

UNLIMITED NewsJournal

A CHRONICLE OF SPEED

MAY 2024

A visit to hydro racing's past.



Randy Hall

George Henley and the *Pay 'n Pak* at the dock in the Tri-Cities 50 years ago while Howie Bennis and *Miss Budweiser* lurk in the background. The two hydros battled each other throughout the 1974 season.

The sport of unlimited hydroplane racing has a long history. It was 120 years ago, after all, when the APBA Gold Cup—the oldest trophy in American motorsports—first took place. So, with that record in mind, every year as the contestants for the upcoming season are preparing to their boats, we like to look back at what was going on within this sport many years ago.

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100 YEARS AGO

The 1924 Season

The birth of the Gold Cup class had come two years before in effort to make winning harder for Gar Wood, who had won the Gold Cup race five straight years. Among other things, the officials at the APBA greatly limited the size of the engines that could be used and outlawed steps on the underside of the hulls that let the boats skip across the surface and go faster. Instead, the officials ordered, the boats competing for the Gold Cup should be more like those that regular people could buy, not hybrids that were practical only for racing.

The change had the desired result in 1922—somebody other than Gar Wood had won. Jesse Vincent took the trophy with his *Packard Chriscraft*, then made it two in a row in 1923. But, getting there involved a touch of controversy. While Vincent's boat had finished second in all three heats, it managed to collect the same number of points as *Rainbow III*, a Canadian craft entered by Harry Greening that had easily won the first two heats.

Dramatic change is never easy, however, and so certain ramifications of the



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

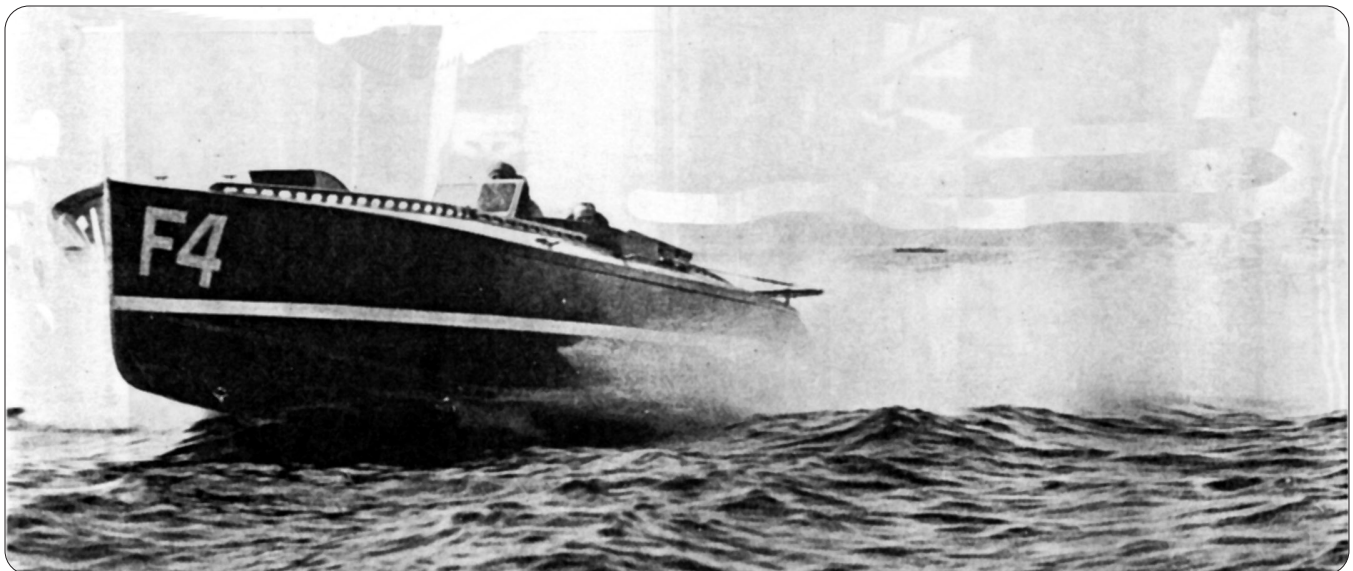
Gar Wood (right) and his riding mechanic, Orlin Johnson, got headlines around the world when they mocked the APBA's rules by wearing formal evening dress at the 2024 Buffalo race.

new Gold Cup rules began to emerge as the boats competed in 1924.

The season started with Jack Williams and his new *Wilgold II* taking victories in Miami; Havana, Cuba; and Buffalo, New York, before the fleet would return to the Detroit River for the Gold Cup in late August. But, by then, the public notice APBA officials hoped would be directed toward their premier event had been far surpassed by worldwide attention to a publicity stunt performed by

Gar Wood.

As the boats visited Buffalo, Wood could not resist mocking the new Gold Cup rules made two years before. Claiming that the APBA's intent was to hold a race among "Gentlemen's Runabouts," he and his riding mechanic, Orlin Johnson, drove their boat while dressed in full, formal evening wear—complete with silk top hats, swallow-tail jackets, white gloves, vests, starched collars, cuff links, and patent-leather shoes.



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

Canadian Harry Greening came close to winning the Gold Cup in 1923 then appeared to have won the race in 1924 with his boat *Rainbow IV*. It was disqualified, however, because of the lapstrake planks used to build the hull were deemed to have given it an advantage.

After winning the race, the two climbed from the cockpit and Wood pronounced his craft a gentleman's boat. "Milady may ride in it clad in a snow-white outfit without danger of a spot of oil or grease," he announced. A photo of the two waving their top hats appeared in newspapers around the world.

Then came the Gold Cup itself, which gave the sport another dose of publicity the officials would have preferred not to have.

Harry Greening, still bothered by his near victory the year before, built a new boat for the 1924 Gold Cup that he christened *Rainbow IV*. In building the boat, he noted that the rules allowed for the hulls to have lapstrake construction, which he researched to mean the planks could be laid on top of another in a way to form a landing for the next plank—like clapboard siding on a house. Nothing specified the direction the planks had to be placed, whether fore to aft, or from one side of the hull to the other. He chose the latter.

All seemed fine as Greening drove his *Rainbow IV* on the Detroit River. He easily beat Caleb Bragg in the elegant *Baby Bootlegger* in the first heat, came in second behind Charles Chapman in *Miss Columbia* in the second heat, and was behind Bragg and *Baby Bootlegger* in the third. But, after they tallied the points, *Rainbow IV* came out ahead of the other two and was declared the winner.

"His success this year was a most popular one," reported *The Rudder*, "and every real sportsman applauded the plucky Canadian for the never-say-die spirit which has kept him in the game year after year in spite of many setbacks which would have discouraged a less determined character."

Greening's joy was short-lived, though. As one reporter put it, "the inevitable protest, without which no run-about race seems complete, was filed by the owner of *Lady Shores* against *Rainbow IV*." The crime? Those lapstrakes went from side to side, which meant they act-

ed like miniature steps along the bottom of the hull—which was forbidden.

After considering the matter, APBA officials eventually decided to uphold the protest, disqualified *Rainbow IV*, and awarded the Gold Cup to Caleb Bragg and *Baby Bootlegger* of New York. Harry Greening would never enter a Gold Cup contest again.

75 YEARS AGO

The 1949 Season

Following his successful 1948 campaign, the Detroit bakery owner's first full year on the Unlimited circuit, Jack Schafer had high hopes for 1949. Dan Arena was back in the cockpit of his defending national champion *Such Crust* and a new prop-rider, built by Arena and named *Such Crust II*, was now added to his team. Most experts agreed that chief among his rivals would be *My Sweetie*, a John Hacker step-hull owned by Detroit businessmen Ed Schoenherr and E.W. Gregory; *Miss Great Lakes*, the lone survivor of the previous year's Gold Cup; and *Tempo VI*, which was owned and driven by the world-famous bandleader Guy Lombardo.

There was no build-up toward the season's biggest event this year—the APBA Gold Cup, typically held in late August or early September when hosted by Detroit, was instead scheduled for the

first weekend of July. Yet, despite the early start, the event attracted 23 entrants to the banks of the Detroit River. Of those, eight started the first heat.

Competing before a crowd of 200,000 spectators and blessed with ideal weather—sunny skies and smooth water—Arena started where he left off the previous fall. He drove *Such Crust* into an early lead, was soon passed by Bill Cantrell in *My Sweetie* until that boat dropped back with a broken throttle, then closely followed Stanley Dollar and his aluminum *Skip-A-Long* before he dashed into the lead with fewer than two laps to go and claimed the victory.

It would turn out to be Cantrell's day, however. He won the second and third heats by a good quarter mile and, according to the reporter from the *New York Times*, "made this dangerous, expensive sport seem ridiculously easy." Dollar would claim second-place honors with two more runner-up finishes in *Skip-A-Long* while Arena and *Such Crust* placed third overall.

Meanwhile, Horace E. Dodge, Jr., was thinking about returning to the sport. He first became involved in boat racing in 1925 and had campaigned many boats, including Gold Cup winners *Delphine IV* (1932) and *Impshi* (1936), then stepped away from racing during the years right after World War II. But, his passion for speed was strong. When



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

The defending champion *Such Crust* was the favorite going into the 1949 campaign.



Tony Bugeja Collection

ABOVE: Stanley Dollar drove his *Skip-A-Long* to a second-place finish in the 1949 Gold Cup then was the winner at the Detroit Memorial, the Gulf Lake Regatta, and the Harmsworth Trophy.

RIGHT: Horace Dodge, Jr., (left) accepts the President's Cup trophy from President Harry Truman after his boat *My Sweetie* won that event. It was among the four straight victories Bill Cantrell had in the boat to finish the 1949 season.

word got out that Ernest Wilson of Canada was considering a challenge to the Harmsworth Trophy, Dodge decided he wanted to be among the defenders.

Dodge considered several boats that he might purchase, but settled on the Gold Cup winner. Three weeks after Cantrell drove the boat to victory on the Detroit River, and a week before the Harmsworth challenge by Wilson's *Miss Canada IV* on that same waterway, Dodge settled his deal with Schoenherr and Gregory and became the owner of *My Sweetie*.

Three boats were on the United States team to defend the Harmsworth Trophy, which had resided unchallenged at the Detroit Yacht Club since Gar Wood last defended it in 1933. In addition to *My Sweetie*, the Canadian challenger also faced Dan Arena in *Such Crust* and Stanley Dollar in *Skip-A-Long*, who had won victories at the Detroit Memorial and in a race at Battle Creek, Michigan, since the Gold Cup.

In the end, the challenge fizzled. While *Miss Canada IV* might have been a formidable foe, given it was powered by a monstrous Rolls-Royce Griffon engine, its performance was less than dazzling. On the first day, as Arena pulled away from the others and won easily, *Miss Canada IV* had fallen 10 miles behind the leader. And, as Dollar sped to a victory on the second day, things weren't much better for the Canadians.

"We made a good start and ran very well until some minor equipment malfunction slowed us down and eventually made it necessary to pull out of the race to avoid engine damage," driver Harold Wilson described in his book *Boats Unlimited*.



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

A two-lap match race between *Such Crust* and *Skip-A-Long* determined which team could claim the Harmsworth victory.

A two-lap match race between *Such Crust* and *Skip-A-Long* determined which team could claim the Harmsworth victory and which would have the honor of hosting the next challenge, should there be one. That matter was settled when an oil line broke on Jack Schafer's craft as the two were about to begin their second time around the racecourse.

My Sweetie had dropped out of the first Harmsworth battle with a broken water line, and followed behind the other U.S. entries as Dodge drove it in the second race, but the boat enjoyed considerable success as the 1949 season continued. Cantrell drove it to four straight victories—the National Sweepstakes, Silver Cup, President's Cup, and Imperial Gold Cup—to wrap up the campaign and claim the national championship.

Yet, there was a revolution brewing. As Dodge and Cantrell celebrated their achievement, a strange looking craft was under construction about 2,300 miles to the west in a large wooden boathouse with crystal windows that sat along the

north shore of Portage Bay in Seattle. But we'll tell you more about that a year from now.

50 YEARS AGO

The 1974 Season

The hydroplane world was stunned the year before when *Pay 'N Pak* showed up for its christening with a wing standing above its rear deck. By 1974, thanks to *Pay 'N Pak's* success in winning four races and the national championship, wings began to be standard equipment on many of the other boats, especially those created by Ron Jones.

Three new hydroplanes emerged from Jones's shop in Costa Mesa, Calif., each adorned with a horizontal stabilizer, as the wings were called, as well as the latest development in skid fin technology to help them get more quickly through the turns. George Simon had ordered a new *Miss U.S.*, Bob Fendler had a new *Lincoln Thrift*, and a new owner, Leslie Rosenberg, bought another and named it *Valu-Mart*.

Attracting the most attention, however, was yet another Jones creation that appeared in the Seattle pits in 1973 but never made it onto the racecourse. The *U-95* not only had a wing, but two turbine engines—the first to successfully



Pay 'N Pak (left) racing side-by-side with *Miss Budweiser* was a common sight in 1974.

Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

do so. Jim Clapp, a prosperous Seattle businessman, had developed the boat with the help of a long-time boat and air racer named Chuck Lyford and watched it make its first test run about a month after the 1973 Seattle race, but he died several months later. It would be up to his widow, Pamela Clapp, to fulfill his dream of entering the turbine-powered hydroplane in a race.

Despite all the innovation, the greatest challenge to *Pay 'N Pak* in 1974 would come from its traditional nemesis, the *Miss Budweiser*. In 1973 the two had thrilled fans in tight battles with each other throughout the season. But, the occupants of both cockpits would be

different a year later. George Henley had replaced Mickey Remund at the controls of the "Winged Wonder," while Howie Bennis was now sitting in the *Budweiser* instead of Dean Chenoweth, who resigned to run his own Budweiser distributorship in Florida.

Bennis came out ahead when the season started in Miami and *Pay 'N Pak* faltered in the final heat, but Henley followed that with two consecutive victories at Washington, D.C., and in Owensboro, Ky. The *U-95*, meanwhile, had the fastest qualifying lap at the Owensboro race and the fastest heat, but was hampered by mechanical trouble and a damaged hull.

In Detroit, *Miss U.S.* emerged as the most successful contender to the top two, when Tom D'Eath set a blistering pace having spun out early in the first heat, but then catching up with the others and winning by a comfortable margin ahead of both *Pay 'N Pak* and *Budweiser*. A broken throttle prevented *Miss U.S.* from starting the final heat, though, and Bennis went on to win the Gar Wood Trophy.

It was pretty much a *Pay 'N Pak* show from that point on, however. Henley and Leif Borgersen in the *U-95* traded victories in the preliminary heats of the World Championship at the Tri-Cities, Wash., but *Pay 'N Pak* enjoyed a clear victory in the final.

For the Gold Cup in Seattle, the hydroplanes returned to Lake Washington,



Randy Hall

After making an appearance the previous year, the turbine-powered *U-95* finally entered competition in 1974. It's shown here at the Atomic Cup in the Tri-Cities.



TOP: Pay 'n Pak driver George Henley.
ABOVE: Howie Bennis, driver of Miss Budweiser.

but to a racecourse off Sand Point—about eight miles north of the place where they had been competing since 1951. The new site provided a better opportunity to collect admission tickets to the event, but also offered water conditions that were not as smooth as those found at the old site south of the Floating Bridge.

The day's first preliminary heat was started three times. The first attempt was stopped when *U-95* blew a turbine and sank from the damage caused by the flying engine parts. The restart was then stopped again when *Miss U.S.* caught fire. The third try was the charm, and Henley got across the finish line before Bennis. Although *Pay 'n Pak* and *Budweiser* thrilled fans by battling closely much of the day, the same result happened in the second, third, and final heats to give Henley and

Pay 'n Pak another race victory.

In Dayton, Ohio, the racecourse was so small only three boats could be on the water at the same time, yet that didn't stop Henley from winning another race. At Phoenix, on a storm-tossed Lake Pleasant, the final heat was delayed two hours before Bennis narrowly nudged his *Miss Budweiser* ahead of Bill Muncey in *Atlas Van Lines* at the finish line as darkness began to engulf the surroundings.

Bennis then broke both legs while riding a motorcycle on a sand dune, so team owner Bernie Little lured Dean Chenoweth out of his retirement to complete the season. It didn't matter. George Henley won in both San Diego and Madison, Ind., to clinch the national championship. *Budweiser* and Howie Bennis had enough points each to finish second in the team and driver standings, while *Miss Madison* was a distant third among the race teams and Bill Muncey took third among the drivers.

25 YEARS AGO

The 1999 Season

The *Miss Budweiser* and its driver Dave Villwock had been completely dominant in 1998—so much so that fans looking ahead to 1999 were encouraged by three changes designed to maybe add some parity to the proceedings.

The most obvious was yet another

change that would apply brakes to any competitor was winning too much. If a boat won two consecutive races, it would be forbidden from racing in lane one during the next event. If it won that third race anyway, then it couldn't be in lanes one or two for the following race, and so on, until it conceivably could only race on the far outside. But, if the win streak was broken, then lane one was again back in play. Also, to encourage more entrants, the distribution of prize money was changed so that instead of giving greater awards to those who finished best, the money would be divided evenly among all entrants.

As the experts looked at the season ahead, however, they thought that perhaps the greatest threat to *Budweiser's* supremacy would come from another team. Fred Leland, whose boat won the national title just three years before, employed all the persuasive powers he could muster to entice seven-time champion Chip Hanauer from his two-year retirement and drive his *Miss PICO* entry.

Yet, despite these efforts, Villwock and *Budweiser* would have a successful year and would be locked out of the inside lanes on many occasions.

As was the practice among the top teams both the *Budweiser* organization and the *Miss PICO* team would arrive at each race site with more than one boat, would send both out on test runs, then decide which of the two they'd enter in



The two *Miss Budweiser* boats sit together in the fog-shrouded pits at San Diego.



the race. For Bernie Little's *Budweiser*, the two were the 1995 rebuild of the boat known as T-3 and the 1997 rebuild of the boat known as T-6. For Leland, he mainly used two boats he had completed the year before, hulls #9810 and #9899. His former champion would not be available to him because he had leased the boat to Jerry Hopp, who would race it with eight different names.

The season started at Lake Havasu City, Ariz., in late-May, where Hanauer seemed to have not missed a step during his time away. He started the final heat perfectly, taking advantage of a split-second hesitation by Villwock as he hoped to avoid jumping the gun, and was away to a convincing victory. Next came Barrie, Ont., where those roles were reversed. In the final, Villwock passed Hanauer during the first lap around the triangular racecourse and stayed there to the end.

In Evansville, Ind., the two were at it again. This time Hanauer was across the starting line too early, which gave Villwock a second victory in a row. Then, forbidden from using the inside lane on the tight course about 230 miles up the Ohio River at a blazing hot Madison, Ind., Villwock's *Budweiser* (the T-3) hit the roostertail from another boat in the first turn of the final and went over. That stopped the heat and gave the win to Hanauer in the re-run.

The duel then continued at the Gold Cup in Detroit. Hanauer nailed the start, kept *Miss Budweiser* (the T-5) to his outside, and was about three roostertail-lengths ahead at the finish to claim his 11th winning of the prestigious trophy. Finally, before heading west, the fleet went to Norfolk, Va., where Hanauer's luck finally ran out. Bedeviled by fuel-flow problems, his *Miss PICO* could not get started for the final, so he was forced to watch the action standing on the deck of his bobbing hydro as Villwock drove to another victory.

While the two had each scored three race trophies during the eastern swing, *Budweiser* was already well ahead in national points as the fleet gathered on the shore of the Columbia River at the Tri-Cities, Wash. The first meeting of the two at the event came in Heat 3A, where *Miss PICO* be-

ABOVE: With Chip Hanauer coming out of a two-year retirement to drive Fred Leland's *Miss PICO*, the team offered the only legitimate threat to the dominance of *Miss Budweiser*.

LEFT: Hanauer celebrates his victory at the Indiana Governor's Cup in Madison, Ind.

While the two had each scored three race trophies during the eastern swing, *Budweiser* was already well ahead in national points as the fleet gathered on the shore of the Columbia River.



Dave Villwock won eight races and his third national title in 1999.

came airborne, rolled high through *Budweiser's* roostertail, and landed right-side up. Hanauer said he was okay, except for a sore back and neck, and his boat seemed to have suffered only superficial damage to its wing and the decking, so the Leland crew immediately began to prepare for the final.

Though many fans hoped for a miraculous flip-and-win effort by Hanauer in the final, it wasn't to be. Mike Weber took over the driving duties of a crippled *Miss PICO*, but could only follow well behind Villwock. Meanwhile, after the race, Hanauer's injuries were diagnosed to be serious enough to keep him out of action

until mid-September. The boat also was damaged more severely than originally believed and also would miss the next two events.

With his biggest threat watching from the shore, Villwock then started collecting the race wins at a consistent pace. A third in a row was claimed in Seattle and a fourth at a wind-blown Kelowna, B.C. When the boats gathered in San Diego, Hanauer and his *Miss PICO* had both been mended and *Budweiser* was prevented from racing in lanes one, two, or three. It meant that Hanauer might have a good chance, circling around a shorter course. "I don't like this new

rule," he said, "but I'll take it."

It didn't seem to make a difference, though. Although he started the final heat in lane five, Villwock was first across the starting line, used his superior speed to run away from the others, and by the end of the fourth lap held a commanding lead. That's when *Miss Pontiac*, the many-named former champion for Leland that Greg Hopp was now driving, suddenly stood on its tail and blew over backward. That ended the contest and Villwock, having completed half of the required laps, was declared the winner.

With *Budweiser's* national title already clinched, the season then wrapped up in Honolulu, where Villwock easily won a sixth in a row. Chip Hanauer and *Miss PICO* finished second in the final standings and Mark Weber was third in a boat that saw names such as *York International* and *Miss DYC*.

When asked after the Hawaii race whether he'd return the following year, Hanauer admitted that he didn't know. "It's just not fun anymore," he explained. "When I started driving Unlimiteds it was against the likes of Bill Muncey and Dean Chenoweth. Now it's a lot different." ❖

Please consider a donation to the *NewsJournal*.

The good news is that the costs to produce the *Unlimited NewsJournal* online are low, especially when contrasted to the expenses we had when this publication was printed and mailed each month. Our *UNJ* staff members utilize their personal technology and software, at no cost to the *UNJ*, to produce each issue. But, we still must pay some expenses. We subscribe to a website-builder program and platform, which is our largest expense. Also, we purchase some website security features and pay fees to retain our URL. Sometimes, our website-building program also requires upgrades that cost additional money. So, every few years, as our bank balance declines, we reach to our readers and ask for donations.

This is one of those times.

The *UNJ* is current on all of its financial obligations, but with some renewal expenses coming in 2024, we will need to increase

our bank balance to fund them. Please consider sending a small donation to the *Unlimited NewsJournal*. Any amount is fine, but we have a few levels to suggest:

- \$10 Outboard Level
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- \$30 Vintage Level
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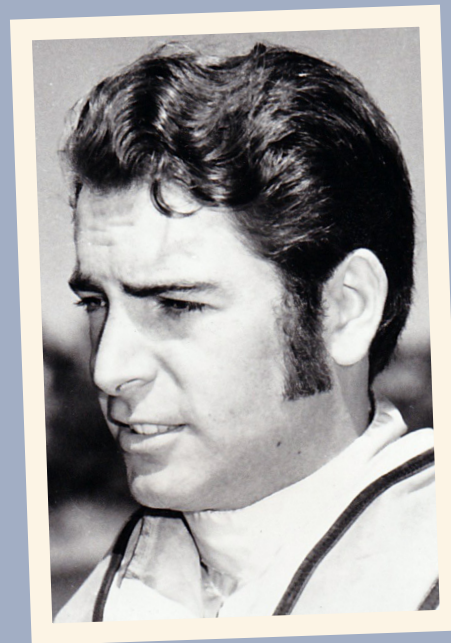
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Thank you!

FROM THE UNJ VAULT:

The racing career of Leif Borgersen: In his own words.

While celebrating the 50th anniversary of the *Unlimited NewsJournal* in our November issue last fall, we featured a story where Leif Borgersen reflected back on his experience driving the *U-95*, the first successful turbine-powered hydro. The story consisted of comments that Borgersen had made during a meeting in November 1986 that celebrated the 20th anniversary of Unlimiteds Unanimous, the Seattle-based hydro club that continues to produce the *NewsJournal*. During that guest-speaking appearance in 1986, Borgersen also talked about other experiences during his driving career as well as his personal views about the sport in general. What follows are excerpts of what Borgersen said that day. These comments previously appeared in the March 1988 issue of the *NewsJournal*.



Unlimited Racing Commission

TRANSCRIBED BY DAVID L. PETERSON

I've always had a love-and-hate relationship with the sport of unlimited hydroplane racing. Loving the good times, travel, and camaraderie; hating the bad times, the deaths we've had, of course—a lot of my friends and many of the heroes of the sport have gone by the wayside. That's the love-and-hate relationship of doing something like we do.

The knowledge, experience, and technology that the years have shown represents where the sport has been, and there's no stopping where it may go. I do sometimes wonder what will happen in the years to come, and it's going to be interesting to watch the changes.

I have my own feelings regarding where I think the sport is going to go, and I think from what was shown in the slides [prior to his speech, a slide presentation was shown that featured boats from the 1950s, '60s, and '70s], what we don't really realize sometimes is that years ago, when we look at some of the hulls and some of the engines that were being run at the time, it was fairly easy to get parity within the sport.

I remember going to many races and, not saying that I always had the fastest boat, but the years that I drove the *Notre Dame* I think were some of my better ones.

With good equipment, good personnel, I really had a good chance to go all the way. I look back then and there really wasn't anything that could stop me



Randy Hall

Borgersen fires up the new *Notre Dame* for a test run on Lake Washington in early 1969.

other than my inability as a driver to not do the job. The crews were trained well, the boats were very similar in design. The engines back then mainly were Rolls, with a few Allison's.

Back then everything was pretty much the same. Everybody had their carburetors flowed basically by the same person. The engines were built very much similar in design with regards to pistons and all the clearances, and that made for good racing. It was very easy to go out and go deck-to-deck with another boat lap after lap. Everybody, of course, had their breakages and their problems like they do today, but it was a lot easier to go out and put on a good show.

Myself, I started out on *Notre Dame* where there happened to be some very good people involved. Dave Culley was a crew member the same year I started

out. Andy Anderson was the boat manager, Jim Kerth was the crew chief, and we also had Jim Lucero on the crew.

If you look through the years, where all those people went and the things that they did, I kind of look back and say, gee, I started out with piston boats years ago and was lucky enough to be involved with a turbine. Did that for a while, and then, when I came back in, I was back with the pistons with *Frank Kenney*.

You sometimes wonder the way things are going. I still enjoy being an engine rebuilder. I enjoy the piston motor. I think that the World War II motors—that mystique, that sound still gives me goose bumps—I feel like I'm in a museum sometimes working around that stuff. On the other hand, in today's world with our youth and where we're going, the turbines are the natural power plant.

I think there has to become a balance somewhere in the sport to really improve the sport to make it go places. I'd really like to see that happen. I don't have the answers when people ask, "Well, what would you do?" It's a hard decision, but I think somewhere the Unlimited sport is going to come up with what I call a short-term and a long-term plan.

I think, like a business, if they decide and make some rules and guidelines and follow them, I think the sport is going to keep on growing. If they don't, I think

Leif Borgersen's Driving Stats

YEAR	BOAT	HULL#	RACE RESULTS						HEAT RESULTS					
			RACES	1st	2nd	3rd	DNQ	START	DNS	FINISH	1st	Pct.	Top 3	Pct.
1968	Notre Dame	6807	3	0	1	0	0	7	0	6	2	0.333	5	0.833
1969	Notre Dame	6907	7	0	2	0	0	19	0	16	3	0.188	13	0.813
1970	Notre Dame	6907	8	0	2	4	0	25	0	22	11	0.500	18	0.818
1971	Hallmark Homes	6740	5	0	1	1	0	13	0	11	3	0.273	10	0.909
	Hallmark Homes	7132	3	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	0	0.000	0	0.000
1972	Miss Van's P-X	7132	1	0	0	1	0	3	0	3	0	0.000	3	1.000
1974	U-95	7495	5	0	1	1	0	13	0	12	3	0.250	9	0.750
1985	Frank Kenney Toyota/Volvo	8413	2	0	0	1	0	4	0	2	1	0.500	2	1.000
TOTALS:			34	0	7	8	0	88	0	73	23	0.315	60	0.822

the sport has a very high percentage chance of being limited—not dying, but being limited to really where it can go as far as the marketing potential.

Years ago, when I was driving, Tommy Fults, who was driving for Dave Heerensperger at the time, had fairly long hair. I was always called the clean-cut guy because I always had short hair. We could probably both go out and do similar things, but he was looked on as being a little bit more rowdy because he had the long hair.

One afternoon out at the Seattle Seafair pits, we were testing, and Tommy put on his helmet—in those days we just had the open-faced helmets—and was sitting in his boat. A few people were standing on the finger pier, and right behind him was this little girl, probably about five, six years old. She turns to her dad and says, “Dad, I didn’t know they let girls drive

those things!”

Dave Heerensperger finally went to Tommy one day and said, “Lookit, Tommy, you’re doing a good job. I don’t want to get down on you or anything, but I’ve got to talk to you about something.” Tommy thought, “Oh boy, I’m going to lose my job. What did I do now?”

Dave says, “We have a little problem in our marketing and advertising.”

Tommy says, “Well, what seems to be the problem, Dave?”

Heerensperger says, “It’s the length of your hair. You don’t give me a very good image.”

I relate that to one thing, and this is that over the years the sport has changed. Back then, the advertising and marketing potentials were just starting. It was really the early age.

You look back on the owners—Bill Harrah, Shirley Mendelson McDonald—

some of them put the names of their corporations on the boat, but they didn’t really use it as a marketing vehicle. It was just something that somebody started so they said, “Well, you know, I’ll put my name on that.” They were all fairly wealthy individuals on their own.

Right in those early days, I can remember from other people talking about how you dressed, what you did. Finally, the owners had to look at their crews, their drivers, and they had to dress them a little bit better. They had to try and market their product a little bit better. Basically, they were out representing their product. So, through the years you saw the names starting to come into the sport, and the sport has really gone into a marketing vein.

There’s more pressure involved than a few years ago. We took it a little bit lighter as drivers in some ways. We all tried just as hard, but I think the intense pressure of advertising has changed a lot of things. It’s made the sport stronger and better because it’s brought money into the sport, and that’s great.

The Notre Dame years:

We ran a 120-mph lap in Detroit one time, and that’s kind of like running in the “brick yard” with the Indy cars. The concrete wall there on the pit turn can be very, very exciting.

The day that we ran 120, we were trying to go out and run fast. In those days you would really try to run fast in qualifying, and we were one of the top qualifiers. So, Bob Espland says, “Go out there and really zing it. See if you can’t set a record.”

So, you kind of gulp, because that’s probably the most dangerous period you can run an Unlimited is by yourself. A lot of things can happen. The water is real flat and real sticky and some unusual things can take place compared to how the boat reacts in competition water.

So, I went out, got all lined up, came down, and I kept sliding the boat out



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

During the boat’s debut season in 1969, Borgersen drove *Notre Dame* to second-place finishes at the Kentucky Governor’s Cup in Owensboro and the Atomic Cup in the Tri-Cities.

Randy Hall



Randy Hall



Randy Hall



TOP: Borgersen takes the *Hallmark Homes* (the former *Miss Bardahl*) out for a test run in Seattle in early 1971. **MIDDLE:** The *Hallmark Homes* was heavily damaged in Madison and had to be replaced with another hydro, which was built in only 32 days. **ABOVE:** The new *Hallmark Homes* appeared in the 1971 season's final three events, including here at the Emerald Cup in Eugene, Oregon.

coming around the turn by the pits. And the wall kept coming up closer and closer. I remember there were about eight guys along the wall, there was this metal barrier that runs the entire length, and they were all watching me come. All of a sudden, you can see them all stand up, and their mouths drop open. They turn around, and then there was a big wall of water. I knocked 'em all down, every one of them, and I knew I had to be really running fast!

We ran 120 mph that day and that was just letting it all loose and going for it. It was pretty scary to do.

The story of 1971 and *Hallmark Homes*:

Hallmark Homes, the boat that I crashed in Madison [Heat 1A at the 1971 Gold Cup], was originally a *Miss Bardahl*. Muncy came over from about the number-six lane and left me “plenty” of room, but for some reason my boat went in the air over the roostertail and crashed, and the fellows brought it back to Seattle.

They actually—and I still can’t believe it—built a complete Unlimited in 32 days, from cutting the frames to actually having it going in the water. There were a number of people in the sport—Bernie Little was one, “Pappy” Cantrell was another—who actually came down to the

boat shop and watched a crew working 24 hours around the clock, taking shifts.

I was still recuperating. I had been on crutches, from some bruises, and I didn't know if I was really hoping if they'd get it done in time or not for the Seattle Seafair race. A lot of people came down and said that there was no way that they were going to make it. Ed Karelsen happened to be lofting the frames, and everybody had their own particular jobs. Dan Kelson was heading up the program with Fred Wright, and I can actually remember guys working and falling down from exhaustion, asleep on the floor from working so many hours and running out of gas.

We actually made it down to the racecourse and qualified on Sunday morning. Unfortunately, we hadn't got all the bugs out and we were having some steering-vibration problems.

I went out and, in the one heat, Muncey was on the right side of me, and I was out in front of him, and I lost the steering and there was nothing at about 155 mph. I started to come out of the throttle and the boat lunged to the right.

Unfortunately, Bill was right there and later said that I steered right into him! There was nothing there and, actually, it was fortunate that Bill was there.

I remember I was kind of hurt that afternoon because he said that an inexperienced driver had hit him. He finished the laps that heat but later sank at the dock because the afterplane was gone. He was pretty upset, to say the least, and my boat didn't really have too much damage. We had a few words back and forth, and that's kind of the sport. Time seems to heal everything.

Regarding Bernie Little:

Bernie Little started out many years ago, didn't win anything, and was a no-name type of person in the circuit. For about four or five years, Bernie would come to races and not do very much. I think a lot of people forget those things. To



Randy Hall

Leif Borgersen in the cockpit of the first *Hallmark Homes*.

me, I think it's always the little person who starts out, it seems, in this sport and builds his way up through the years, through the trials and tribulations.

On crashes:

It takes a lot to come back from a crash. You have to go through it and experience it to really be able to say, "Hey, I'd like to do something like that."

I visited Dean Chenoweth in the hospital after one of his blow-overs and remember telling him, "Chenoweth, why don't you grow up? You've been doing this long enough and won everything there is. You quit, now you come back, and you crash. What the hell's the deal?"

He says, "Yeah, you know you're right. You're the only smart one. You stayed out of it and you've been able to stay out of it."

Yeah, I was pretty smart. I got right back in, just like he did!

Personally, as a driver like Dean Chenoweth and Bill Muncey that has crashed before, you really have to dig down deep inside and say, "Do I really want to do this? Do I want to risk my life

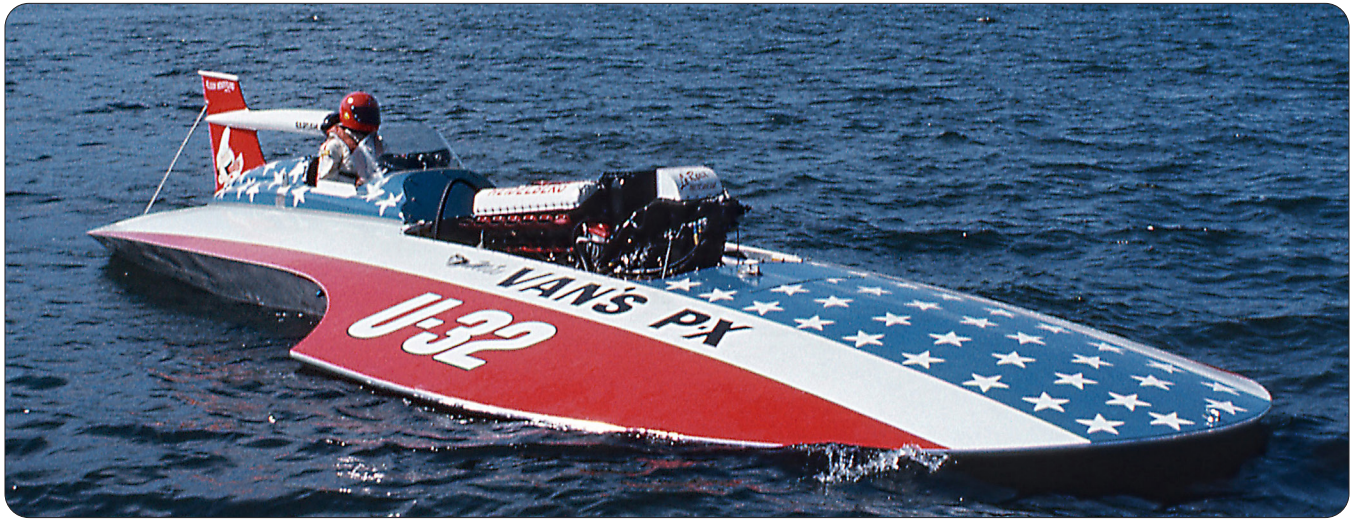
to go out there and try to prove something?"

Well, I've come back from about two or three accidents through the years and have always been able to get back in the boat and do it. This last one [Frank Kenney Toyota/Volvo's flip at Syracuse, NY, in 1985] I said, "No, I'm just too old for this. My body just can't stand this anymore. This is it. I've come as far as I can. If I go out there again, like the doctor says, 'You might enjoy the rest of your life from a wheelchair.'" I'm very lucky to be walking and doing the things I am after the accident I went through.

Then versus now:

It's hard to compare some of the speeds these days because the courses have changed so drastically. Years ago, it was a different ball game running the long racecourses. Now you're dealing with different speeds, setting the boat up completely different, with different propellers.

Now these boats are fantastic, they'll go through a corner like a rocket ship. It's like, "Hang on." Actually, you're going



Randy Hall

The former second *Hallmark Homes* was renamed *Miss Van's P-X* in 1972. Borgersen drove it only in Seattle and finished in third place.

through the corner nowadays as fast as you are in the straightaways, believe it or not. It's kind of hard to get used to it.

I know that when I came back, I was having a hard time figuring that I was only going 165, 170 down the chute, and I was going almost as fast in the corner.

The turbine boats are going even faster and really hanging in there close in the corners. Years ago, you used to drive down the straightaway, get your hook on, and let the boat settle down, set it into the groove, come back with the power, and reverse it like a dirt tracker. There's less and less of that nowadays because of the canted skid fins, the propeller designs, the boat weight, setting up the propel-

lers, and the center of gravity differences. All of these things have been contributed to setting up for a small racecourse. They aren't having to look for the high chute speeds because of the stopping and starting like you had with the piston boats.

Nitrous oxide:

Years ago, when I drove *Notre Dame*, we had two bottles in the boat. When I would go head-to-head with someone, I'd always come in and either the motor would be broken and there would be oil all over, or the nitrous bottle would be empty and then the motor would load up.

I'd hate to tell you how many times I got chewed out for either breaking a motor from using too much nitrous, or I ran it out. As years went by, all the other guys kept putting more bottles in their boats. *Frank Kenney* had five nitrous bottles in it, and I mean the big bottles. As the years went along, everything has just gotten more and more and more.

On what might have been:

I had negotiated with Dave Heerensperger early in 1975. The *Pay 'n Pak* ride was open at the time as George Henley had quit. Dave and I talked with Jim Lucero, and as it ended up, we weren't able to come to an agreement on compensation.

They hired Jim McCormick, ran at Miami, and then went to Washington, D.C., for the President's Cup. I was out on a sailboat that weekend, and as you remember, the President's Cup was a two-day affair.

My family and I had anchored for the night on the north end of Lake Washington near a friend of mine's property. All of a sudden, I hear this yelling from my friend, Louie Massano, who's at the top of this cliff yelling, "Dave Heerensperger's on the phone, he wants to talk to you."

Somehow, Heerensperger had managed to locate me, so I said get the num-



Hank Kosciuszko

Borgersen prepares to head out onto the racecourse.

ber, I'll call him back. So, I get into my five-foot plastic dinghy, which is a real joke for me to try and fit in it anyway, and row into shore. I'm all wet when I get there, and then I have to traverse this mud slide that Louie has bulldozed over the side of the cliff.

I finally get up there, get the telephone numbers, and try to reach someone back in D.C. I can't get ahold of Dave, I can't find Lucero, and I'm going back and forth trying to reach someone. Finally, I get Lucero on the phone and I said, "I appreciate your calling, but no thanks."

I figured it out. They were going to send the Lear Jet for me. Dax Smith was going to fly out and pick me up. In the time it would have taken me to get from Seattle to D.C., I wouldn't have been able to sleep at all, and then when I finally get there, I'm going to step right off the airplane and get right into that silly race boat and try to go out there and run? No, I'm not going to take that chance. I said no thank you, and we never got together after that.

One year I was able to drive the Ed Karelsen-designed *Miss Budweiser* for an advertisement they had to film out on Lake Washington. Crew chief George McKernan and I had gotten to be friends, and they needed someone to fill in for their regular driver who was out of town and unavailable. George says, "Now lookit, sucker, don't go out and break



Randy Hall

Borgersen is best remembered as the driver of the *U-95*, the first hydro to successfully use turbine power. He drove the boat in five events in 1974 before it sank at the Gold Cup in Seattle.

anything, just go out and do the photography thing."

Since I'm out there, I should kind of check out and see if it turns any better, check the numbers, etc. It was amazing. Basically, same boat and motors as *Notre Dame*. It was just like changing a propeller, from night to day, as to how a boat will work. I told George, I think I got more chute speed on you in some ways. The *Bud* had faster end-chute speed, but the *Notre Dame* will out accelerate you. The *Bud* seemed to go through the corners like a rocket ship. I kept putting the throttle down and the prop just keeps biting. It was amazing that there was that much difference between those two boats.

I've really enjoyed the camaraderie within the sport, especially people like Bill Muncey and Dean Chenoweth, who

were the real characters. I never was able to get up to the stature where they were, the wins and some of the things that they did, but I was always competing one-on-one with them and always felt good about that.

In the sport of Unlimited racing, I really don't know who wins—the guy who gets the trophies and the money and accolade or the person who survives and is around a little bit longer.

I like the sport, not just for the driving aspect of it. I've always enjoyed that, and I guess it's something you learn. It's something you do, kind of like going to work. People say, "Well, what does it take?" It really doesn't take much. I guess it takes growing up with it, so you accept it.

Going through the years, the different things I have done has really been my payback. I feel like I'm a winner, not for trophies I don't have or the wins I don't have in the record book. I'm a winner because of the people I've met, the people who are my friends, and the things I've been able to do through the years. I learned a lot and it's made me what I am today, and I'm still here, even though I tried hard not to be.

There are many people that I'd have missed meeting in my life if I hadn't been connected with Unlimited racing, and one of them happens to be my wife. That right there in itself tells the story. ❖



L. Dodd

Borgersen ended his driving career in the cockpit of *Frank Kenney Toyota/Volvo* in 1985. He entered two races and managed a third-place finish in Miami.

AROUND THE CIRCUIT

Race Site News by Chris Tracy



As the beginning of the 2024 Unlimited season gets closer, some important pieces are starting to fall into place for the series.

The San Diego race site has moved from being tentative to being a firm race, September 13 to 15. The 2023 race was canceled when longtime title sponsor, HomeStreet Bank, did not renew and when cost estimates for their rental equipment (cranes, etc.) far exceeded past costs. For 2024, the positive news is that the San Diego Tourism Marketing District has stepped their support for the San Diego Bayfair Festival.

In addition, heavy equipment provider, All Access Services, bolstered their support. (Fans may recall that All Access Services was founded by former hydro racers Kevin Aylesworth and the late Jeffrey Johnson.) Thanks to the increased support from San Diego Tourism Marketing and All Access Services, the race will be held this year. For ticket information, go to their website, sandiegobayfair.org.

Last year, the Tri-Cities unlimited hydroplane race did not have a title sponsor, when longtime sponsor HAPO Credit Union did not renew. I talked with event director Mark Williams several weeks ago and he was not optimistic about having a title sponsor for the Unlimited race in 2024, too. The *Tri-City Herald* newspaper ran a story about the hydroplane race that noted that without an Unlimited race title sponsor, the future of the race could be in jeopardy.

After hearing that news, Kennewick-based Apollo Mechanical stepped up and inked a three-year deal to be the title sponsor for the Unlimited race. Apollo is Native American-owned and the central offices are almost walking distance to the race pits in Kennewick. The good-sized firm, has offices all over the

western part of the US and in Tennessee.

Apollo provides mechanical design and preconstruction and construction services to schools, healthcare facilities, government, and much more, plus light industrial and residential HVAC installation and service. Thanks go to the Ratchford family, the owners of Apollo. Spokane Teachers Credit Union (STCU) will be returning for the second year in a row as the Water Follies Air Show sponsor.

While a race in San Diego looks like it will happen, the race in Detroit will not. Despite a report that a call for volunteers had been issued, organizers announced in late April that a Detroit race would not happen this summer.

There has been a lot of talk about boat count for the 2024 season. A Madison race official fairly recently said that there were five confirmed boats for

their race, which stirred some talk. While that is probably correct, please recall that H1 has said that at least six boats at each race is their priority. It appears that a round-robin race format would be run with six boats, with four boats in each heat.

At the *NewsJournal*, we hear lots of things—sometimes true, sometimes with threads of truth, and sometimes just rumors—but as we glean through all, it appears that there are a lot of moving parts to help ensure that at least six boats appear at each race.

One thing we do know for certain: The annual spring testing opportunity on the Columbia River will take place on Friday, May 31. We don't know how many boats will be there, but we know that the racecourse is scheduled to open at 9 a.m. ❖

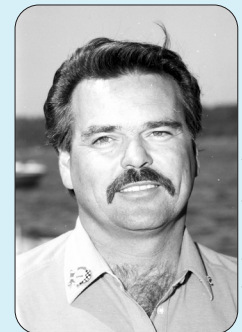
Remembering Ron Jones, Jr.

People throughout the world of hydro racing are sad for the passing of Ron Jones, Jr., on April 21. He was 67 years old. The Renton, Wash., native was a noted hydro designer and builder who came to his skills naturally. His grandfather was Ted Jones, the designer of the revolutionary *Slo-mo-shun IV* and many others. His father, Ron Jones, also created several champion boats that included many named *Pay 'n Pak* and *Miss Budweiser*.

Ron Jones, Jr., first ventured into the Unlimiteds when he leased the former *Miller American* and raced it in 1991 and '92 as *American Spirit*. He also built his first Unlimited in 1992, a craft that debuted as *Coor's Dry* with rookie Dave Villwock in the cockpit. The first appearance by both became the first race victory for both. Thirty-two years later, the hull still races today. It won the 2018 national title and saw action last season as *Beacon Plumbing*.

Jones was also involved in boats that raced as *Miss Exide* in the mid-1990s, was a partner with Ken Muscatel in operating the *U-25* in 2007, and built his last boat when he created the *U-88 Degree Men* for Jane and Billy Schumacher in 2011.

You can read more about his career in an interview that was published in the May 2019 issue of the *Unlimited NewsJournal*. In that interview, he also speaks candidly about his struggles with the lung condition that would eventually take his life. ❖



Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum

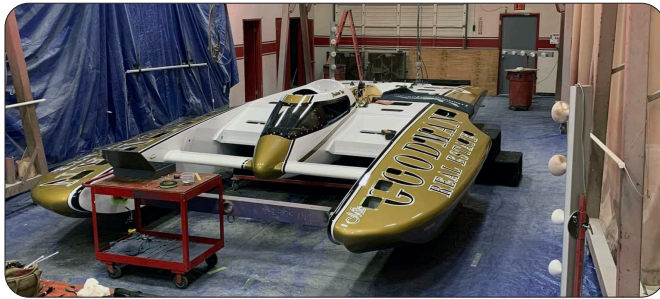
HYDROFILE

Race Team News by Lon Erickson



Miss Madison Racing/Goodman Real Estate

Crew member Mike Noonan provided pictures from the team's Tukwila shop that show the rollover of the U-91 *Miss Goodman Real Estate*. Installation of the systems will continue now with the hull right side up. Meanwhile, the Madison Regatta is partnering with Miss Madison Racing and has unveiled a promotional hull for the Miss Madison Racing Team. The hull is preparing to be wrapped to help the Madison Regatta promote the July 5 to 7 Indiana Governor's Cup and will make appearances around the surrounding area for the upcoming race this summer.



Mike Noonan

U-40 Bucket List Racing

With hull repairs finished, paint refresh is coming, and systems will go back into the U-40.



Bucket List Racing



Jeff Ayler

U-60 Go Fast Turn Left Racing

This is the projected new look of GFTL's *Miss Thriftway*, as designed by Brent Walden of Atomic Screenprinting.



U-11 Unlimited Racing Group

The U-11 Unlimited Racing Group team is hard at work getting ready for the 2024 season. The crew is prepping to rollover the hull in the shop.



Unlimited Racing Group

MY \$0.02 WORTH

Editorial Comment by Andy Muntz



If you're looking to be popular, you'd best not choose to be a referee for a hydroplane race. That's why, as the 2024 H1 Unlimited season fast approaches, I'm offering a good word for the people with the blue shirts who stand on the official tower during the races and render judgment on those who are speeding around the racecourse.

Many times during the past few years, I have had the good fortune of standing on the tower with the H1 referees, the timers, and scorers, and can say with great conviction that they deserve none of the scorn that is heaped upon them regularly.

I've watched them in action. I've been there beside chief referee Rick Sandstrom as he has made quick and weighty decisions regarding what was happening on the water. I've listened to assistant referee Matt Yarno explain the intricacies of certain racing rules and watched as assistant referee Ryan Johnson examined the video images being sent to him by the drones to see whether there were any vi-

olations within the chaos that is the first turn of an Unlimited race.

Seeing this I realized that just three people on the tower can't possibly see everything that happens on a racecourse. It should be twice that number, at least.

Let me offer one example: the final heat of last year's Gold Cup in Seattle. Because it was the final heat of the season and would not only determine the winner of the sport's most prestigious race but also the national championship, we knew going in that it would be a barn burner. The drivers were going to hold nothing back. And, that turned out to be exactly correct.

On this occasion, the drone images had to be viewed on a small computer screen and had to be switched back and forth from drone to drone—the two large monitors normally used had been requisitioned for some other purpose.

Then, something was noticed. It looked like a boat had cut off another.

Was the offending driver more than the required seven boat lengths ahead

when he closed the door? Or, was it six? The video had to be played back and forth, over and over again, to make sure. Fingers were employed to a still image on the screen to count the distance in boat lengths—one, two, three...

Meanwhile, the race was still underway. More boats were passing others, perhaps colliding. Spray was hiding from view much of what was happening in the far-away turns. And the heat, which lasts only about five minutes, was already quickly coming to an end.

That's what life is like on the official tower. Decisions have to be made, or not made, in a matter of seconds, while the race is still underway. There are no timeouts. And, those decisions are often based on information that is less than complete. No slow-motion replays from eight different camera angles like you'll get in many other sports. Yet, despite that, whatever the decision, it will be criticized for months to come.

So, a tip of the hat to the referees. We couldn't hold races without you. ❖

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

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PLEASE JOIN US AT THE NEXT MEETING OF UNLIMITEDS UNANIMOUS

2 p.m. on Sunday, May 19, 2024

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