

POWERBOAT.

• NEWS •

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Chris Davies
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- + **Mercury's 808hp V12** – The concept rewriting outboard history
- + **St. Pete & New Orleans** – IHRA Offshore race reports & standings
- + **West Marine Chapter 11** – What it means for the boating industry
- + **Iran's Fast Boats** – How offshore technology reached the Strait of Hormuz
- + **IHRA F1** – Bradenton & Port Neches race reports
- + **Back in the Day** – Miami Vice Scarab, ABBA & the Venetian speedster
- + **Inside Sunseeker** – Behind the factory doors with the man who started on the tools

Welcome to Edition #1

Powerboat News launched in September 2025. Eight months later, 141,000 readers have found us. This is our first print edition.

The idea behind Powerboat News was simple: cover the sport properly, in the language readers actually speak. The response has been extraordinary. Our French-language preview of the 24 Heures Motonautiques de Normandie became the most-read powerboat racing article in France in years. Our IHRA Offshore coverage draws a North American audience that tells us consistently it is the most detailed race reporting available anywhere.

This edition brings together the best of those eight months. We were at Poses for the return of night racing on the Seine, at Sunseeker's Poole factory for access no media outlet has had before, and at IHRA events from St. Pete to Port Neches.

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Photo: Chris Davies / Powerboatpix.com

Night Racing Returns to the Seine

The 24 Heures Motonautiques de Normandie 2026 – 10,000 spectators, night racing on the Seine, and the Morin family finally getting the result they had been owed since Rouen.

Something happened at Poses last weekend that powerboat racing in Europe has not seen for a while. People came. A lot of them.

French families descended on a riverbank in Normandy to watch raceboats. The car parks filled. The food vendors didn't stop working. And the church spire of the Église Saint-Quentin stood above it all, watching something it had never quite seen before.

The 24 Heures Motonautiques de Normandie 2026 was the debut of a new event on a river that powerboat racing knows well, and it announced itself in terms no one had quite anticipated. The Powerboat News French-language preview for the event broke the site's record number of views by a distance.

The number that mattered most was not on any screen – it was the one you could see in person: 10,000 spectators over three days, with many standing four deep on the far bank, watching Boat 2 go past in the dark with its navigation lights on and spray flying off the chop the wind had built through the afternoon.

Michel Lenglet, president of organising club Rouen Inshore Racing, was direct: "C'était noir de monde sur le chemin de halage le long de la berge rive gauche de la Seine." It was black with people on the towpath along the left bank of the Seine.

Race 1 was twelve hours, noon to midnight. Boats carrying navigation lights, racing in the dark on a French river, with the temperature dropping and a thunderstorm building to the north. It was the kind of racing that used to define the 24 Hours at Rouen and has been absent from the sport since the Rouen Yacht Club lost its right to the city's waterway in August 2022. At Poses, it came back.



Chris Davies
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Photo: Chris Davies / Powerboatpix.com

THE NIGHT COMES BACK

Not everyone in the field had raced at night before. Adam Wrenkler of Monsnauteam had pushed to take a night stint. His inspiration was the Rouen 24 Hours he had watched on YouTube.

"It is a dream to do endurance during the night. I started at dusk to get a feel for the lines. After that you just drive on rhythm and feeling. You can see absolutely nothing except lights and buoys." – Adam Wrenkler

His teammate Hilmer Wiberg delegated his night shift without much persuasion. Wrenkler's explanation: "He is scared of the dark – I had to step in!"

THE OLD MASTERS

Nelson Morin, Peter Morin and Thomas Cleret won the 2026 UIM S3 World Endurance Championship for Team Touax MRK Racing, taking Race 1 on Friday night and Race 3 on Sunday afternoon. Nelson is a multiple 24 Hours of Rouen winner. Peter is a seven-time S3 world champion who also competes in UIM FIH20 and UIM F2 each season.

Winning at Poses meant more than another entry in a trophy cabinet that has run out of shelf space. In the two previous editions at Rouen, the family led both races and lost both in the closing stages.

"It was a long time that we wanted to race more in the night. We were leading two times and missed the victory. It was a very good adventure but very sad, finally." – Peter Morin



Photo: Chris Davies / Powerboatpix.com

"The boat that capsized while leading did the quickest lap of the twelve-hour race. That is endurance racing."

THE GENERATION BEHIND THEM

Monsnauteam's Belgian-Swedish crew won Race 2 outright and led Race 3 for more than an hour before a fuel shortage handed the lead back. Hilmer Wiberg is a three-time world champion in junior categories. Adam Wrenkler finished third in the UIM F4 World Championship last season.

Niklāvs Rimeicāns of Akvashelf Racing, who had never raced at night before, was taking mental notes. His team — which included Nida Kilinskaite, the only female driver — finished fourth overall. Team Torpilleur Racing took third in the championship with three podium finishes across three races.

Even Jeremy Brisset, who capsized while leading in the second hour of Race 1 and walked away uninjured, left a calling card. His GSET by MRC crew set the fastest lap of the entire twelve-hour race: 1:01.95 at 126.857 km/h.

WHAT POSES PROVED

The 24 Heures Motonautiques de Normandie is not a replacement for the 24 Hours of Rouen. It is something new on a river that both events share. The format — three heats across three days with night racing built into the first — is different from what Rouen offered. But the crowds who enjoyed those three days were not thinking about any of that. Neither were Chris Davies and I. We were just watching the racing, which is the point.

RACE REPORT · 24 HEURES NORMANDIE 2026



Left: Akvashelf Racing #69. Right: BRT Maverick Racing #27. Photos: Chris Davies / Powerboatpix.com



The podium: Touax MRK Racing champions, Monsnauteam vice-champions, Team Torpilleur third. Photo: Chris Davies / Powerboatpix.com

RACE 3 – FINAL CLASSIFICATION

Pos	Boat	Team	Laps	Best Speed
1	2	Team Touax MRK Racing	220	97.9 km/h
2	38	Monsnauteam	219	100.5 km/h
3	69	Akvashelf Racing	211	93.7 km/h
4	9	Team Torpilleur Racing	211	98.8 km/h
5	87	Club Motonautique Normand	205	98.5 km/h
6	27	BRT Maverick Racing	177	96.0 km/h
DNF	1	Team Inshore Performance	–	–

2026 UIM S3 WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP – FINAL STANDINGS

Pos	Team	R1	R2	R3	Total
1	Team Touax MRK Racing	20	17	20	57
2	Monsnauteam	13	20	17	50



Photo: Powerboat News

St. Pete Powerboat Grand Prix

DMR Performance doubled up on Tampa Bay as the 6th Annual Monster Energy St. Pete Powerboat Grand Prix opened the 2026 IHRA Offshore season across a packed two-day programme.

Bill Pyburn and Brit Lilly in DMR Performance (#03) led from pole in Saturday's Race 1, finishing ahead of Monster Energy/MCON and GC Racing. Sunday's Race 2 produced the

same podium in the same order, giving DMR Performance a dominant weekend double.

PRO CLASS 1 – RACE 1 (SATURDAY)

Pos	Boat #	Team	Note
1	03	DMR Performance	
2	06	Monster Energy / MCON	
3	32	GC Racing	
4	5	WHM Motorsports	
5	11	X/Insurance North	
6	10	XINSURANCE South	DNF

PRO CLASS 1 – RACE 2 (SUNDAY)

Pos	Boat #	Team	Note
1	03	DMR Performance	
2	06	Monster Energy / MCON	
3	5	WHM Motorsports	
4	11	X/Insurance North	
5	32	GC Racing	

IHRA OFFSHORE · ST. PETE GRAND PRIX



Left to right: Monster Energy/MCON #06 · XInsurance #10 · Marine Technology #32 on Tampa Bay. Photos: Powerboat News

SUPER CLASSES & BRACKET RACING

David Selley and Steven Bridges in Team Bermuda (S-25) converted Saturday's Super Stock pole to victory on Sunday.

Rob Unnerstall's CR Racing took Super Cat honours from Dirty Money Racing in second.

SUPER STOCK – FINAL RESULT

Pos	Boat #	Name
1	S-25	Team Bermuda
2	S-55	Mom Ain't Happy
3	S-8	Wozencraft
4	S-54	STR - Allied
5	S-12	Nuff Said

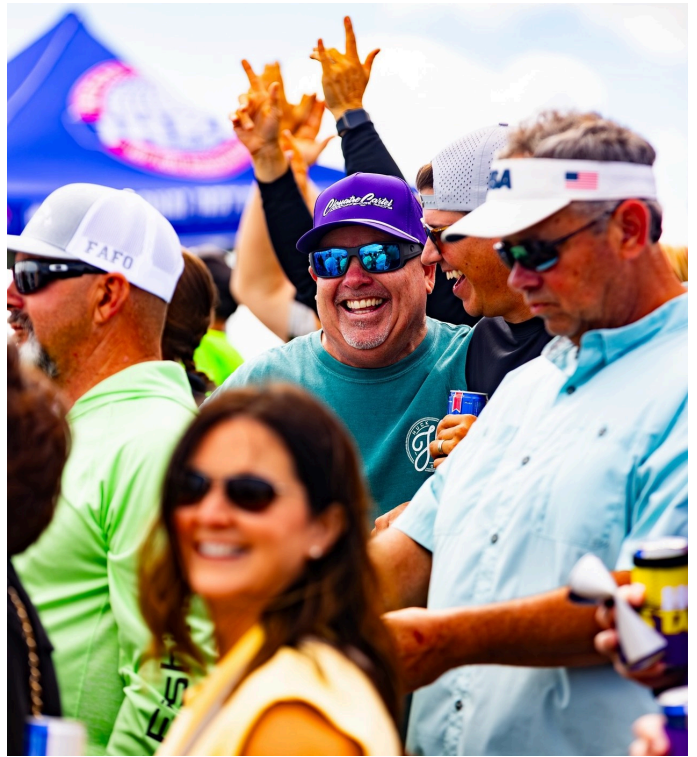
SUPER CAT – FINAL RESULT

Pos	Boat #	Name
1	08	CR Racing
2	3	Dirty Money Racing
3	54	Graydel / CJ Grant Racing
4	77	EWB Racing

PRIZE MONEY

IHRA Offshore distributed \$214,285 across 65 boats at St. Pete — the largest opening-round purse in the series' history.

IHRA OFFSHORE · NEW ORLEANS GRAND PRIX



Race day atmosphere at the 2nd Annual New Orleans Powerboat Grand Prix. Photos: Powerboat News

New Orleans Powerboat Grand Prix

Lake Pontchartrain delivered choppier conditions for Round 2. DMR Performance extended their championship lead with another double.

The 2nd Annual New Orleans Powerboat Grand Prix ran on Lake Pontchartrain, with wind-driven chop making conditions harder than the flat water of St. Pete. Bill Pyburn

and Brit Lilly in DMR Performance continued their dominant run, leading both Pro Class 1 heats.

PRO CLASS 1 – RACE 1 (SATURDAY)

Pos	Boat #	Team
1	03	DMR Performance
2	06	Monster Energy / MCON
3	5	WHM Motorsports
4	11	X/Insurance North
5	32	GC Racing

PRO CLASS 1 – RACE 2 (SUNDAY)

Pos	Boat #	Team
1	03	DMR Performance
2	5	WHM Motorsports
3	06	Monster Energy / MCON
4	32	GC Racing
5	11	X/Insurance North

IHRA OFFSHORE · NEW ORLEANS GRAND PRIX



The New Orleans Powerboat Grand Prix Factory Stock trophy. Photo: Powerboat News

Sunday's race reshuffled the podium, with WHM Motorsports moving ahead of Monster Energy/MCON for second place.

The championship picture after two rounds shows DMR Performance with a 19-point lead.

IHRA OFFSHORE CHAMPIONSHIP – AFTER ROUND 2

Pos	Team	R1 Pts	R2 Pts	Total
1	DMR Performance	40	40	80

IHRA F1 POWERBOAT SERIES



Left: Andrew Tate wins Round 1 at Bradenton. Right: Spencer Love leads at Port Neches. Photos: Powerboat News

IHRA F1 — Inaugural Season

The IHRA F1 Powerboat Series launched its inaugural season at Bradenton in February. Andrew Tate took the first-ever victory. Spencer Love dominated Port Neches to level the standings.

Andrew Tate won the inaugural round of the 2026 IHRA F1 Powerboat Series at the Bradenton Area River Regatta, completing a commanding weekend on the Manatee River that gave him his first F1 win in the series and also produced victories for Mason Rinker in Tri-Hull and Shelby Love in Formula Lights.

ANDREW TATE: A CAREER IN EVERY CLASS

Tate's win was no surprise to anyone who has followed American powerboat racing over the past two decades. A fourth-generation racer, he began competing in stock outboard hydroplanes at nine years old and has since

accumulated nine APBA National Championship titles, over 100 race victories across multiple classes, and induction into the APBA Hall of Champions five times.

His credentials in unlimited hydroplanes are equally formidable. He was named H1 Unlimited Rookie of the Year in 2016 after winning the Seattle Seafair Cup in his debut season, the first rookie to take that race since 1956. He went on to win the 2018 APBA Gold Cup and the H1 Unlimited National High Points Championship that same year, making him and his father Mark the only father-and-son duo to both have won the Gold Cup. He took a second H1 Unlimited National Championship in 2024.

ROUND 1 — BRADENTON, FLORIDA

Pos	Driver	Note
1	Andrew Tate	
2	Spencer Love	
3	Danny Bevins	
4	Chris Hughes	



TECHNOLOGY



Mercury's 808hp V12 concept at the Miami International Boat Show, February 2026. Photo: John Moore / Powerboat News

Mercury's 808hp V12 Concept Signals Power Evolution

Mercury Marine unveiled an 808 horsepower outboard concept at CES 2026, signalling the next evolution of the V12 Verado platform that has reshaped outboard design since 2021.

Mercury Marine used CES 2026 in Las Vegas to unveil an 808 horsepower outboard concept. The concept suggests the next evolution of the V12 Verado platform that has reshaped the outboard landscape since its February 2021 launch.

The "808" designation points toward supercharging the existing 7.6-litre naturally aspirated V12 block, following Mercury Racing's established pattern. Industry observers expect formal confirmation at the Miami International Boat Show.

ENGINEERING REVOLUTION

Mercury invested over \$1.5 billion in research and development between 2008 and 2021. The naturally aspirated quad-cam V12 uses a narrow 64-degree bank angle, maintaining a compact 27-inch centre-to-centre mounting width — just one inch wider than a 400 horsepower Verado.

The industry-first two-speed automatic transmission, developed with ZF Marine, provides 2.97:1 gearing for launching heavy boats, shifting seamlessly to 2.5:1 for efficient cruising.

MARKET PERFORMANCE

Boston Whaler fitted triple V12s to its 420 Outrage, Formula Boats installed quads on its 500 Super Sport Crossover. Testing showed twin V12s delivered 20 per cent better fuel

economy at cruise than triple Yamaha 425s — 24 per cent at top speed.

TECHNOLOGY

RELIABILITY CHALLENGES

In August 2023, Mercury issued a voluntary recall affecting both recreational and commercial V12 variants, centred on a potentially faulty steering position sensor that could force engines into guardian mode.

Owner forums paint a more complex picture. Multiple operators reported ongoing issues including seal failures, persistent oil leaks, and overheating at trolling speeds. On a

\$77,000 engine with complex steerable gearcase and two-speed transmission, these become significantly more serious.

FUTURE TRAJECTORY

Mercury Marine has established a clear pattern with its Verado line. The 808 concept suggests supercharged development targeting 750-800 horsepower, returning Mercury to sole possession of the high-horsepower crown. The fundamental shift continues beyond pure power figures as outboards replace inboards on increasingly large vessels.

VERDICT

The V12 Verado is the most sophisticated outboard engine ever manufactured. The 808 concept confirms Mercury has no intention of ceding the high-performance crown it claimed in 2021.

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Sunseeker's Poole joinery production facility. Photo: Chris Davies / Powerboatpix.com

Inside Sunseeker: Behind the Factory Doors

For the first time in the company's history, a media outlet was given unrestricted access across every Sunseeker manufacturing unit in Poole. The man who opened those doors started there as an electrician in 2000.

Steve Timms joined Sunseeker as an electrician in 2000. He has spent more than 25 years at the company, rising to interim CEO in April 2026. Many of the workers on the shop floor have known him for most of that time. When photographer Chris Davies and I met some of them, it showed.

Sunseeker currently produces around 90 yachts per year, ranging from 55 to 134 feet. The company employs approximately 1,900 people across its Dorset facilities and exports 98 per cent of its production through a dealer network covering more than 60 countries. The furniture production line alone now turns out 8,500 individual pieces per year, all made within the Poole facilities.

BOATING INDUSTRY



A hull under construction in the GRP facility. Photo: Chris Davies / Powerboatpix.com



A finished model at the Poole berths. Photo: Chris Davies / Powerboatpix.com

BOATING INDUSTRY

**THE DETAIL THAT SEPARATES THEM**

The cleat on the left is not simply a cleat. Hand-polished to a mirror finish with the Sunseeker crest engraved at its base, it reflects the Dorset sky back at you. Someone spent considerable time on this — probably more time than most boat owners will ever notice.

Robert's Bar — named for Sunseeker founder Robert Braithwaite — is part of the company's client entertainment facility at Poole, where prospective buyers and partners are hosted on land before stepping aboard the boats. The bar is a statement of intent: this is what the Sunseeker experience looks and feels like before you even leave the dock.

POWERBOAT NEWS ACCESS

Exclusive photography and in-depth articles from the Sunseeker factory visit will be published at powerboat.news throughout summer 2026.

The logo for West Marine, featuring a stylized blue icon of a boat's hull on the left and the text "West Marine" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font on the right, with a registered trademark symbol (®) at the end.

Photo: Powerboat News

West Marine Eyes Chapter 11 as Restructuring Talks Continue

West Marine, the largest boating and marine supplies retailer in the United States, is laying the groundwork for a possible Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing, according to reporting first published by Bloomberg on May 1, 2026. The company has not filed, and discussions are ongoing.

The talks involve financial and legal advisers including Portage Point Partners, FTI Consulting and Kirkland & Ellis. No final decision has been announced. All details in initial reports came from sources close to the matter rather than from official West Marine statements. CEO Paulee Day declined to comment on the Bloomberg reporting.

West Marine was founded in 1968 and has been operating for 58 years. It runs more than 230 physical stores across the United States alongside e-commerce platforms, making it the dominant bricks-and-mortar presence in the US marine retail sector.

WHAT CHAPTER 11 WOULD MEAN

Chapter 11 is a court-supervised reorganisation process, not a liquidation. It would allow West Marine to restructure its debt, renegotiate or reject store leases, and close underperforming locations while continuing to trade. Plans reportedly include closing an unspecified number of its physical stores to reduce overhead. The brand and online operations would be expected to continue throughout any restructuring process.

OWNERSHIP AND DEBT HISTORY

West Marine was publicly traded for many years before going private. Monomoy Capital Partners acquired the company in 2017 in a leveraged buyout valued at approximately \$338 million. L Catterton took a controlling stake in April 2021.

In late 2023, the company completed an out-of-court debt restructuring involving approximately \$800 million in debt. L Catterton injected roughly two-thirds of a reported \$150 million capital infusion, subordinated some of its own debt, and Oaktree Capital Management gained joint control as part of the arrangement. The company is currently jointly controlled by Oaktree Capital Management and L Catterton.

That 2023 deal did not resolve the underlying pressures. Ongoing trading difficulties through 2025 and into 2026 have brought the company back to restructuring discussions.

HOW A RETAILER CARRIES \$800 MILLION IN DEBT

The \$800 million was not accumulated through years of trading losses. It was loaded onto West Marine's balance sheet when Monomoy Capital Partners bought the company in 2017 using a leveraged buyout. In that structure, the acquiring firm borrows heavily against the target company's

ANALYSIS



Photo: Powerboat News

Iran's Fast Boats: How Offshore Racing Technology Ended Up in the Strait of Hormuz

President Donald Trump announced on Monday, May 4, that US forces had struck seven Iranian fast attack craft in the Strait of Hormuz, as Washington attempted to guide stranded commercial vessels out of the Persian Gulf under what the White House has branded “Project Freedom.” The Maersk-operated *Alliance Fairfax*, a US-flagged vessel held in the Gulf since air strikes on Iran began in late February, exited the strait under US naval escort and reached open water safely.

President Trump, speaking on Monday:

We've shot down seven small boats or, as they like to call them, 'fast' boats. It's all they have left.

Iranian state media disputed the claim, citing a military source who said two small cargo vessels had been struck instead, killing five civilians. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi offered his own assessment of the American operation.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi:

Project Freedom is Project Deadlock.

The Strait of Hormuz has been largely closed since the US and Israel launched air strikes on Iran on February 28. Tehran responded by blocking the waterway through which roughly 20 per cent of the world's seaborne oil and liquefied natural gas normally passes. An April ceasefire ended drone and missile strikes on Gulf states but left the shipping question unresolved. The US subsequently imposed its own blockade on Iranian ports, producing what analysts described as a dual blockade.

The “fast boats” Trump was dismissing have a more specific history than the phrase suggests. Two of the core designs in Iran's fleet trace directly to the offshore powerboat racing world.

ANALYSIS

THE BLADERUNNER CONNECTION

In August 2005, a powerboat called Bradstone Challenger completed a circumnavigation of Britain in 27 hours and 10 minutes. The boat covered 1,460 nautical miles at an average speed of 53 knots to set a new world record. The hull was a Bladerunner 51, designed by naval architect Lorne Campbell of Ice Marine, a 15.5-metre vessel running twin 1,000 hp Caterpillar C18 diesel engines through Arneson surface drives. It was built for rough-water stability and high-speed performance; the design was intended for luxury and sporting applications.

Western governments blocked direct sales of the design to Iran. In 2009, Iran obtained a Bladerunner 51 through a South African dealer, routing the acquisition around export controls. The boat was taken to Bandar Abbas, headquarters of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) on the Persian Gulf coast, where it was dismantled and reverse-engineered. The Seraj-1, Iran's militarised copy, was unveiled in August 2010. Mass production followed through 2011 and 2012.

Campbell expressed his frustration publicly when the copying became known. The Seraj-1 was fitted with a bow-mounted DShK 12.7 mm heavy machine gun and a 107 mm 12-barrelled rocket launcher. IRGCN commander Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi claimed the Iranian version had been modified to reach 80-85 knots, against the Bladerunner 51's approximately 65 knots. Independent analysts questioned the figure, noting the weight penalty imposed by the weapons systems.

THE FABIO BUZZI CONNECTION

A second thread runs through the late 1990s and early 2000s, when Iran obtained boats, design plans, and frames from FB Design, the Italian company founded by offshore racing champion Fabio Buzzi. Iran's Joulaee Marine Industries produced domestic military variants based on the FB stepped-hull designs, capable of 60-70 knots and fitted with weapons systems. Buzzi acknowledged the commercial sales publicly, describing them as boats rather than arms. The domestic military copies were not part of the original arrangement.

American authorities questioned FB Design about the Iran deals in 2005, effectively ending the commercial relationship. By then the design transfer was complete. In January 2008, according to diplomatic sources cited at the time, Iran-made copies of the FB hull were deployed in a confrontation in the Strait of Hormuz, when Iranian speedboats closed on three US Navy warships – the first documented operational use of the domestically produced variants.

FB Design had, by the time of Buzzi's death in September 2019, supplied high-speed patrol boats to 43 military and police forces worldwide. He was one of the most decorated figures in the history of offshore racing, with 52 world championships and 40 world speed records to his name. The Iran contracts were government-approved at the time of sale.

THE FLEET IN 2026

The IRGCN's small-boat fleet spans several thousand vessels across dozens of types. It has proven far harder to neutralise than Iran's conventional navy, most of which was destroyed or severely damaged in Operation Epic Fury and related strikes in February and March. The Seraj series operates alongside Zolfaghar-class craft and Boghammar-derived vessels that date to Sweden's marine exports during the 1980s Tanker War. The boats operate from 38 islands and fortified coastal bases spread along Iran's coastline, making comprehensive targeting a considerably different problem from striking ships in harbour.

US helicopters struck a number of them on Monday. Iran disputed the account. The Strait remains contested, with the US Navy now physically escorting commercial vessels through a passage that, three months ago, carried 20 per cent of the world's traded oil and gas without military accompaniment.



Photo: Powerboat News

Malta: 2026 UIM Pleasure Navigation World Championship

The 2026 UIM Pleasure Navigation World Championship opened at Sliema and the Grand Harbour in Malta on April 17-19, with 19 boats from Malta, Belgium, and Italy contesting two races across five classes. Organiser VOOMQUEST Limited ran the event under UIM sanction, with Enemed and VisitMalta among the principal supporters.

Full results from all five classes are below. For the full entry list and event background, see our pre-event guide .

HOCR F1 GROUP A

HOCR SPORT GROUP A

HOCR SUPERSPORT GROUP A

CLASS 1

Pos	Boat	Team	Nat	Driver / Navigator	R1	R2	Total
1	24	Cinzano Sorbino	ITA	Gullo / Testa	300	400	700
2	05	Vanta Racing	MLT	Bianco / Portelli	400	225	625
3	90	If Only	GBR/IRL	McCarthy / Power	169	300	469
4	71	Paco Racing	MLT	Mifsud / Callus	225	169	394

CLASS 2

Pos	Boat	Team	Nat	Driver / Navigator	R1	R2	Total
1	26	Poseidon Racing	MLT	Cassar / Arapa	400	400	800
2	11	Infinity Powerboats	MLT	Camenzuli / Farrugia	300	300	600
3	69	Infinity Powerboats	MLT	Buttigieg / Buttigieg	0	225	225

CLASS 3

Pos	Boat	Team	Nat	Driver / Navigator	R1	R2	Total
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Malta Prime Minister Robert Abela attends the VOOMQUEST World Championship. Photo: Powerboat News

Malta's Prime Minister Robert Abela attended the VOOMQUEST UIM Pleasure Navigation World Championship last weekend, joining the opening round at Sliema and the National Grand Harbour Straight Runs – the events covered in full by Powerboat News across our pre-event guide and round one results.

The visit carries a neat personal note. Abela was born in Sliema on 7 December 1977 – the same waterfront that served as the championship's 3.54 nautical mile race circuit on April 18-19. He has served as Malta's 14th Prime Minister and leader of the Malta Labour Party since January 2020, following his election after Joseph Muscat's resignation. He was returned to office in March 2022 with the largest Labour majority in Maltese electoral history.

VOOMQUEST, the organisation behind the event, marked the visit in a statement from the organiser:

"His visit is a testament to the growing importance of this sport in Malta, and we sincerely appreciate his presence and continued support for our community."

"His visit is a testament to the growing importance of this sport in Malta, and we sincerely appreciate his presence and continued support for our community."

AARON CIANTAR AND VOOMQUEST

FEATURE



Photo: Powerboat News

World's Oldest Motorboat Racing Venue Cannot Confirm 2026 Season

The Lowestoft & Oulton Broad Motor Boat Club has told its members it cannot confirm whether the 2026 race season will go ahead at Oulton Broad, eight months after the death of competitor Brett Duncan.

In a statement issued to members, club directors said “ongoing work to make this happen continues” but that the club “simply can’t confirm the restart” of racing activities at this time.

LOBMBC describes Oulton Broad as the world’s oldest motorboat racing venue, with a competitive history stretching back to August 1903. The club has run organised racing there since 1933.

Brett Duncan, 51, from Ipswich, died on July 24, 2025, when his hydroplane struck a stationary houseboat moored near North Bay during the ninth round of the LOBMBC club championships.

The Broads Authority noted that the collision occurred beyond the boundary of the official race area.

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch attended initially but subsequently confirmed it would not be conducting a formal investigation, as neither vessel was engaged in commercial activity. East Suffolk Council has been conducting its own investigation, and the Broads Authority, which licences powerboat racing on the Broads, has been involved throughout.

The 2025 season was formally ended last September, with the club’s Battle of Britain meeting on September 14 failing to go

ahead despite the club having hoped it could be saved.

With the usual season start at Oulton Broad falling in early May, the club acknowledged that “time is obviously very much of the essence.”

Directors said a planned on-water demonstration of activity is intended to show the relevant authorities what a safe return to racing looks like, but that additional documentation and safety assessments must still be completed before any restart can be sanctioned.

The club management have done above and beyond to find an agreeable solution and will continue to do our very best.

Off-water dates for the club’s AGM and 2026 season presentation are expected to be announced shortly.

Members have been asked to maintain their memberships and to continue supporting other UK circuit clubs in the meantime.

FEATURE



Photo: Powerboat News

The Venetian Designer Who Built the World's Fastest Single-Engine Monohull

Alessandro Bacci was born and grew up in Venice, where, as he puts it, everyone has a boat. He began his working life alongside his father, finishing propellers and setting running parameters. His mother enrolled him in a yacht design course at the Westlawn Institute of Marine Technology, the American school that has trained naval architects for over a century, and he went on to study engineering. The formal curriculum, he says, rarely involved boats in the early years. He preferred to learn by doing.

His education outside the classroom centred on one figure above all others. Bacci pursued Fabio Buzzi for ideas, shadowing the Italian racing legend and engineer during the Venezia-Trieste-Venezia offshore race. Buzzi founded FB Design in 1971 and went on to accumulate 40 world speed records and 55 world championships before his death in a speed record attempt crash in Venice in September 2019. For Bacci, that association proved formative.

Out of that research came the FTS hull – Flow Trimming Step – the design concept Bacci has spent his career developing and refining. The FTS is composed of two geometrically different sections: a deep-V bow, polyhedric and convex with two or more runners per side, paired with a moderate V-shaped stern that is constant and without runners. The configuration allows the boat to plane quickly and reach high top speeds while maintaining an optimal angle of trim with the smallest wetted surface possible, reducing fuel consumption and improving cruising range without sacrificing handling.

Bacci claims the concept has produced what has been recognised, according to the Crouch and Keith performance prediction formulas, as the fastest single-engine monohull in the world. The Crouch formula is a standard naval architecture tool used to predict planing boat performance from power, weight, and hull characteristics. Bacci has not cited an independently ratified speed record, and Powerboat News has not been able to verify the claim through third-party sources at time of publication. What can be confirmed: the last delivered Rialto Sette50 – 1,500kg, fitted with a 250hp Mercury Verado and a 27-inch four-blade Mach prop – exceeded 70 knots.

FEATURE



Left: the 16ft FTS prototype at 42 knots. Right: FTS hull with BPM engine at 60 knots. Photos: Powerboat News

THE RIALTO SUPERBOATS RANGE

WHERE THE WORK GOES NEXT

In search of efficiency, Bacci's current work moves in a different direction. He has recently completed the design of a 60-foot semi-planing hull displacing 20 tonnes, capable of reaching 25 knots on only 880 horsepower. If those figures prove out on the water, the power-to-speed ratio represents a meaningful gain for a hull of that size and weight – the kind of performance that matters for commercial, charter and patrol applications as much as for leisure craft.

He is also working on a fully integrated project for a 41-foot motorboat where the hull is designed around the powertrain from the outset rather than treated as a separate engineering problem. Bacci says he remains available for design consultancy and collaboration.

Powerboat News will follow this story as further details of the 60-foot project become available.

IN MEMORIAM



Igor Tycel, Polish jet ski champion, 1984–2026. Photos: Powerboat News

Igor Tycel: Polish Jet Ski Champion Dies in Racing Collision at Płock

Igor Tycel, a 19-year-old Polish PWC racer and national champion, died on Saturday following a collision during the opening round of the Polish Water Scooter Championships on the Vistula River in Płock.

The accident occurred shortly before 3pm during a stockbox class race at the Mazovia round, held on a stretch of the river adjacent to the pier at ul. Rybaki. Two jet skis collided and both riders were pulled under the water. An air ambulance from the Lotnicze Pogotowie Ratunkowe landed on the riverside, but despite prolonged resuscitation efforts, he could not be saved. The other rider, a 54-year-old man, survived without serious injuries and tested negative for alcohol at the scene.

The championships were halted immediately. The event was organised by the Polski Związek Motorowodny i Narciarstwa Wodnego (PZMWiNW) and the Płock Voluntary Water Rescue Service (WOPR).

INVESTIGATION OPENED

The following day, Bartosz Maliszewski, spokesman for the Płock Regional Prosecutor's Office, confirmed that a formal investigation had been opened. The inquiry is expected to proceed under Article 160 of the Polish Criminal Code, covering the endangerment of life, alongside Article 155, which covers the involuntary causation of death.

Investigators seized both jet skis involved in the incident, along with Tycel's racing suit and helmet, full event documentation and video recordings including drone footage. Around 12 competitors and several officials were interviewed at the scene.

A FAMILY SPORT, A LIFE LIVED ON THE WATER

Tycel competed for the WKSM JetRiders club based in Wrocław and trained at the Nysa water area in Lower Silesia.

He had risen quickly through Polish and international jet ski competition.

In 2022 he was vice-champion of Poland in the Runabout GP4 class. The following year he won the national Runabout Stock Box title, finished runner-up in the Runabout GP2 class, and took a bronze medal at the European Championships. He went on to compete in UIM-ABP Aquabike World Championship rounds across Europe, representing Poland in international junior and pro class events.

Jarosław Białochoławek, president of the WOPR Nysa water rescue service, told local outlet opolska360.pl that Tycel had been part of the sport his entire life.

Białochoławek said:

He came from a family of motorboaters. He trained with us since childhood. Jet ski racing is an extreme sport. These machines accelerate to 100 km/h in seconds. Mastering them is no small feat. Over the years there have been accidents and collisions. They ended mainly with bruising, sometimes broken bones. And here we have a death. Igor was incredibly talented. This is a great loss.

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The PZMWiNW issued a statement describing the shock felt across the Polish water sports community.

The federation said:

Back in the Day

STORIES FROM THE SPORT'S GOLDEN ERA

BACK IN THE DAY



Photo: Powerboat News

Wellcraft Scarab 38KV – Miami Vice Edition

With filming set to begin in June 2026 for the Miami Vice reboot, Miami's waterways are about to get their close-up again. Joseph Kosinski's production, starring Austin Butler and Michael B Jordan, returns to 1985 for what the director calls a "full on" period aesthetic. That means authentic hardware from the era that defined Miami excess.

Based near the film's expected locations, one of those authentic pieces sits at TNT Marine Center in North Miami. Gustavo "Gus" Morales owns a 1986 Wellcraft Scarab 38KV "Miami Vice Edition". During the Miami International Boat Show, I took a trip back in time and shared a few hours with a beautifully restored classic.

THE TELEVISION PHENOMENON

Miami Vice premiered on NBC in September 1984 and ran until January 1990. Created by Anthony Yerkovich and produced by Michael Mann, the series revolutionised television aesthetics. Pastel suits, synthesiser soundtracks, and high-performance boats became cultural signatures.

Don Johnson's James "Sonny" Crockett and Philip Michael Thomas's Ricardo Tubbs drove powerboats as fast as they drove McBurnie's Daytona Spiders and Ferrari Testarossas. The show's marine hardware wasn't background scenery. While the Chris-Craft Stinger 390X featured in the first season, it was the Wellcraft Scarab 38KV that appeared prominently from season two through five, becoming as iconic as the show's fashion and music.

BACK IN THE DAY



Left: stern profile. Right: cockpit and deck layout. Photos: Powerboat News



Engine bay · Helm controls · John Moore with owner Gustavo Morales. Photos: Powerboat News

According to Wayne Kolb, considered by many the most respected Miami Vice boat historian and the owner of three Scarab 38KVs, the producers decided to replace the Chris-Craft due to operational difficulties during filming. Chris-Craft also wanted the show to pay for any additional boats, a proposal the producers rejected.

Wellcraft capitalised on the show's popularity, which attracted more than 10 million viewers per episode. The company contributed two Scarab boats built from the pre-existing Scarab 377 hull, originally designed by Larry Smith using Kevlar hull laminates and made famous by offshore racing champion Betty Cook and her Scarab KAAMA powerboat.

Producers named the boats Star 1 (camera boat) and Star 2 (stunt boat). Kolb currently owns Star 2, which is due for restoration. A total of six boats were contributed free of charge by Wellcraft for the series, with three loaner boats provided to Don Johnson for personal use.

Wellcraft also marketed Scarab 38KVs directly to the public under the "Miami Vice Edition" branding, leveraging the show's popularity to sell high-performance offshore boats to those who wanted a piece of the television aesthetic. A total of 33 Miami Vice Edition boats were manufactured and sold at US\$130,000 each between 1986 and 1989. Wellcraft achieved approximately a 20 per cent increase in boat sales during this period.

FACTORY SPECIFICATION VS REALITY

The 1986 Wellcraft Scarab 38KV Miami Vice Edition carried factory specifications designed for performance and style. Length overall measured 38 feet with an eight-foot beam. Twin 440-horsepower V8 Mercury MerCruiser petrol engines provided 880 combined horsepower, delivering approximately 52 knots top speed.

BACK IN THE DAY



Photo: Powerboat News

John D. D'Elia and the Special Edition Years

John D. D'Elia, who won national and world offshore powerboat championships alongside his son and made a 30-foot Chris-Craft catamaran one of the most consistent boats on the American circuit in the 1980s, died on April 22, 2026. He was 90. The racing story is worth telling.

Marathon, Florida. April 25, 1987. The Bud Light Offshore Challenge was already generating headlines before a boat had turned a lap. Six Open class entries had arrived from the shops with F-16 fighter plane canopies bolted over their cockpits and five-point harnesses inside, the sport's belated answer to a run of fatal accidents. Spectators called them Martian ships. The APBA's chief paramedic watched from a helicopter overhead.

Down in Modified class, none of that applied. John D'Elia and his throttleman Digger Dirgins climbed into Auto Armor Special Edition, a 30-foot Chris-Craft catamaran running twin 550hp MerCruiser engines on surface drives, and went racing. The boat had nine wins from thirteen Modified class starts since the beginning of the 1986 season. D'Elia, who had already collected one US and two world titles, was not particularly interested in the space capsules.

When the Open class drama played out above them, with Spirit of America winning at 100.4 mph before a protest and penalty changed the outcome, D'Elia and Dirgins had already posted their number: 98.1 mph over the 149-mile course. The Powerboat magazine correspondent covering the race noted

they had averaged 2.9 mph faster than the eventual Open class winner. In the Modified, it was another entry in the win column for the team the writer described as one of racing's most exciting.

His son John Jr., racing separately in the 24-foot Skater catamaran Breakaway in Stock A, won his class at 76.5 mph, more than ten miles per hour clear of the next boat. Father and son each stood on top of the podium on the same afternoon in Marathon. Both had been described by that point as former world champions.

D'Elia had come to offshore racing in 1980 after watching the Walsh Offshore Grand Prix at Point Pleasant Beach, New Jersey as a spectator. He was already a former amateur car racer and a substantial automotive business operator, running Honda, Acura and Isuzu dealerships across Connecticut and New York, a portfolio his father had founded as a Dodge and Pontiac dealership and which D'Elia had expanded into one of the larger groups in the Northeast. He had run competitively through school and university and, by all accounts, applied the same unhurried, calculating approach to race preparation that he did to business.

BACK IN THE DAY



Anni-Frid Lyngstad gets a helping hand aboard — the Evinrude outboard is no coincidence. Photo: Powerboat News

ABBA's Forgotten Connection to Powerboat Racing

In the early 1970s, Sweden's outboard racing scene had a problem that was entirely internal.

Evinrude and Johnson were sold by rival distributors, and those distributors were competing as hard as the racers they backed.

In Stockholm, AGB held the Johnson franchise.

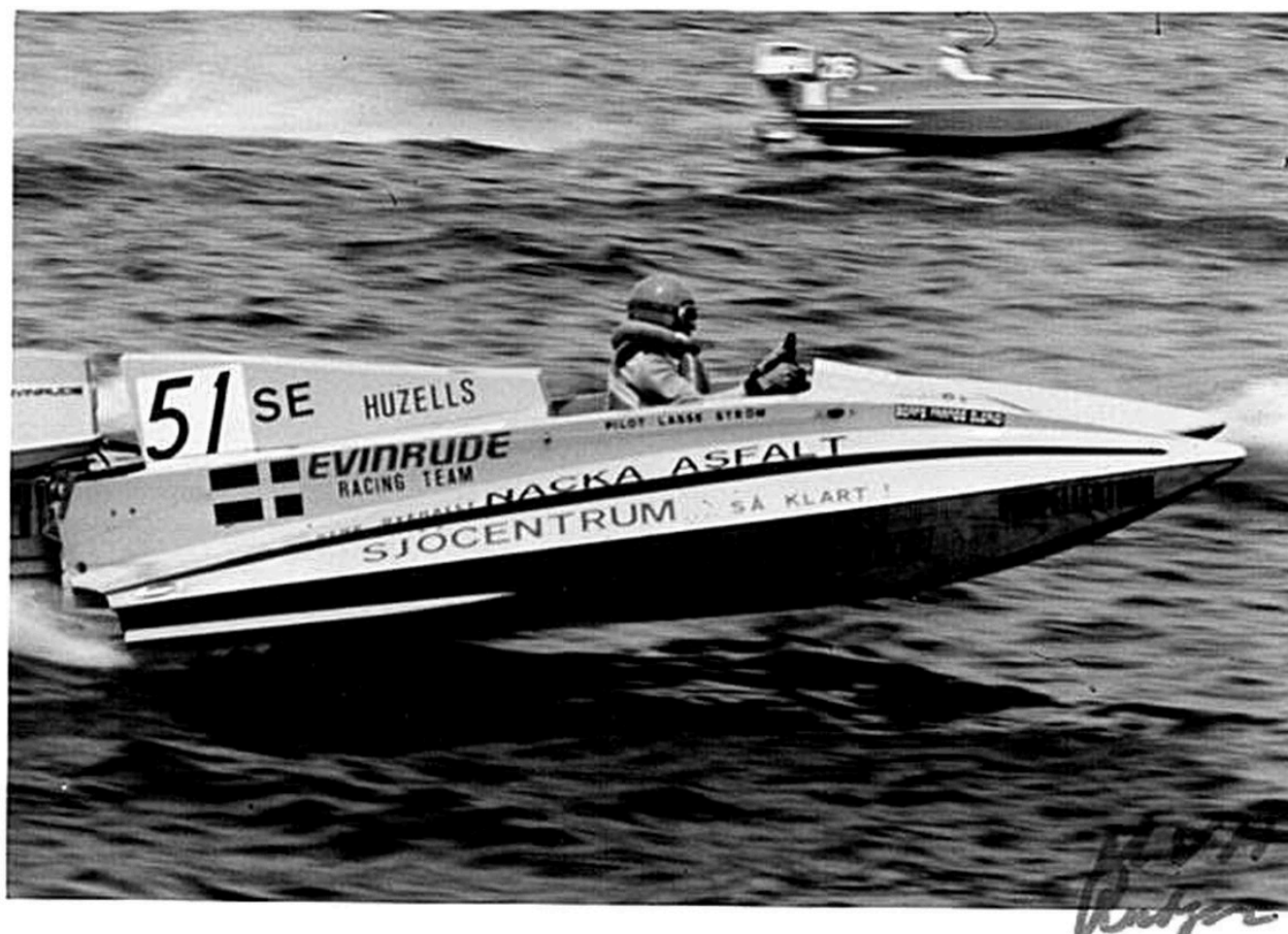
Huzells, run by Bill Huzell, had Evinrude, and Huzell was determined to win.

When Lars Strom won his first major race, Huzell took notice.

Strom had come through the Swedish outboard scene the long way, working in marine dealerships while learning to set up and drive fast.

The breakthrough came in the winter of 1972/73, when the call came from Evinrude Sweden: Huzells would give him the new 65SS engine, purpose-designed to win the UIM SE class.

BACK IN THE DAY



Lars Strom in the Huzells Evinrude Racing Team boat, SE Class, 1974 – the Swedish powerboat racing world ABBA moved in. Photo: Powerboat News

The condition was straightforward.

Buy a new catamaran from Italy.

Strom drove to Cremona with his father and collected a Clerici hull.

The combination worked immediately.

In 1973 he won the European SE Championship in Lappeenranta, Finland, defeating Roger Jenkins, the OMC factory-backed driver, in the process.

Huzells went from sponsor to serious racing partner.

Then, for the 1974 season, they went further.

The person responsible for what came next was Anita Torpman, Huzells' PR manager.

She signed ABBA as brand ambassadors for Evinrude.

Lars is precise about the distinction: it was a commercial arrangement between Huzells and the band, not a personal deal involving him.

Speaking to Powerboat News, he said:

"They weren't a sponsor. They were a brand ambassador. Huzells paid ABBA to use them. Make it 100% clear: I did not have a direct contract with ABBA to sponsor me. It was Evinrude, Huzells, that had it."

What Torpman's campaign produced was hard to ignore.

Huzells printed t-shirts featuring Lars's Clerici race boat alongside the ABBA name and sold them in large numbers.

All four members of the band wore them.

At the 1974 Stockholm Boat Show, Huzells put the Clerici/Evinrude on the stand, ran the Bond film Live and Let Die on a continuous loop, and distributed the t-shirts to the public.

Torpman's plan also called for Lars to bring his race boat to promotional shoots where Huzells would photograph the band alongside it.

"They called me and said: Lars, you've got to bring your race boat, we're going to meet up with ABBA, promote Evinrude and your racing. And I said I don't have time for that. I was so focused. I was young and not thinking clearly about what I should have done."

It was not a straightforward mistake to make.

Sponsorship in motorsport was still new in the early 1970s.

Commercial branding on racing cars had only arrived with the Lotus Formula One team in 1968.

Outboard circuit racing was further behind the curve.