

Regatta Review

Issue #77 - July 16, 2008

THE CHRYSLER JEEP SUPERSTORES APBA GOLD CUP - JULY 11-13, 2008

***** HEARTBREAK AT THE DETROIT RIVER**

***** GOLD CUP RULED "NO CONTEST"**

We did our best but Mother Nature denied us on Sunday, making for only the second weather cancellation in the APBA Gold Cup's esteemed history.

As early as 9am the DRRA, ABRA and APBA began forming contingency plans, expecting that the winds would be picking up. The first plan set in motion was to get started early and possibly move the heat races to earlier in the day, but the crash in the first heat and the lengthy cleanup put us behind the curve ball.

The Coast Guard bent over backwards to accommodate us, allowing us to keep the river closed as late as 8:30pm, but even that wasn't enough.

The fan turnout was *tremendous*. I even heard that there were people outside the gates with "I need tickets" signs looking for any extras they could find.

Some have asked if points collected in qualifying and Saturday heats will apply to the ABRA's season-long totals, but the ABRA does not have a rule for this circumstance. The ABRA Board will be getting together to discuss this matter.

We're happy to report that Mike Allen of the U-7 FormulaBoats.com team will be fine. The crash was fairly violent and it is believed he hit the bottom of the Detroit River. He suffered a couple broken ribs, a mild concussion, as well as cuts and bruises, but was back in the pits Sunday evening looking to thank the divers who rescued him from the boat.

***** DETROIT RIVER BEATS THE FIELD**

***** STORY FROM THE AMERICAN BOAT RACING ASSOCIATION**

DETROIT --- Wind speeds in excess of 20 miles per hour out of the West kept the unlimited hydroplanes on the beach for most of the day and then finally defeated the nine boat field for the 100th running of the Chrysler Jeep Superstores APBA Gold Cup. The race was ruled 'No Contest' and the 100th running of the Gold Cup will now take place in 2009.

"These are the worst conditions I have seen in 20 years on the Detroit River," said Steve David, driver of the Oh Boy! Oberto. "The wind is coming right up the river and when you have a four foot wave, you have to realize you have an eight foot hole and that is dangerous."

This is the first time the race has been ruled 'No Contest' since 1960 when the APBA Gold Cup was contested in Lake Mead, Nevada.

"This has been a difficult day for all of us," said American Boat Racing Association Race Chairman Sam Cole. "It is a beautiful, sunny day except for the high wind conditions and safety is the prime concern of everyone associated with this race."

Five boats did take to the river Sunday morning for the first elimination heat of the day. Mike Allen (New Orleans, La.) in the Formulaboats.com flipped his boat going through turn one. Allen was taken to Detroit Receiving Hospital for precautionary reasons and then released. The elimination heat was not re-run.

The unlimited fleet will race next on the Columbia River in Tri-Cities, Wash. in two weeks.

*** DRRA TO EXPLORE FAN CONSIDERATIONS ONCE BUDGET KNOWN AND SETTLED

The Detroit River Regatta Association (DRRA) shares race fan's disappointment that high winds and bad weather prevented the completion of Sunday's Gold Cup Race but we are grateful that the drivers whose boats crashed due to the winds are going to be okay.

The DRRA is a voluntary not-for-profit (NPO) organization that produces the races with more than 400 volunteers who give tens of thousands of hours of their time to make the races happen each year.

The DRRA wants to find some appropriate recognition for loyal boat race fans and will explore all options once the budget of this year's race is settled and the financial picture is clarified.

The DRRA board plans to announce its evaluation and actions in 60 days.

Tom Bertolini, President, Detroit River Regatta Association

*** U-7 FLIP IN HEAT 3A

There is a photo sequence of Mike Allen's flip in heat 3A, taken from the referee helicopter. This is the only angle you can see a little of the U-7, as Mike was between roostertails and not visible from ground level. Visit <http://www.abrahydroplanes.com> and click on the image in the upper right.

Here is a video from the U-13 onboard camera, and while you don't see the flip itself, you will see an odd splash as they round the turn.

This video starts at about the one minute gun with the boats coming down the backstretch, then slowing to get in sync with the clock start, then as they round the Roostertail turn they pick up speed as they head toward the Start/Finish line. <http://tinyurl.com/6gsdqj>

*** SLIDESHOW AND AUDIO OF INTERVIEW WITH DANNY FOSTER

Here's a short interview with the legendary Danny Foster, a two-time Gold Cup winner himself, with some pictures. <http://tinyurl.com/6bpl8b>

*** QUAKE ON THE LAKE IS THIS WEEKEND - JULY 18, 19 AND 20

Quake on the Lake is a limited inboard hydroplane event held at Pontiac Lake in Waterford Michigan. This is an excellent venue with a huge area for spectators.

"The award-winning 9th Annual "Quake on the Lake" APBA Inboard Hydroplane Races are preparing to sail this summer with a brand new, exciting twist. In addition to all the high-speed racing action, Malibu Boats, the world's leading competition ski/wakeboard boat manufacturer, will be presenting the 10th Annual "Malibu Open" showcasing the top slalom skiers, jumpers and wakeboarders in the world creating a unique, high-energy water sports festival for the Summer of 2008!"

Parking is nominal and Friday is FREE day. On Saturday and Sunday admission is \$8 (Children 5-12 are \$4).

Also, be sure to tune into Fox 2 Friday morning ... they will be broadcasting live from the Quake from 7-9am and again from 11am-12pm.

For much more info visit their web site: <http://quakeonthelake.org>

*** DRRA VOLUNTEER PHOTOS COMING SOON

Keep your eye on the DRRA photo gallery, as we recover from the weekend, sort out our photos and get them posted.

*** DETROIT WELCOMES THE RETURN OF TEMPUS U-17, MISS BUDWEISER U-1

*** By Bill DeGlopper, Vintage historian with input from Fred Farley

Dick Higgons has been a lifelong fan of all types of motorboats, ranging from classic woodies to race boats in various categories. As a teenager, he selected a plan from a magazine and proceeded to build his first hydroplane as a class project while a student in high school. This love of boats continued through the years as Dick purchased different hulls and restored them to running condition. Everything from a classic 16' Gar Wood utility to a Chris Craft Cobra and even a 30' Faye Bowen launch located in New York's 1000 Island region. Other hulls came &

went over the years as he continued to foster a keen interest in boats. Later, Dick formed a friendship with renowned boat builder, and successful race boat designer/driver Bill Morgan.

In 2004, Dick was inspired to undertake restoration on a special Unlimited hydroplane. He purchased the U-17 Tempus from Buffalo's Bullet Bob Schroeder. It was a huge project to undertake, but certainly worth doing due to the boat's interesting history. This hydroplane was designed and built by Bellevue, WA resident Chuck Hickling who was a shipwright by trade. Race boat historians recall Chuck as a remarkable designer, builder, owner, and driver. His career spanned 70 years. Members of the hydroplane racing fraternity always came to Chuck when repairs were needed to their own boats. Such was the superb quality, precision and craftsmanship produced by Hickling's work.

This hull was begun by Chuck as his own unlimited hydro in 1970. Yet, due to work on other competitors hulls, Chuck never completed the boat until 1978. It was christened at the 1978 Seattle Seafair Regatta. At that time it received universal acclaim from race boat owners, fans and others who were highly impressed by the impeccable craftsmanship of the hull. While it was truly a work of art and a fine testament to Hickling's skills and genius, the design was obsolete. It was the last rear cockpit, engine forward hull to be built in the unlimited class. In 1979, Chuck, at age 65, piloted it to 5th place in the Tri-Cities Columbia Cup and a 6th place in the Seafair Regatta.

In 1980, Chuck made a deal with friend Bernie Little and it became the Miss Budweiser as a replacement hull when Bernie's primary boat was damaged during the season. In 1985, Hickling sold the boat to Ed Cooper Sr & Jr. Still later Bob Schroeder acquired it. Bob installed a second seat to accommodate a riding mechanic and campaigned it on the APBA Vintage & Historic circuit. Movie producers recruited the hull from Schroeder for the filming of the movie Madison. In the film, it became the Miss Budweiser U-1. Painted red & white like the modern era Bud boats, and driven for the film by Bob Schroeder. Due to its age and years of racing, the hull had gradually faded from its former proud glory. When last run at the Buffalo Launch Club Vintage Race boat Regatta, Schroeder and pit personnel worked quickly to get the hull in & out of the water after fly bys. Despite being equipped with multiple bilge pumps, the old girl was prone to taking on water at a frightening rate! She leaked like a sieve, despite the addition of hundreds of steel screws in her bottom.

Nevertheless, Dick Higgons accepted the challenge, purchased the hydroplane and moved her to a new home in Indianapolis, IN. Initial assessments were that it would be a routine restoration involving 6 months of work in the woodshop. Not so! In the workshop, a sling was fabricated and by using a forklift, the boat was removed from the trailer, flipped over and secured to stands attached to the stringers. Removal of the bottom came next. A 4' X 5' section of aluminum plate attached amidships to the outside bottom proved especially challenging. Someone had riveted, bolted, screwed and epoxied the plate in place in an attempt to strengthen the hull. Once the plate was dispatched, the aluminum skins were removed from the entire hull and sponsons. This exposed horrific serious damage to much of the wood components. Chunks of wood literally fell right off the hull onto the shop floor! Split wood, rotten frames, massive oil soaked infrastructure

was found everywhere. Damage to Hickling's once beautiful design was significant. Ribs had been cut out to accommodate different gearboxes and running gear. Oil was seeping from every fastener in the boat. The cockpit area had been altered to accept the second seat and a plywood tail attached to the rear cowl for the movie role. The engine stringers were rotten at every rib intersection. All sponson bulkheads were either rotten or broken.

At least 60-70% of the wood structure was replaced. 16 sheets of aluminum were used to create the new bottom, secured by 5200 sealant and screws on 2" centers. Hundreds of new SS fasteners were added.

New ribs and stringers were made of white oak. Originally, Chuck had made all of the wood components himself & all the parts were of sizes and tolerances not available in today's wood industry. His craftsmanship was a marvel to see. Tolerances created and the perfect fit of wood parts was remarkable. However, Higgons was able to locate a wood company in Maine who had 18' X 7/8" pieces of oak. These became the foundation of the new stringers. Fine quality sheets of mahogany planks were also located to aid in fabricating new components.

Once the woodworking was completed on the hull, work began on the mechanicals. All hoses were removed and replaced with Aerequipt products. All wiring was replaced. New ignition and starting components were added. The new tail fin and cockpit cowl were built by making a foam plug and new mold. New parts were blended into the existing cowl. A new front cowl was built with glass and epoxy. All decks were stripped, repaired and recovered with fiberglass cloth and epoxy. The hull then went off to the Penske shop, which had a paint booth large enough to accommodate the hull and trailer.

The Allison 1710 12-cylinder engine that came with the boat had low hours of running time. Bullet Bob Schroeder and the ace mechanics from Seattle's Hydroplane & race boat Museum had recently worked on it. The carburetor was removed and sent out to be cleaned and flow tested. The gearbox was inspected, painted and reinstalled. Following paint, the motor was reinstalled. Fuel, oil, wiring and plumbing were completed and the engine fired up for the first time in 3 years. Lastly, the trailer was restored. Bunks redone, hydraulic cylinders replaced, framework structure reinforced, sandblasted, rewired and painted to compliment the beautiful new hull.

In retrospect, the project took 3 years to complete; due to the fact Dick did all of the work himself, as time was available from his job. Dick had the support of 2 friends as well. Mike Scott spent hours inside the hull securing nuts, bolts, & washers. For his efforts, he became covered with dripping 5200 during bottom installation. Mike did what no one else would ever volunteer to do. Without his untiring assistance, the job would never have been completed. Lyn Mills was another key member of the crew, offering advise and solving problems as they arose.... Like "how do we flip this hull over??"

The good news is they were working in a shop that had 2 complete machine shops. It included a fine woodworking operation. Everything Higgons could ask for was at hand within feet of the boat. Shops including upholstery by Smitty's; Lettering and graphics by Green Apple Graphics provided finishing details. Portage Bay rebuilt the gauges. Total hours to complete the restoration?? Too many to count as one could have built a new boat in half the time. As we know that is not what drives the purists in the field of Vintage boating. Dick Higgons and crew are to

be congratulated on a truly outstanding mission to bring the Tempus back to its former glory. One thinks the Hicklings would be pleased to see their pride and joy returned to its former beauty. Plus generations to come can see what the glorious unlimited hulls of racings past represented prior to the emergence of cab over generation that rules the unlimited class today.

The best news is this hull will be coming to Detroit to join in the celebration of the 100th running of the Gold Cup this July. Dick Higgons has agreed to make it's new maiden voyage in Detroit, No trailer queen, this Hickling beauty will run the course on the historic Detroit River. Bob Schroeder will be there to see it in person for the first time since he sold it to Dick. It will be a moment to experience.

September 6th, this race boat will return to the oldest APBA powerboat racing club in the country... the Buffalo Launch Club. There it will again take to the mighty Niagara River course to run fly bys where all the greats of racing's glorious past have competed.

- Brian Reed - DRRA volunteer

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