

KIRSTEN'S GOLD

Erick Ellstrom looked at the number on the propeller of his APBA Gold Cup winning Miss Elam Plus and was momentarily without words. "The propeller is number 7-11, that's the same day that my mother died. It has been a rough month, but I think she would be happy. This Gold Cup is for her." In addition to dealing with everyday responsibilities of running the Ellstrom Racing Team, Erick spent most of the 2007 season living with the fact that his mother Kirsten was losing her battle with lung cancer.



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Another Ellstrom Win!
The team celebrates their Gold Cup win in Detroit



STORY & PHOTOS BILL OSBORNE



*Ellstrom Racing
The team goes for the Gold Cup*



THE GOLD CUP DETROIT, MICHIGAN

ELLSTROM, THE TEAM TO BEAT | The powerful Ellstrom team came into the Gold Cup with two wins in Indiana and was clearly the favorite to win its first APBA Gold Cup. "We ran well enough to with there, but this was our focus. This race has not been good to us in the past. Last year, our number one boat was at home after the Valleyfield accident and two years ago we crashed on the Friday before the race. Every member of the team stepped up and made this one of the greatest days in Ellstrom racing history."

A battered fleet limped into Detroit after a rough start to the 2007 ABRA season. At Evansville, both Formula Boats flipped. While Jeff Bernard and his U-5 Formula Boats was repaired in time to race at Evansville, things were bleak in the U-1 camp. The boat was badly damaged and Mike Allen broke his left thumb in two places. Despite the injury, Allen raced in Madison and Detroit. Little did anyone know that Allen's troubles were not over quite yet.

The Miss Beacon Plumbing team, owned by Billy and Jane Schumacher came to Detroit as the defending APBA Gold Cup champions. Despite a flip in Evansville, Jean Theoret was ready to defend his title. His first run on Friday convinced everyone that the U-37 was going to be a factor in the race. Theoret was first onto the race course and clicked off laps of 152, 158, and 160 to set the bar for the weekend. At that point, most observers felt that Miss Beacon Plumbing had a good shot at becoming the first boat to repeat since Miss Budweiser won in 1997 and 1998. That optimism would decline as the events of the weekend unfolded.

Dave Villwock brought Miss Elam Plus out with a goal to wrest the top qualifying speed from the checkerboard Miss Beacon Plumbing. Despite his best effort, Villwock was only able to muster up a speed of 158. Did they have more in the tank or was Beacon the faster boat? Time would answer that question. After each run, Ellstrom, Villwock, and Tracy



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engine screamed wildly until Theoret shut it down. From the shore, it sounded like either a prop or a gearbox let go, signifying the possibility of huge damage to the defending champion. While neither of those parts was broken, Miss Beacon Plumbing was injured. Could the team salvage the day? Would they make repairs in time for Heat 1A at 10:20 am? Once again, the award-winning Beacon crew fixed the damage and they were ready to race.

The rest of Saturday's unlimited activities were suspended due to the wind so the offshore boats took over. They completed their preliminary heats, much to the delight of the fans and the race promoters.



Realtime Repairs are just part of the challenge of Hydro Racing

Bratvold, the Elam engine guru met to search for more power. Finally, late in the day, Villwock topped the charts at 163. After the good run, Bratvold breathed a sigh of relief. "We had some fuel control issues and all we could do was keep making subtle adjustments. Things are better, but we are still not where we should be right now."

Steve David took third place in qualifying the Oh Boy! Oberto at 156 followed closely by Jimmie King's Miss Chrysler-Jeep at 155.5. David was very happy after the qualifying session ended. "This is only the third race with our new boat and its first time in Detroit. I think it will do very well here. I have no excuses now!"

J. Michael Kelly was just a tick behind King, followed by the two Formula Boats, both qualified by Jeff Bernard. Ken Muscatel checked in Miss Jarvis Construction at 149 and Greg Hopp rounded out the field at 138. With field set, everyone was excited to race on Saturday. Mother Nature had other plans in the form of 15-30 mph winds all day, wiping all activity except for a few runs early in the morning.

Miss Beacon Plumbing made the most noise when an output shaft which connects the engine to the gearbox let go on its Saturday test run. Miss Beacon Plumbing's

KIRSTEN'S WISH, WIN FOR ME! | ABRA officials met and modified the format, cutting the number of elimination heats from four down to three and made every heat a five-lap event.

The first heat of the day matched three of the top contenders, Miss Elam Plus, Miss Beacon Plumbing, and U-1 Formula Boats along with Spirit of Detroit and Mirage Boats. Theoret grabbed lane one with Villwock next to him in lane two. All five boats made a good start and it was time to see who had what it takes. Miss Beacon Plumbing lead briefly as the boats made their way around the Detroit River oval. By the time Villwock exited turn one, the race was over. Miss Elam Plus established a huge lead and never looked back.

According to Theoret, Miss Beacon Plumbing was in trouble. "I made a good start in lane 1 and hit the accelerator, but the engine didn't respond. I looked over to my right and Mike Allen went around me. Before I knew it J. Michael passed me. I am not used to people going around me that easily." Little did anyone realize that the problems for the Beacon Plumbing team were far from over.

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U-13 Spirit of Detroit

J. Michael Kelly provided the fans with several thrills as he flew the U-13 all over the race course.



EXTREME

EXTREME BOATS MAGAZINE



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*Detroit, Michigan
Gold Cup Race*

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O Boy! Oberto, Steve David put up an excellent challenge, winning two heats!

Afterwards, Erick Ellstrom smiled and thanked his crew for all of their efforts. "With all that has happened in my life over the last month, I haven't been able to devote all of myself to racing. Some things are just more important." Ellstrom made the trip to Evansville, knowing at any minute that his mother could take a significant turn for the worse. His worst fears became reality when her condition deteriorated after that race.

Erick decided to skip Madison, which as it turns out was a fortuitous decision. He spent as much time with his mother as he could and was with her when she passed on July 11. With a heavy heart, he boarded an airplane and flew to Detroit to do what he had promised her he would do; win the APBA Gold Cup in her honor. Step one of the mission was now complete.

HOW SLOW CAN YOU GO? | For many years, the rule book stated that, "All boats must remain on plane from the one-minute gun to the start of the race." Over time, racers pushed the rule to the limit and officials were reluctant to make the subjective call of what "On plane" means. The solution was to drop that phrase from the rule book. The result of the change can be seen at almost every heat start; boats crawl up to the last turn as slowly as possible to claim lane position.

Heat 1B could be classified as the ultimate slow start. Oh Boy! Oberto and Miss Chrysler Jeep were nearly a minute early as they approached the Roostertail Turn prior to the start. Would David go too slowly and fill his engine with water? Would King get the rpm's in his turbo-Allison so low that it would not respond when it was time to go. Could Jeff Bernard and Ken Muscatel take advantage of the other two, pass them at the start and cross over in front of them before they came up to speed?

King's fears were realized when the huge aircraft engine's twelve cylinders did not respond. The three turbines left King in their wakes. David, who appeared to have nailed his start took off like a rocket and left Bernard and Mucatel behind with Kind a distant fourth. King made up the deficit quickly and after two laps, he was in second place. Oberto held a huge lead, so the Chrysler boat settled for second until the Belle Isle turn of lap five. With three-quarters of lap to the go the Allison engine quit and King's ride was over.

No one in the pits was aware that Steve David had jumped the gun until he received the green flag instead of the checkered, signifying that he had a one-lap penalty. The infraction moved Jeff Bernard's U-5 Formula Boats into first place and gave Dr. Ken Muscatel the valuable 300 points for finishing second. Oberto came around to collect 225 points for third place.

To complicate matters, U-5 Formula Boats was cited for a flagrant N-2 violation, handing the 400 points to Muscatel and moving Oberto into second. The Formula Boats team protested and the data was reviewed. In a very unusual turn of the events, the penalty was overturned and the U-5 was given back its points.

According to ABRA Chairman Sam Cole, "They (The U-5 team) asked us to check their data earlier to see if they were OK. Our technician looked at the data and said they were legal without looking at all of the data which showed that they were running over. First, we don't check data for teams. It's their job to their engines set up to be in compliance. Because we gave them bad information, we had to make it right. We made a mistake. It will not happen again. Period!"

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ROUND 2 TO OBERTO | For the second heat in a row, Steve David and Jimmie King faced each other for the second time in a row and the results were the same; Oh Boy! Oberto just had too much speed and the right spots and Steve David recorded his second heat win of the day. For those who watched David manhandle the field, averaging 149.445 mph, the only question for the Madison-based team was whether or not they could tame the Villwock Express.

That question would remain unanswered until the final heat. Jimmie King restored faith in fans of the Allison-powered Chrysler-Jeep as he came from back in the pack to claim the valuable 300 points for a second place. While he was pleased with the outcome, King noted, "We ran well, but we are a long shot to make the final. It puts us in a must-win position in the next heat."

J. Michael Kelly provided the fans with several thrills as he flew the U-13 Spirit of Detroit all over the race course. "I hit hard twice. The first one took the wing off the boat. That one (looking at a picture of the boat up in the air) is where I hurt my elbow." Say whatever you want about young Mr. Kelly, but don't ever discount his courage. The young man gives it his all every time out. Kelly went on to collect the 225 points for finishing third and kept his chances for running for the Gold Cup alive.

*Detroit Gold
The Gold Cup is
a local favorite,
with plenty
of spectator
participation.*

KIRSTEN'S DREAM | Knowing that Villwock had an advantage in power, Jean Theoret pushed Miss Beacon Plumbing hard at the start. In this case, he pushed a bit too hard and the U-37 was over the line early, earning a one-lap penalty. Meanwhile, Villwock coasted to an easy heat win, averaging 9 miles per hour less than Oberto ran in the last heat. Ken Muscatel drove Jarvis Construction to a second place, enhancing his chances of running in the final.

Theoret, the defending champion was placed in the same place as Jimmie King, win the next heat or pack up and go home. He reflected about the start, "I thought if I could get to the first turn ahead of him (Villwock), I could hold him off. It must have been close. I feel bad that I let the team down, but we do have one more heat."

For the second heat in a row, Ellstrom was reluctant to show too much emotion. Erick's thoughts went to his mother as a reporter asked him about her. "I am sure that she is looking down on us and I know she is proud. The real race is still ahead of us. There are other boats that can race with us, so we will have to have our best combination out there." Then Ellstrom went back into his pit area and prepared for round number three, almost assured of a place on the front row of the final heat.

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Formula U-5 had a great weekend, making it to the final heat.

AN EPIC BATTLE | Just prior to the start of Heat 3A, Ken Muscatel turned over the driver's seat of the U-25 to Greg Hopp whose boat was finished for the day. Muscatel looked longingly as Hopp entered the boat. "I feel bad about stepping out of the boat, but it's the right thing to do. I was having some breathing problems, so I decided not to take any chances." Anyone who knows Dr. Ken realizes how tough that decision was. Muscatel is a proud man, filled with the dream of winning the gold. That dream for him was now over for this year.

Oh Boy! Oberto and Jarvis Construction hit the line at full speed with Chrysler-Jeep well behind. A third place in the heat would eliminate the U-3 from any hope of running in the final. King was not going down without a fight. He quickly passed Hopp and set out after David.

The fans were treated to the best race of 2007. Each time the two combatants raced down the backstretch towards the Roostertail Turn, David's lead diminished. When the two boats exited that turn in the third lap, the fans went crazy. Could King pass the turbine on the outside? In the Belle Isle turn during lap five, King received a much-needed break. Oberto unhooked for a second. By the time David had his mount under control, King had the lead, but could he gain an overlap?

The answer was no, but Jimmie King now controlled the race course. He would pin David to the buoy line, forcing him to run where King wanted him to run. There was no wiggle room for David. Everyone in the stands stood and gasped as the two stormed into the last turn. Jimmie King planted his boat in lane two, giving David exactly one lane and not another inch. The two boats screamed the finish line, both unaware of the outcome. The final heat speeds told the story, Miss Chrysler Jeep first at 151.435 mph and Oh Boy! Oberto at 151.358 mph.

Afterwards, King and David shook hands and complimented each other about the race. "Steve drove a heck of a race, perhaps the best I have ever seen him do. It was so much fun to race against him like that. That new boat of his is amazing. I knew that I had to win in order to run in the final, so I ran as hard as I could and hoped it was enough." King did all that he could. Now, all he could do was wait for the next heat to see if he was in or out.

THREE FOR THREE | Needing a win to advance, Theoret grabbed lane one with Elam and Formula next to him. Villwock glided around the other two in the Belle Isle Turn and moved out to a huge lead. Trying to make up ground, Theoret pushed Miss Beacon Plumbing hard in lane one. As he entered the Roostertail Turn, Theoret caught a wake and hooked inside the apex buoy. By the time he circled the buoy, Miss Beacon Plumbing's day was all but over. "I was trying to catch Villwock when I saw a lot of water in front of me. I tried to keep right on the buoy line and ran out of room." Mike Allen took over second followed by his teammate Jeff Bernard.

With the defending champion out, Villwock's path to the championship was easier, but he still had deal with Steve David's Oh Boy! Oberto and U-1 Formula Boats. For the second straight year, Ken Muscatel's boat made the final field along with U-5 Formula Boats on the front line. Jimmie King was the trailer boat and Miss Beacon Plumbing was the first alternate. Prior to the final, Miss Beacon Plumbing gave up its spot as alternate. The reasoning at the time was sound; even if someone failed to start, the alternate would only move up to the trailer position. In the Gold Cup, it is virtually impossible to win from the trailer position.



Bill Osborne covers the Unlimited Hydroplane circuit for Extreme Boats Magazine, sharing his insight and captivating images of this intense water sport. To purchase prints, visit www.billophoto.com.

THE 3-LAP RULE | Dave Villwock made a good start and opened up a huge lead over Steve David and Mike Allen. Entering the first turn of lap three, Mike Allen's U-1 Formula Boats flipped, stopping the heat. In any other heat, Villwock would have been declared the winner because he completed more than half of the heat, but Gold Cup rules are different for the final. The rule states that the lead boat must have completed 3 full laps. There would be a rerun.

Allen's injuries were comparatively minor. The incision on his surgically-repaired thumb opened up and was bleeding. He also took in more water than he ever wanted, but in the end, he would recover. As a result, Miss Chrysler jeep moved up to the front line and Spirit of Detroit moved into the trailer position.

WE HAVE A WINNER | U-13 Spirit of Detroit moved up to the front line when the U-5 Formula Boats did not start. Villwock claimed lane one with Oberto in two, Spirit of Detroit took lane three, Chrysler Jeep in four and Jarvis in lane five. For the second time in an hour, Villwock led the field through the first turn of the APBA Gold Cup with Oh Boy! Oberto giving chase, followed by Jimmie King, J. Michael Kelly and Greg Hopp.

Villwock drove Miss Elam Plus like a man on a mission, flying his boat all over the Detroit River course, seeking his date with destiny. This time, no one flipped and Miss Elam Plus was on its way to winning the 99th running of the APBA Gold Cup. The Ellstrom crew waited nervously as the orange rocket completed the final heat. Finally, Miss Elam Plus crossed the line finishing first and tentatively winning the race. The crew went crazy, hugging, yelling, and in some cases crying.

For turbine specialist Tracy Bratvold, the Gold Cup had eluded him since 1978, so sharing the victory with his son Adam was special. The Ellstrom family entered the sport in 1994 and never had never tasted gold, yet there they all were, on the podium holding the Tiffany-created trophy. In between 1994 and 2006, Ellstrom-owned boats flipped, missed the race because of wrecks, and never really had a solid chance to win until now.

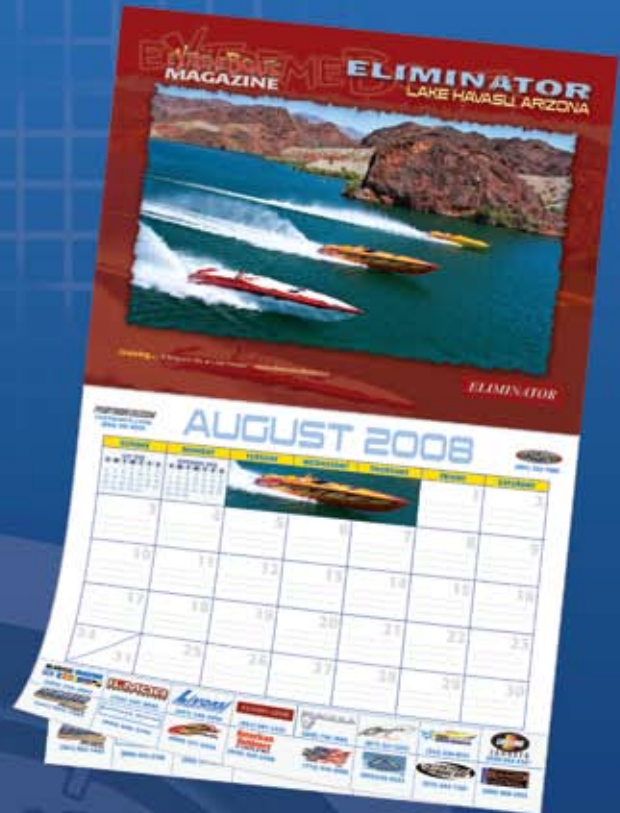
While the champagne corks popped and the team celebrated, Erick Ellstrom had time to reflect upon the last few days. "I know my mom would be very proud today. She always believed that we could do it. I just wish that she was here right now to share our joy." Kirsten's dream came true today, July 15, only four days after her passing. Dreams do come true and at long last Kirsten has her gold. *-Bill*

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U-37

U-37

Meet the Team

Miss Beacon Plumbing

The Miss Beacon Plumbing team is the largest, and one of the hardest-working, teams on the ABRA circuit. In two years of ownership, **Billy and Jane Schumacher** have assembled a formidable team, capable of winning every week.

Driver Jean Theoret grew up in a racing family near Valleyfield, Quebec. After winning 43 times on the GP-class, Theoret moved to the unlimiteds. He won twice in 2005 and three more times last year. He is regarded as one of the best starters and no one turns a boat any better than Theoret.

Crew Chief Scott Raney literally grew up in the boat shop where he now spends most of his waking hours. "I came here in 1989 and started by sweeping the floor at the shop while learning this job from the bottom up." In the last two years, he has received the ABRA Crew Chief of the Year award. In that period, he has quietly assembled a crew that mirrors his intensity. In 2006, the Scott Raney-managed team won three of the last four races.

John Walters entered the sport in 1969 as a crew member on Lou Nuta's Miss Miami. In 1982, Walters became the first driver to win an event driving a turbine-powered unlimited. After twenty years of turning wrenches, John Walters is considered one of the very best turbine men in the business. His engines produce power without sacrificing reliability. Last season, Walter's turbines ran at top speed all year without suffering a serious mechanical failure. **Aaron DeMarc** assists Walters in the turbine shop at every race as well as working in the shop in between races.



The Beacon Plumbing Team, owned by Billy and Jane Schumacher, are a serious threat every weekend!

Ryan Mallow can do it all. He is well versed in all of the materials used to construct a race boat. His race day duties include checking the engine, gear box, and fuel systems. As he puts it, "I am Scott's right-hand man. I've worked on every single part of the boat in the last few years." Ryan is the one who has the primary responsibility of getting Jean Theoret into the race boat.

Every team needs a welder and a metal fabricator and the Beacon team has a great one in **Chris Myers**. There are no hydro stores where we can buy parts, so everything you see on the U-37 is a custom-built part. Whether it's a new skid fin bracket, a roll cage, or a rudder bracket, Chris Myers takes care of all these jobs.

The rest of the crew is made up of a group that takes care of all of the tasks to make the U-37 compete. **Greg Pogue** supplies the graphics for the boat and also works on the hull. **Randy Roe** takes care of props, while **Bill Moore** handles the skid fin at each race. **Paul, "PK" Kiser** lives in Detroit and attends as many races as he can, helping on the boat wherever he can.

Carl Hatterly is the youngest member of the team, but don't mistake his age and experience, because the young man has a world of talent. Reminds us of a young Scott Raney. Carl works on the hull and assists Raney in all aspects of the boat.

Claude Comeau, "Mr. Clean," is one of Jean Theoret's closest friends. He attends each race and is the one who keeps Miss Beacon Plumbing looking good.

The entire team has its sights set on improving on its third-place in the ABRA national high-points. Look forward to improved performance in 2008! •



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