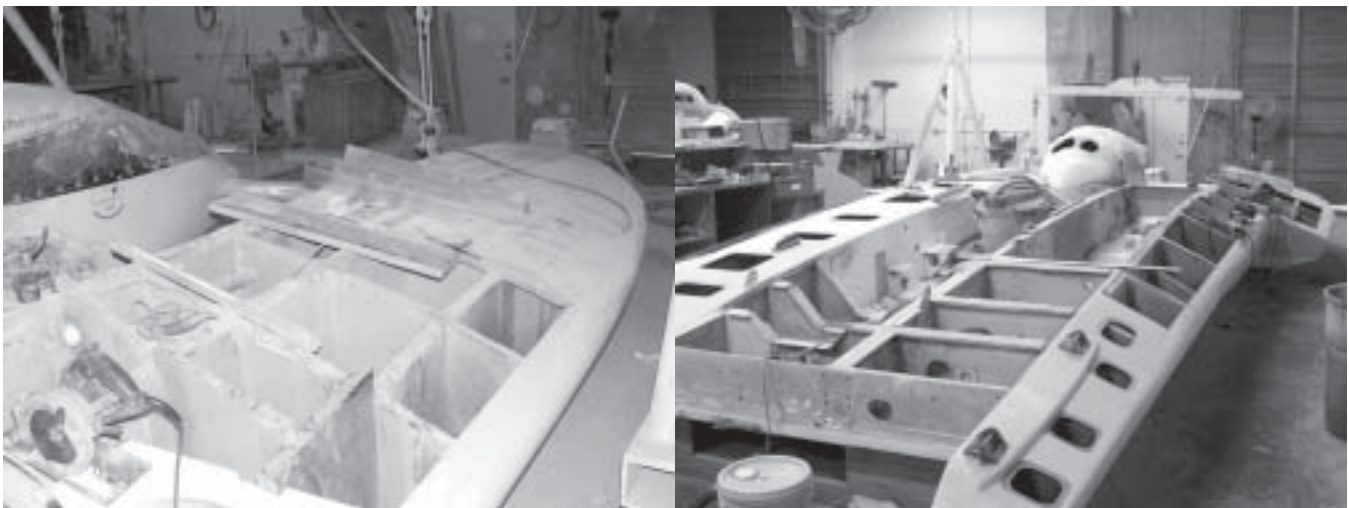
U-21. The “new” *Albert Lee* (#0721) had an exceptional first test on 5-7, in the Tri-Cities. The team then went and repeated another successful test session on Lake Washington, 6-8. They continued to test different gearbox settings, electronics, and systems for different water/race conditions. The team was extremely pleased with the results of both the test sessions and the work accomplished in the off-season. **Greg** and **Brian O’Farrell’s** U-21 will race as *Miss Gill Chiropractic* at the APBA Gold Cup and as *Albert Lee* the rest of the circuit.

U-22. Webster Racing has been busy re-working some hull modifications from things learned in 2009. Bull nose extensions were added to improve lift, handling, and speed. The team has completed making some minor changes to the paint scheme for 2010. They have two “new” rebuilt motors coming to compliment their existing stock of equipment and have been working to resolve gearbox issues that plagued them in ‘09. **Mike Webster’s** goal is to maintain their consistency and gain some speed from the off-season changes the team has worked on.

U-25. The Superior Racing team went to Tri-Cities in May intending to work on their balance issues, but experienced trouble starting and mechanical issues the next morning. Superior Racing had a more successful test session at Lake Washington on 6-8 along with the U-21 team. They had a new low-profile cowling ready to test and ran with it in all four runs. They also ran without a horizontal rear wing, a concept designed to save weight, decrease drag, and smooth airflow over the hull to increase speeds. The exhaust fried one upright when it collapsed. Boat ride and balance during the test appeared to still be an issue that they will continue working on. New team driver **Jon Zimmerman** split the driving duties with **Dr. Ken Muscatel**, each getting two runs in the boat during testing. The U-25 team plans to have Zimmerman drive in Madison and some of the heats in Tri-Cities. Boyland Nissan of Macomb, Michigan will be the title sponsor of the Superior Racing team owned by Ken Muscatel and **Ron Jones, Jr.** for the 2010 APBA Gold Cup.



U-37. **Bill** and **Jane Schumacher’s** *Miss Peters & May* hull now has all the internal repairs completed, new decks, reconfigured bull noses, and systems have been checked and waiting to re-install. A bright “new and vibrant” paint scheme is now being finished and soon to be unveiled. **Scott Raney**, **Dave Hawley**, and **Bruce Haskin** worked building engines during the off season. Raney shared with the *UNJ* that the U-37 is bringing three engines to Madison, two built in their Seattle shop by the team, and one built by **Butch Corning** with help from **Jim Lucero** at Competition Specialties. Raney, **J.W. Myers**, and the entire team are very confident with all the work that’s been accomplished over the winter and feels the hull will be very competitive for 2010. Bill Schumacher has been busy working on additional sponsorships,



recently adding partnerships with Central Welding Supply and ExOfficio to add to the Peters & May USA title sponsorship agreement signed this spring. -- U-37 photos from Lon Erickson

U-100. Leland Racing reports through **Jim Harvey** that the team has been working on routine maintenance of their hulls and equipment. They have six turbines checked out, prepped on the dyno, and ready for 2010. **Fred Leland** continues to work on the automotive powered unlimited he is developing. The hull (#9810) that last ran as *Miss Thriftway* at Seattle in 2005 is the planned test bed for the automotive concept boat. Leland Racing's **Tim Shaddick** has been working with **Earl Wham** (former 1969 *Atlas Van Lines* driver and limited inboard racing icon), to test and dyno the fuel injected 526 c.i. Dodge Hemi engines that will go into the three motor craft.

U-50. **Greg O'Farrell** sold the former *Lakeridge Paving/Navy* hull (#9399) to **Ted Porter** and Formula Boats to be used as a display hull for promotion and marketing of the newly formed offshore team, "Formulaboats.com" that will compete on the Offshore Powerboat Association Series presented by GEICO.



2010 Tri-Cities Water Follies display hull. **Greg O'Farrell** has loaned the Tri-Cities Water Follies one of the hulls from his collection. Originally intended to be the second turbine *Pay 'n Pak*, the hull (#8410) started its racing career in 1984 as the U-10 *Miss Tosti Asti* and competed under various names, including *7-Eleven*, *Cellular One*, *Vantage Ultra*, *Winston Eagle*, *Pete's Wicked Ale*, and others through the 1995 season. -- Brad Drake photo

Nate Brown was first up in **O'Brien Law Firm (John O'Brien)** is a partner in Our Gang Racing LLC, U-17 crew member, and major supporter of Tastin' 'n Racin.' His firm is in Issaquah). It was a little light in the far turn on an early run, but after making a few adjustments, it ran much smoother on the water. Overall, the U-17 took right off, looked, and sounded great from the beach. A few hours after **Kip Brown** flipped his 5 liter on Lake Sammamish he was right back in the U-17 and clocked some quick laps. -- Lon Erickson photo



The U-25 "Superior Racing" hull was unchanged from Tri-Cities, still in need of cosmetic work and a wash; somebody scrawled U-76 in the dirt on the sponson. After some trimming to make to it fit, their new, "very" low profile engine cowling, seemed to work just fine. The question is, will it work under racing conditions. The boat ran well, but didn't look that good on the water. More fine tuning will be needed. **Jon Zimmerman** handled the boat like a pro.

The "Go Fast Turn Left" team forgot the rear horizontal wing for the boat and were going to try running without it, but a late crane gave them time to run back to the shop and install it in time for their first run.

On their first attempt, *Albert Lee* failed to start and died about 60' from the dock. The team was trying new electronics to monitor N2 from going over the limit. It didn't work because it took too long for the turbine to spool up and the new system kept it from starting. The team bypassed it, re-programmed the system, and the second time out the boat ran very well." -- Michael Prophet photos





Chris Tracy

Confusion, drama and uncertainty have been part of setting the hydroplane race schedule for 2010. Both **San Diego** and **Evansville** made noise about having an unlimited event in 2010, but it appears that it was more wishful thinking than anything else, and neither event is on the current race schedule.

July 2-4 is the **Madison Regatta** and the big news is that they picked up Lucas Oil as their title sponsor. Here's the story behind the Lucas sponsorship. Fred Farley reports, "Last fall, Sam Cole contacted Madison Mayor Tim Armstrong and arranged for Armstrong to go to the Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis for a football game. The seats were in the Lucas Oil box. Charlie Grooms, the Miss Madison team manager, accompanied Armstrong and Indianapolis Colts fan Dan Cole, Sam's brother.

Armstrong knew that box-seat etiquette called for avoiding hard-sell business talk with Forrest Lucas. Armstrong and Lucas talked mostly about Madison in a general sort of way, which included discussion of the Madison Regatta, the "Madison" movie, the hometown story, the various festivals, etc. And it just kind of evolved from there in a low-key sort of way. Lucas is very keen on what a community does with its resources and doesn't expect something from the government. Shortly thereafter, Lucas made the commitment to be the title sponsor for the Governor's Cup race." Craig Fjarlie will cover the Madison race for the *UNJ*.

The tour will then move to the Gold Cup in Detroit, July 8-11. **Detroit** lost Chrysler as their title sponsor and has not been able to recruit a new title sponsor in economically hard hit Michigan. Financial issues put the race in the tentative for much of the spring, but it is on the schedule. The Detroit River Regatta Association (DRRA) has been actively soliciting donations to help pay race expenses. And there was a challenge to the race permit, as one person objected, complaining that there was intentional racial discrimination, as he was not allowed to run his 5-liter boat. DRRA noted that the river was too rough and dangerous for that small class. The City granted a permit for the Gold Cup and the 5-liter racer will be able to run an exhibition during Detroit River Days in June, but not during the Gold Cup races. And there is more. Detroit has no money to do some dredging that is needed to race on their normal racecourse, so the racecourse will likely be modified from the recent past and be a 3-mile course. And adding to the drama, DRRA negotiated a smaller fee (around \$130,000) with H1, which would reduce compensation for race teams. It has been reported to the *UNJ* that seven owners said yes and four said no. We have been told that Ellstrom, Webster, Cooper and Brown voted no, and that Leland had considered voting no, but ultimately voted yes. Some believe that Detroit is just being honest with their financial situation. (There have been incidents where teams were not paid the full purse after an event.) Our stats guy, Allan Stiles, will cover the Detroit race for the *UNJ*.

The series moves west July 23-25 for the **Lamb Weston Columbia Cup** in Washington's Tri-Cities (Kennewick, Richland, Pasco.) It will be the 45th running of the event. Expect the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum to send vintage boats for an exhibition there, too. This is the third year of a three-year title sponsorship deal with Lamb Weston. In conjunction with the race, Lamb Weston is offering, for the second year in a row, the wildly popular Free Fries Fryday (www.freefriesfryday.com) at many restaurants on Friday of race week. (More than 25,000 servings of French fries were given away last year, which also greatly increased both traffic and revenue for Tri-City area restaurants.) This year patrons get free French fries and Lamb Weston will make a charitable contribution to Second Harvest for every serving, too! Lamb Weston has first right of refusal for extending their race sponsorship and the Tri-City folks are hoping they will extend. HAPO Community Credit Union is sponsoring the air show. Ben "Doc" Keller will write the race report.

Albert Lee Appliances inked a three-year deal with Seattle's Seafair for the **Albert Lee Cup**. This year's race will run one week later than usual, Aug. 6-8. Rumors have been circulating all year that Seafair did not get all their expected sponsorship dollars from Chevrolet in 2009 and that contributed to considerable belt tightening at Seafair during the past year. Seafair tried twice to negotiate a smaller fee with H1 for the 2010 race. Owners turned down the first offer and split on the second offer and the race was briefly in jeopardy, but restaurant owner, Duke Moscrip, pledged \$40,000 to bridge the gap between H1 and Seafair. His restaurants, Duke's Chowder Houses, got tons of media publicity when they announced their support. Boeing is back sponsoring the air show that includes the Blue Angels, but another longtime air show sponsor is not returning for 2010. Veteran race reporter, Mac Clouse, will write the *UNJ* race report.

Rounding out the schedule, Nov. 18-20 is the **Oryx Cup, UIM World Championship**, in Doha, Qatar. The Qatar race was quite successful last year; although the grapevine says the total money package in 2010 might not be as large as last year. It has been rumored that one or two more Middle East races might be coordinated with the Qatar race, and a race in **Bahrain** in December seems to be a strong possibility.

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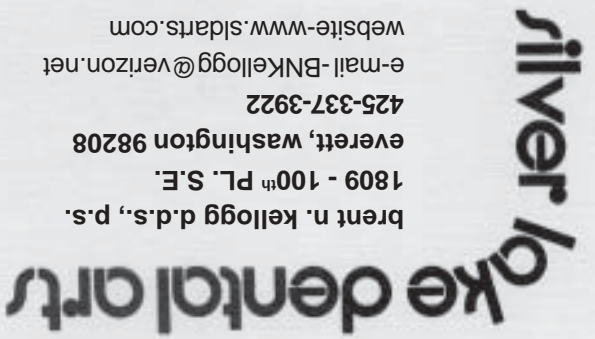
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