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Jon Roth and John Tomlinson drive Roth's Skater Powerboats 388 SS at the Desert Storm Poker Run on Arizona's Lake Havasu. The two also teamed up to run the boat 179 mph in the shootout.



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LOVING LIFE

Producing a high-performance boating website with daily news, a weekly electronic newsletter and a digital bi-monthly magazine is—as you’d probably expect—time-consuming, demanding and frankly a ton of work for two guys. Want to know what else it is?

Plain old fun. As in the most fun we’ve had in our editorial careers. As in we can’t see ourselves doing anything else.

From our admittedly skewed perspective, the go-fast boating beat is the best beat in the world. We don’t say that without having written about anything else. We started our careers as newspaper and magazine sports writers. And within the boating world, the two of us have written about personal watercraft, yachts and a whole lot more in between.

All of it pales next to the amazing go-fast boat stuff we get to cover.

For proof, just dig into this issue. In “No Turning Back” on page 24 you’ll get the past, present and future skinny on the Miss GEICO Offshore Racing team. “Eye of the Storm” on page 42 will take you into the heart of one of the hottest go-fast boat events in the country. On page 48, “Pure Pleasure” will put you onboard a 50-foot Mystic catamaran with Mercury Racing 1350 engines. And in “Here’s Looking at You, Kid” on page 34, you’ll get to know Mike Fiore, the founder of Outerlimits Offshore Powerboats, as he celebrates his company’s 20th anniversary this summer.

Without question, most of the content in this issue centers on the high end of the



“FROM OUR ADMITTEDLY SKEWED PERSPECTIVE, THE GO-FAST BEAT IS THE **BEST BEAT IN THE WORLD**”

market. When you’re talking about *Miss GEICO*, Mystic, Outerlimits and much of the fleet at Desert Storm, you’re definitely talking about the upper echelon. Rest assured, however, that we know there’s more to the go-fast boat world than that. Upgrade and restoration projects have never been hotter, and we plan to incorporate features on those projects into the magazine as we move forward and grow. We lose sleep over developing and evolving Speed On The Water magazine. It is an ongoing challenge.

But mostly, it’s just plain fun. **SOTW**

Jason Johnson and Matt Trulio

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HOT SHEET

Happenings | Hardware | Heroics



HITTING THE JACKPOT IN ATLANTIC CITY

Weekend speed-fest a major success.

What do you get when you combine a poker run, a day of boat rides for Wounded Warriors, a classic car show and an offshore race? You get the inaugural **Atlantic City Festival of Speed**, which, thanks to the New Jersey Performance Powerboat Club, the Offshore Powerboat Association and the host venue Golden Nugget Resort and Casino, brought thousands to check out and enjoy the go-fast boat action for three days in mid-June.

HEADLINERS

Quick hits from the go-fast world



RACE

Thousands of dollars in prize money and free hotel rooms were welcome realities for competitors at the inaugural **Lake Race** on Missouri's Lake of the Ozarks in June.



CHARITY

Ace photographer **Tim Sharkey** stepped up with an image from the New York City Poker Run with all proceeds going to the Wounded Warriors project.

PHOTO DESK STUNNER

SWEET TRIFECTA

New contributing photographer **Rodney Olson** delivered this gem from the Hall of Fame Poker Run, the second event of the 2013 Poker Runs America Season, on New York's Alexandria Bay.



INDUSTRY

Sunsation continued its remarkable **34 CCX center console** success with the delivery of its first triple-outboard 34-footer, which tops out at 75 mph.

Photos: Jay Nichols, Rodney Olson, Tim Sharkey

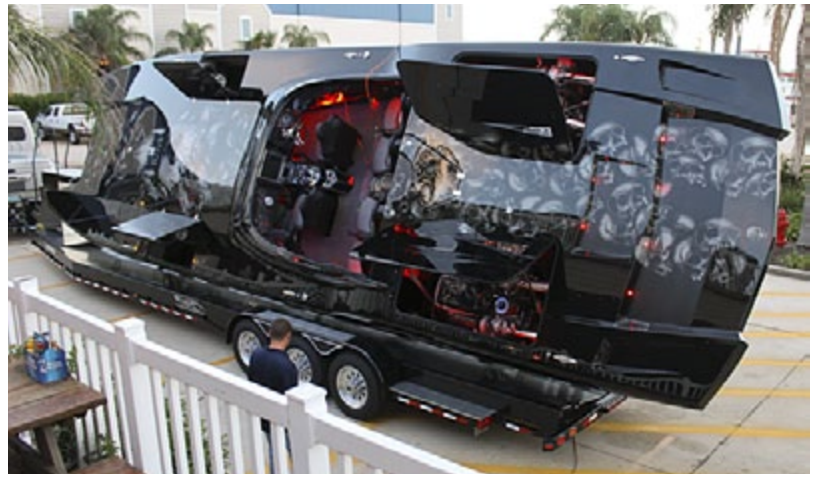


HOT SHEET



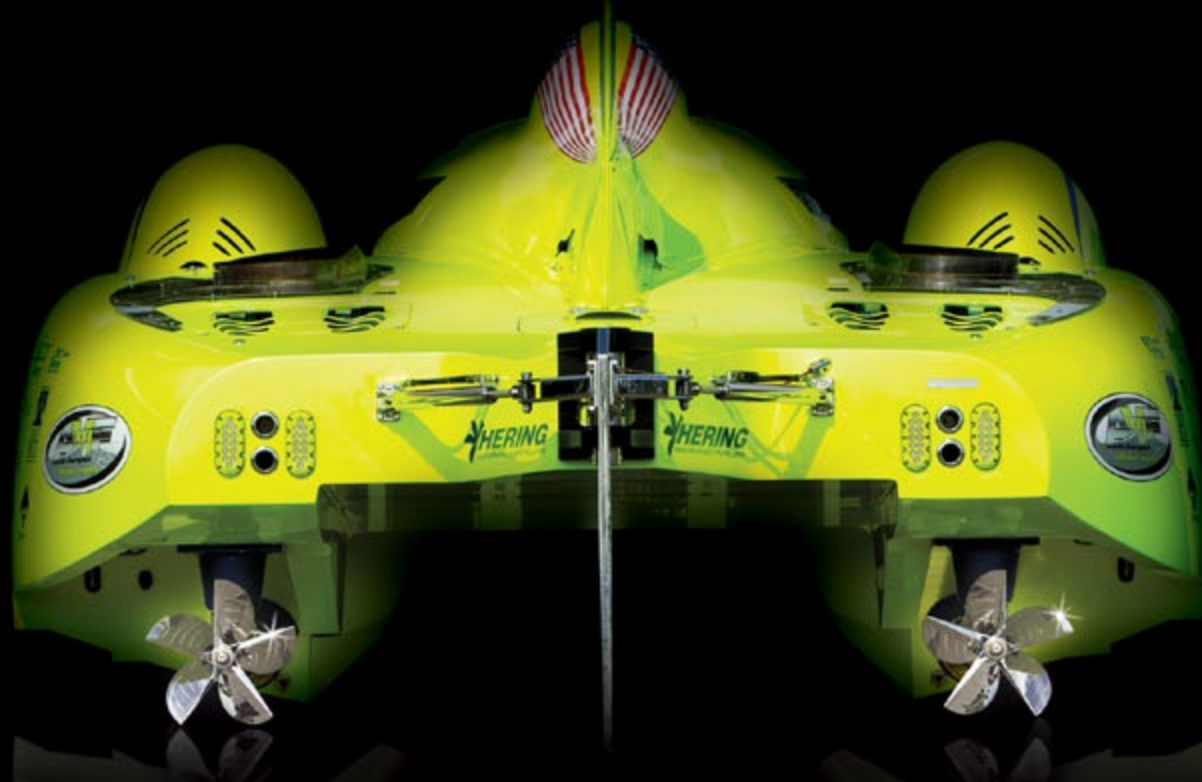
MYSTIC GETS GRAPHIC

Using a state-of-the-art Hies Specker paint system, **Mystic Powerboats** of DeLand, Fla., is now offering complete painting services not just for its own exotic catamarans, but for owners of new and pre-owned boats from other builders. Joining the existing Mystic graphics crew of Steve Valle and his team is veteran powerboat paint man Chuck Penwell. Their first graphics project was on a Mystic C5000-S cat for repeat buyer Don Onken.



SENDING THE WOLF

It's good to be **Mario Williams**. Not only did the Buffalo Bills player recently sign the fattest contract in NFL history for a defensive player, he took delivery of *Big Bad Wolf*, a 446 catamaran from Marine Technology Inc. With graphics designed as an homage to the Wolfpack mascot of North Carolina State University, where Williams was a student, the wider version of MTI's 44-footer is powered by twin Mercury Racing 1350 engines.



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HOT SHEET



STANCOMBE'S TUNNEL VISION

Though it left him shaken, a crash at the Super Boat International race in Orange, Beach, Ala., won't keep longtime offshore racer **Micheal Stancombe** out of the cockpit. In fact, while he's hoping to race again with Paul Boudreaux when the 44-foot MTI cat they rolled is repaired, Stancombe bought a tunnel boat. He's not sure if he'll actually race the boat, but he's looking forward to trying it.

171 MPH

That's how fast Gunslinger GPS Shootout winner Kenny Mungle went in *Gone Again*, a 20-year-old, 32-foot Skater. Will he be a factor in the upcoming **Lake of the Ozarks Shootout**?



NYC POKER RUN RETURNS

After four years, the **New York City Poker Run** returned in fine form, and organizer Billy Frenz got what he expected—a fleet of 35 catamarans and V-bottoms that enjoyed a bluebird Saturday on the Hudson River. On hand was noted powerboat industry observer Rich Luhrs who wrote in a **commentary**, “What the event lacked in quantity it made up for in eye-catching quality.” **SOTW**

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PROPELLER 101

Understanding the ins and outs of propeller measurements can help you choose the right one for your boat.

It was cool to find out that a local guy—Seabrook's own Kenny Mungle—brought home the top trophy in the Gunslinger Outlaw GPS Shootout at the Texas Outlaw Challenge in June. Mungle posted a 171-mph top speed in his 32-foot Skater *Gone Again*, which is powered by twin 1,500-hp Sterling Performance engines.

A couple of weeks before his run at the Texas Outlaw Challenge, Mungle posted the following comment on our Facebook page: I think it would be very useful to know what all of the numbers in a prop size mean. Diameter, pitch, rake—a lot of people don't know exactly what each number represents. I'm sure your "guru" can explain it.

So, in light of Mungle's recent accomplishment, let's talk propellers.

The first thing you need to know when it comes to propellers is that nothing about them is an exact science. There are many variables that affect how a prop performs in various applications. Blade surface area, blade shape, pitch progression, trailing edge cup and finish are just some of the more ambiguous variables.

The basics are easy. The first number used in describing a propeller size is the diameter. It is expressed in inches measured straight across

from blade tip to blade tip. If you are measuring a propeller with an odd number of blades, you can measure to the center of the hub on a horizontal plane and double the measurement.

The second number used to identify a propeller is the pitch. It's also measured in inches. Pitch is the theoretical distance a propeller will travel through the water in one revolution. Most props don't have a constant or single pitch. In other words, there are portions of the blade that are greater, and portions of the blade that are less than the stated pitch.

Most single propeller styles have evolved to a level of comparability. For example, cleaver propellers made by Hering or Mercury closely resemble each other in pitch. By comparison, the earlier Mercury lab-finished (not CNC) were actually a higher pitch than stated.

Propellers also have evolved to having more blades for increased efficiency. Five-blade propellers are pretty much the standard for the larger drives now with occasional use of six-blade offerings.

Propellers for Alpha and Bravo drives are numerous. The early standard was the

TEAGUE'S TIP

IT'S IMPORTANT TO CHECK your propellers regularly for damage, nicks and cracks. Minor nicks should be repaired as they can cause a blade to crack and break off. Most Bravo-style props develop cracks on the leading edge first. The larger cleaver-style props usually develop cracks at the trailing edge near the hub or "root" of the blade. A crack not discovered is sure to result in catastrophic failure.



Mirage three-blade. Then the four-blade revolution began with the Mach Sterndriver, Hydromotive Quad 4 and Mercury Bravo One. Next came the five-blade Herings and Hydromotives followed by the Mercury Maximus. Hering and Hydromotive also offer six-blade propellers for Bravo One- and Bravo One XR-style drives.

When it comes to these propellers, the comparisons are not direct, but the standard Bravo One propeller is a good baseline for comparison. Most five-blade props are more efficient than the four-blades. The Maximus line is very efficient for the stated pitch number, which means that the same power won't pull the same pitch as in other props.

Propeller technology and increased blades have allowed performance boat builders to continually raise the drive height or "X-dimension," which results in less gear case drag and higher performance. Older V-bottoms that don't have steps and require bow lift to attain speed generally do not benefit



Kenny Mungle ran 171 mph in his 32-foot Skater to take home top honors in the Outlaw GPS Shootout.

from extremely high drive heights.

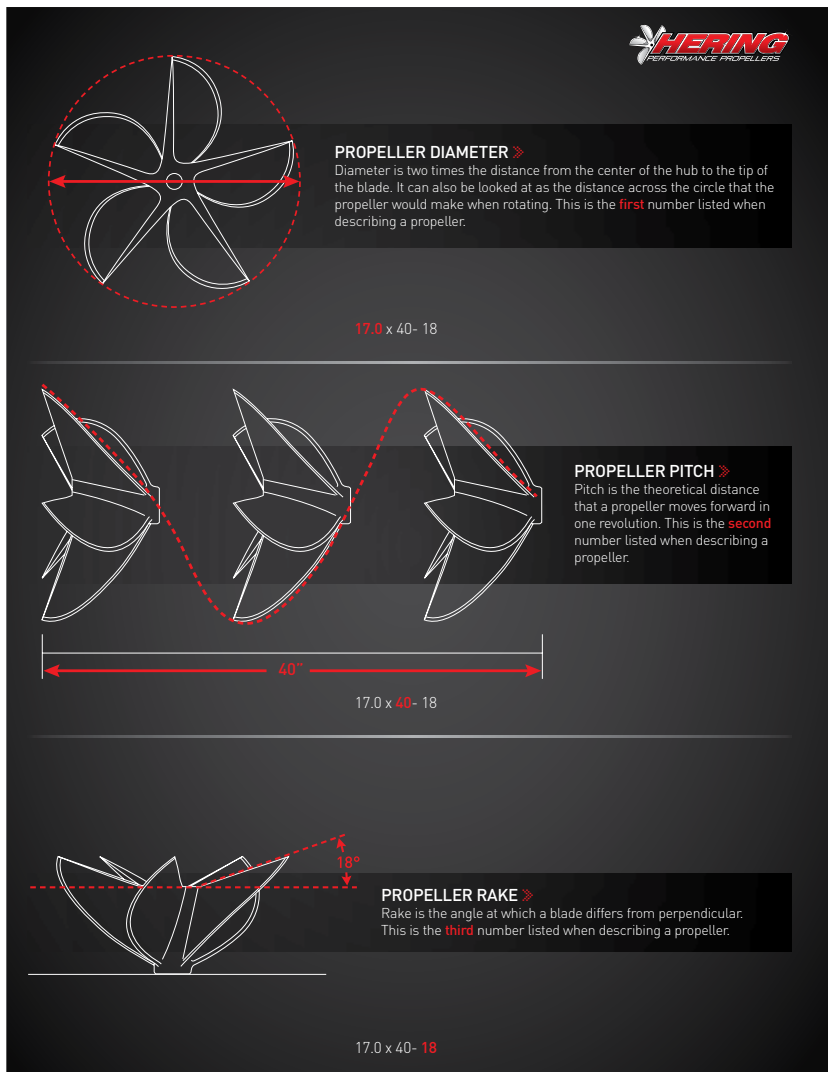
The next design feature is blade rake. Rake is the angle at which the propeller blade differs from perpendicular (zero degrees or flat). While all propellers have a certain blade rake, various blade rakes are readily available for cleaver-style propellers made for the larger drives such as the NXT¹, No. 6 and M-8 stern drives. Mercury offers three standard blade rakes—15, 18 and 21 degrees. Hering offers 16-, 18- and 20-degree blade rakes.



Always Nice To See Ya!

HIGH PERFORMANCE PHOTOGRAPHY
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NAPLES
IMAGE



Propeller terminology chart courtesy Hering Propellers

Generally speaking, higher-rake propellers create more lift. Depending on the rotation on twin-engine setups, the lift will be more at the transom or at the bow. With most setups, inward rotation creates more bow lift and outward rotation creates more stern lift. That's because of the influence the running surface angle has on the lower sweep of the blade that "sees" cleaner water resulting in more influence.

Surfacing propellers on single applications are a little trickier, especially if the X-dimension is high. The blade rotation can actually paddle the boat sideways, which sometimes requires a wedge on the skeg for compensation.

Finally, when it comes to selecting the correct propeller, try to get advice from some experts on your type of boat. You may still have to try a few setups to achieve maximum performance, handling and safety. **SOTW**

—Technical editor and offshore racing world champion Bob Teague is the owner of Teague Custom Marine in Valencia, Calif.



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TEXAS OUTLAW CHALLENGE

Seabrook, Texas

Over the last few years, the Texas Outlaw Challenge has grown from a regional event into a nationally recognized must-attend poker run. It helps that every year organizers have added something new to the mix, including a GPS shootout, a street party, a bikini contest and the Outlaw Corral, where participants can buy and sell used boats. This year, the poker run registrations topped 160 boats (up from 125 the year before), and the assortment of boats from the West Coast, Northeast and Midwest were welcomed with true Texas hospitality by local boat owners and many community establishments such as Lance’s Turtle Club and the Kemah Boardwalk. One such owner is Kenny Armstrong, who opened his home for a giant pool party the day before the poker run teams took off from Endeavour Marina in Clear Lake to hit up to 10 stops in and around Galveston Bay.



1) Dozens of boats showed up to Kenny Armstrong’s house in Dickinson, Texas, for Friday’s “premier” poker run stop—aka the only destination of the day—for the Texas Outlaw Challenge. 2) During the poker run on Saturday, many of the boats made their way to the Harborwalk Yacht Club in Hitchcock after touring Galveston Bay and Clear Lake. 3) Armstrong, who owns two catamarans from Marine Technology Inc., the 48-foot *Phantom* and the 44-foot *Hellraiser*, opened his home and his resort-like pool to hundreds of boaters for a memorable party.



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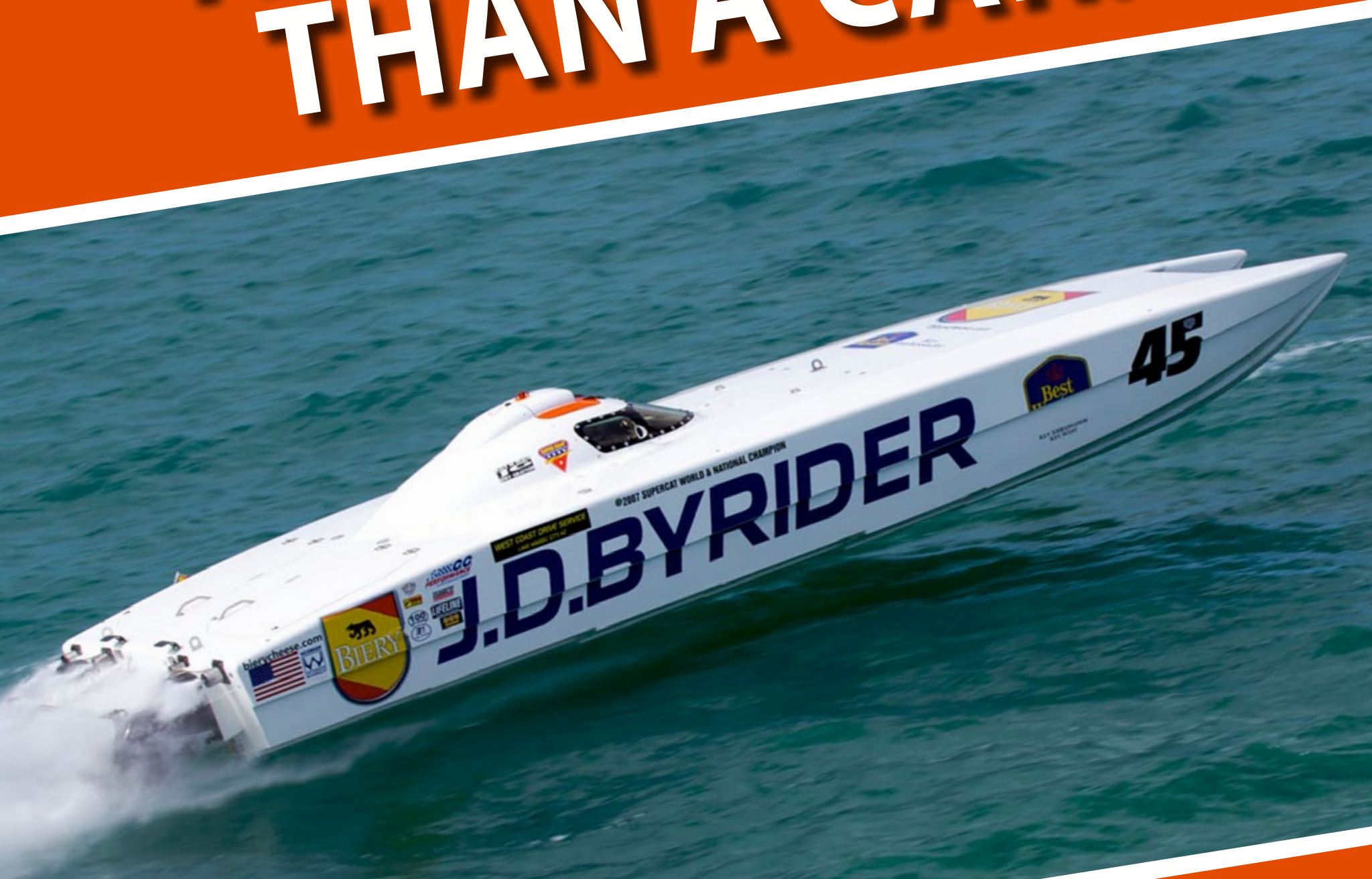
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7

4) A.J. Phillip brought his 40-foot Skater Powerboats catamaran, *No Plans*, from Louisiana for the event. 5) There were quite a few classic Sonic V-bottoms participating in the poker run, including this 30SS. 6) From cruisers and V-bottoms to catamarans and center consoles, a variety of boats took part in the sixth annual Texas Outlaw Challenge. 7) Dave's Custom Boats founder Dave Hemmingson, left, catches up with Jeff Johnston of Hering Propellers during the event. Hemmingson rode with Colorado resident Win Farnsworth, who owns the first M41 Widebody catamaran from the company. **SOTW**

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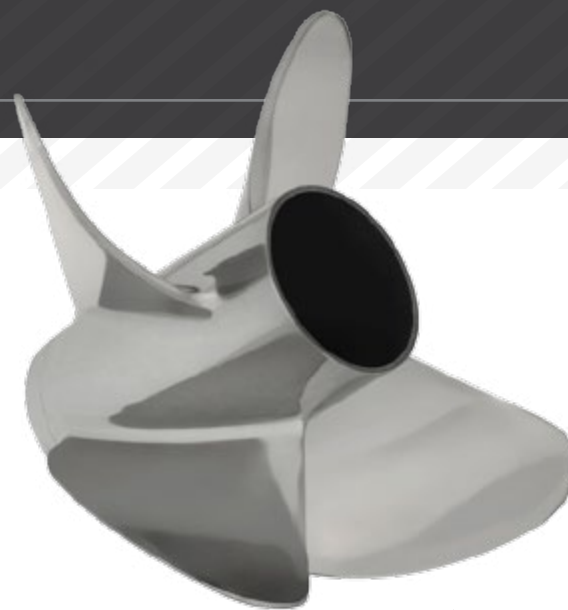
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NO TURNING BACK

From the highs of spending big money to the lows of watching its raceboat burn, the Miss GEICO Offshore Racing team never stops moving forward.

words Matt Trulio | photos Jay Nichols

After about seven hours in the Miss GEICO Offshore Racing/AMF Offshore Rigging shop in Riviera Beach, Fla., I was ready to pull out my hair, which was kind of a problem as I am trying to keep what little I have. The truth about offshore racing shops, raceboats aside, is that they're not all that sexy. The people in them work hard—really hard—for long hours, and entertaining guys who push

digital recorders in their faces and ask a lot of questions rarely tops their priority lists.

But that's not why I was ready to rip out what's left of my receding hair. I am not, by nature, a patient person and we had been waiting since I got there that morning for the 44-foot *Miss GEICO* Victory Team-built catamaran to make its first run with its new twin 1,650-hp engines from Mercury Racing.





From its first Platinum 40-foot cat with twin turbine engines to its current 44-footer with Mercury Racing 1650s, it's been a wild ride for the Miss GEICO team.

Memory Fast Lane

The basic history of the Miss GEICO Offshore Racing team goes like this:

John Haggin, a generous guy who made his money the old-fashioned way—inheritance—was looking for something really fun and exorbitantly expensive to do. Born in New York City, Haggin eventually ended up in Florida and got into high-performance boating. That led him to offshore racing, and sometime in 2004 he decided to start a Turbine-class team—he owned a turbine-powered 51-foot Outerlimits V-bottom pleasure boat—called AMF “America Moving Forward” Offshore Racing. (In an interview I did with Haggin the following year, he said he originally got the initials “AMF” from his father, and they were shorthand for “Adios Mother ...”—the blank is yours to fill in.)

With Granet and throttleman Scott Begovich, a pair of relatively obscure offshore racers at the time, in the cockpit of a turbine-powered 40-foot Platinum catamaran, the team began racing in 2005. Insurance industry giant GEICO signed on as a sponsor, and so began the next six years of the team flat-out dominating its class.

Problem was, at least in terms of consistent competition for the *Miss GEICO* team, which went from the Platinum cat to a 44-foot MTI and then to a 50-foot Mystic, there was no real Turbine class. Take nothing away from Begovich, Granet and the rest of the crew—they prepared meticulously, ran hard and put on a show and represented themselves professionally in a notoriously unprofessional sport. Despite never having raced overseas, *Miss GEICO* became the most recognizable raceboat—maybe even the most recognizable boat, period—in the world. Not since the *Miss Budweiser* Unlimited hydroplane had a boat become so famous.

But head-to-head Turbine-class battles? In six years, you could count them on two hands with fingers left over.

At the end of the Offshore Powerboat Association 2010 World Championships in

“Your timing is perfect,” Marc Granet, the driver of *Miss GEICO*, told me over the phone as I staggered off my red-eye flight from San Francisco to Fort Lauderdale. “Actually, one of our guys is in Lauderdale right now picking up a part. You guys should get here at about the same time. We have just a few more things to do before we run it.”

At that moment, I knew the chances of getting the boat in the water that day were remote. It's not that I am a pessimist or a cynic. I've just been around a lot of offshore racing and high-performance pleasure boats and I've waited on “just a few more things to do before we run” more than once. Even when a raceboat is on the launch ramp and the driver and throttleman are climbing into the cockpit, actual running is not assured.

When I left the shop early that evening, *Miss GEICO* had not hit the water. My hair, however, was still intact.



Driving Miss GEICO

Orange Beach, Ala., Haggin announced that he was getting out of the sport. The burn rate of a Turbine-class offshore racing team is best compared to that of a Southern California wildfire, and in addition to fielding *Miss GEICO*, Haggin spread his money without reservation throughout the sport. His nightly dinners and parties during race weekends, to which every team was welcome, were legendary.

In that moment, the one where Haggin told the group gathered at the Live Bait restaurant and bar in Orange Beach that he was retiring, the team went from being the richest in domestic offshore racing to one with the biggest nut to crack and no revenue stream beyond sponsorship in domestic offshore racing. The team now had to become self-sustaining. Fast. Or die.

Gone was AMF Offshore Racing, replaced by a new entity called AMF Offshore Rigging/ Miss GEICO Offshore Racing that didn't just field the raceboat, but took in rigging and setup work for high-performance pleasure boats and other race teams. The original partners in the ongoing venture, all still there, were Begovich, attorney/accountant Scott Colton, GEICO sponsorship liaison and marketing manager Gary Goodell, Granet and head rigger/team manager Gary Stray.

"There was a lot of pressure," said Granet. "Thank goodness we had Scott Colton's fiscal acumen and responsibility. Scott laid out



It's safe to say that *Miss GEICO* driver Marc Granet is pleased with the new engines in his raceboat (above). Moments into their first tests with the Mercury Racing 1650 engines under the hatch (below), Granet and Scott Begovich knew they had made the right power move.

budgets and gave us the rules we needed to live under, and though we didn't always like them, they allowed us to operate. The pressure he kept on us to stay on budget gave us the ability to stay alive."

Against pretty long odds thanks to a sharp decline in offshore racing fueled by a recession, the team survived through 2011. But in 2012, it was dealt a near-death blow when the *Miss GEICO* Mystic burned to the waterline during a practice session in Sarasota, Fla. The team finished the season in a well-used 44-foot Victory team-built catamaran (Stray, who



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worked for the Dubai-based team actually rigged the cat for the team when it was new) with Mercury Racing 1075SCi piston engines. Mechanical issues knocked it out of three of the four races it entered.

In February 2013 at the Miami International Boat Show, the team announced major news. *Miss GEICO* would run the first production pair of Mercury Racing 1650 Race engines during the 2013 season.

And that pretty much bring us up to present—and explains what brought me to the Miss GEICO Offshore Racing shop in Riviera Beach on one long day in May.

Team Players

Since it opened its doors after Haggin's exit, AMF Offshore Rigging has tackled a number of high-profile projects including re-rigging and changing the overall setup for *Cintron*, a 50-foot Mystic offshore racing catamaran, restoring a 47-foot Apache V-bottom and equipping it with twin 1,500-hp engines, and swapping out the turbine engines in Haggin's Outerlimits for 480-hp Yanmar diesel mills with Arneson drives. But the truth about AMF Offshore Rigging is this: It exists to supplement the efforts of the 14-member Miss GEICO Offshore Racing team. For that reason, the team won't tackle any outside rigging projects this season.

"The mainstay of this business is supporting Miss GEICO and taking care of the raceboat," Stray said. "To take in rigging jobs when we are

doing a major refit of the boat would not be a smart thing to do. I made a decision after Key West last year—we weren't going to take on any new projects. We have a big commitment with GEICO and Mercury Racing. We wanted to focus solely on this boat and get it back on top where it needs to be, so we made a conscious decision not to take on any other work."

"The mainstay of this business is supporting Miss GEICO and taking care of the raceboat."

That's a good thing, because the work that went in *Miss GEICO* for this season was extensive. Stray and his team fabricated a new engine-mounting system for quick removal of the powerplants if necessary—the team actually has a spare set of 1350s.

"With the exception of disconnecting hoses and wires, you only have to pull four bolts and the engine is free from its cradle," Stray said.

To avoid restricting water flow, the team used a dry exhaust (rather than water-jacketed exhaust) wrapped in ceramic material for the engine—a trick they borrowed from their turbine days. The engines put their power to the water via BPM crash boxes and Zeiger driveshafts instead of the M8 drives that come standard



Scott Colton (center), Gary Stray (right) and other members of the *Miss GEICO* family watched the cat run during its first sea trial with new power. Making the boat safer for its driver and throttleman was a major offseason goal.





From this angle, the AMF Offshore Rigging shop appears to have plenty of wide-open space. The place actually is packed with hardware, as well as raceboats and trucks.

with the Mercury 1350 engines.

“Erik Christiansen (the general manager of Mercury Racing) and Gary Stray didn’t have the time to sit down and work out the engineering to optimize this hull with the M8 drive system,” Granet said. “So we stuck with our original drive system.”

The catamaran’s rudder system, however, is completely new. Engineered by Childress Racing of NASCAR fame, it features a Flexitab 465 stainless-steel rudder and Latham Marine hydraulic rams.

On the structural side, the bulk of the work that went into *Miss GEICO* during the off-season centered on the cockpit. According to Begovich, the team added 14 layers of carbon fiber and a roll cage on the inside of the cockpit, and installed a thicker windshield and exterior carbon shell. On the throttleman’s side, the crew removed the entire dash and added a new carbon-fiber “joystick”—similar to the one that was destroyed in the *Mystic* last season—for throttling and trim control. Not only can Begovich control the drive and tunnel tab trim from the joystick, he can adjust the sensitivity/speed of the trim control itself.

“You can adjust the system on the fly,” Stray explained. “We can vary the speed from 4.5 seconds full up or down for the drives and 1.5 seconds for the tunnel tab to 40 seconds full up or down with the drives and 12 seconds full up or down with the tunnel tab.”

Begovich said that while he appreciates the variable-speed trim system on the joystick, what he likes most about his new arrangement is simply having more space. With the dash ahead of him gone and a new bucket seat, he has a lot more room, which translates to more comfort, for his 6’ 3”, 275-pound frame.

“To me, that was the best thing Gary Stray and the guys did,” said Begovich with a grin.

Of course, the *Miss GEICO* Offshore Racing team is technically not all “guys.” Louise Stray, Gary’s wife, manages the front office and more or less plays den mother, albeit one who rules with a strong hand, with the crew. Laura Hanner handles ordering parts.

“Louise is everybody’s go-to person,” Stray said. “She does all the little things—whatever it takes to make the team run smoothly.”

In addition to the partners, the team includes engine man Harold Grady, vacuum-infused



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Up Close and Personal ➔

For the design of its Flexitab rudder (top) with Latham hydraulic cylinders, the team tapped Childress Racing. *Miss GEICO* throttleman Scott Begovich (middle) said the team's goal is to win a world championship this year. An application borrowed from the team's turbine catamarans, ceramic wrapped dry exhaust (bottom) allow the turbocharged 1,650-hp engines to breathe.

carbon parts fabricator Ed Demmer, crew members Patrick Cleaveland and Micah Paul, rigger Craig Wilson, and Bruce Tobiasson and his wife, Mary, who handle hauling the boat and support trailer to races, boat shows and air shows.

Success Before Sunset

When my cab picked me up at 5:30 p.m. to take me to Fort Lauderdale—a \$100 fare that included a fuel stop on my dime—Stray and his crew were reinstalling Begovich's new seat. An infinitely more patient man than I am, photographer Jay Nichols said he'd wait it out in the hope of catching the first running shots of *Miss GEICO* with its new 1650 Race engines.

Nichols' patience was rewarded. About the same time my navigationally challenged cabbie, who got lost twice before he found the Interstate, dropped me two blocks away from my hotel—I just couldn't take it anymore—*Miss GEICO* was on the water and running. Everyone involved was ecstatic.

"With the exception of a twin T-55 (3,000 hp per engine) turbine boat, this is the hardest accelerating boat I've ever throttled," Begovich said. "The boat is extremely impressive."

What is the *Miss GEICO* team hoping for this season? Despite the disaster of last year, the team has two major objectives.

"We want to finish every race we enter," Begovich concluded. "We're not that concerned with where we place in each race, we just want to finish every one we start on our way to the world championships in Key West. Our other goal is to win a world championship this season."



THE SHAPE OF MISS GEICO TO COME

Next time around, the Miss GEICO team isn't buying a boat from a builder. Instead, the team will build its own 47-foot catamaran designed by British-born team manager and chief rigger Gary Stray. What qualifies the 43-year-old Stray, who began his career with Cougar Marine in England in the 1980s, moved on to the Dubai-based Victory Team in the '90s and then moved to the U.S. to handle the rigging chores (under his Super Cat Rigging banner) for Marine Technology Inc., to design an offshore racing cat?

"Here's the thing: Every boat company or team I've been involved with has been very successful, and I've always had large input into what they've done with their boats," said Stray, who started an entity called Gary Stray Yacht Design a couple of years ago. "MTI is a perfect example. I did a lot of the design work with (company



Team manager Gary Stray in action.

founder) Randy Scism. At Victory, I ended up in charge of research and design with a \$23 million annual budget. I believe I have a knack for this stuff, and the records speak volumes. I haven't generally been the guy in the limelight, but I've always been in the background engineering to make this stuff tick."

Stray said the data *Miss GEICO* collected via hundreds of sensors on the 50-foot *Mystic* before it burned helped him design the new 47-footer—as did the data from his time working with Victory Team.



Shown in 1:12 scale model form, Gary Stray's first catamaran will be built for pleasure rather than racing. The 47-footer is going to a customer in Trinidad.

"I am a great believer in data and science over the 'black art,' " he explained. "For some reason in this industry, there has been this mystical area of black art. Boat design and propellers are not black art—they're physics. It all comes down to physics, and the more data you can look at the more you can deduce what's going on. That was one of the advantages to working for the Victory Team. They were open to gathering data."

Although the length of Stray's canopied cat, which will first be built in a pleasure version for an owner in Trinidad, is 47 feet, its running surface will be 42 feet. The sponsons will incorporate steps on their sides and their running areas.

"It's a variable deadrise bottom," Stray said. "The running surface actually gets narrower as it moves toward the back and wider as it moves forward. It's a design I came up with that is very much what we were moving toward when I worked with the Victory Team."

The pleasure version of Stray's cat will seat seven passengers and will feature gull-wing doors for side access, as well as a section of the deck that uses hydraulics to become a sunshade. Stray wouldn't discuss the seating arrangements, but described them as unique.

The same buyer of the pleasure

boat will get the first race version. According to Stray, the buyer plans to campaign the cat in the Super Boat International Superboat class in 2014. While the pleasure boat deck is full of curves, scallops and angles, the racing model will be almost completely flat—the driver and co-pilot will occupy an egg-shape capsule under the deck.

"They will be very laid back, almost like Formula One drivers where their feet are at the same level as their heads," Stray said.

The third Stray-designed cat will be the next *Miss GEICO*. The plan is to debut the boat in 2015. Most likely, it'll have piston power. A class has yet to be determined.

"We had the turbine boat and no one wanted to run with us," Stray said. "Then our boat burned. So we said, 'Let's go down the piston route' because we thought if we went piston racing more boats would come out. We thought it would bring more people out of the woodwork. So far, it hasn't turned out that way. But we're hopeful.

"I think people want to beat us, but I don't know what the answer is to get people out there," he added. "For 2015, if the 750 (Superboat) class happens, who knows? Maybe that's the class to go into. We just want to compete. That's why we do this. We want to compete."—MT **SOTW**

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HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU, KID

For 20 years, the love of boat building has driven Outerlimits founder and owner Mike Fiore in good times and bad. And it still does.

words Matt Trulio
photos courtesy Outerlimits

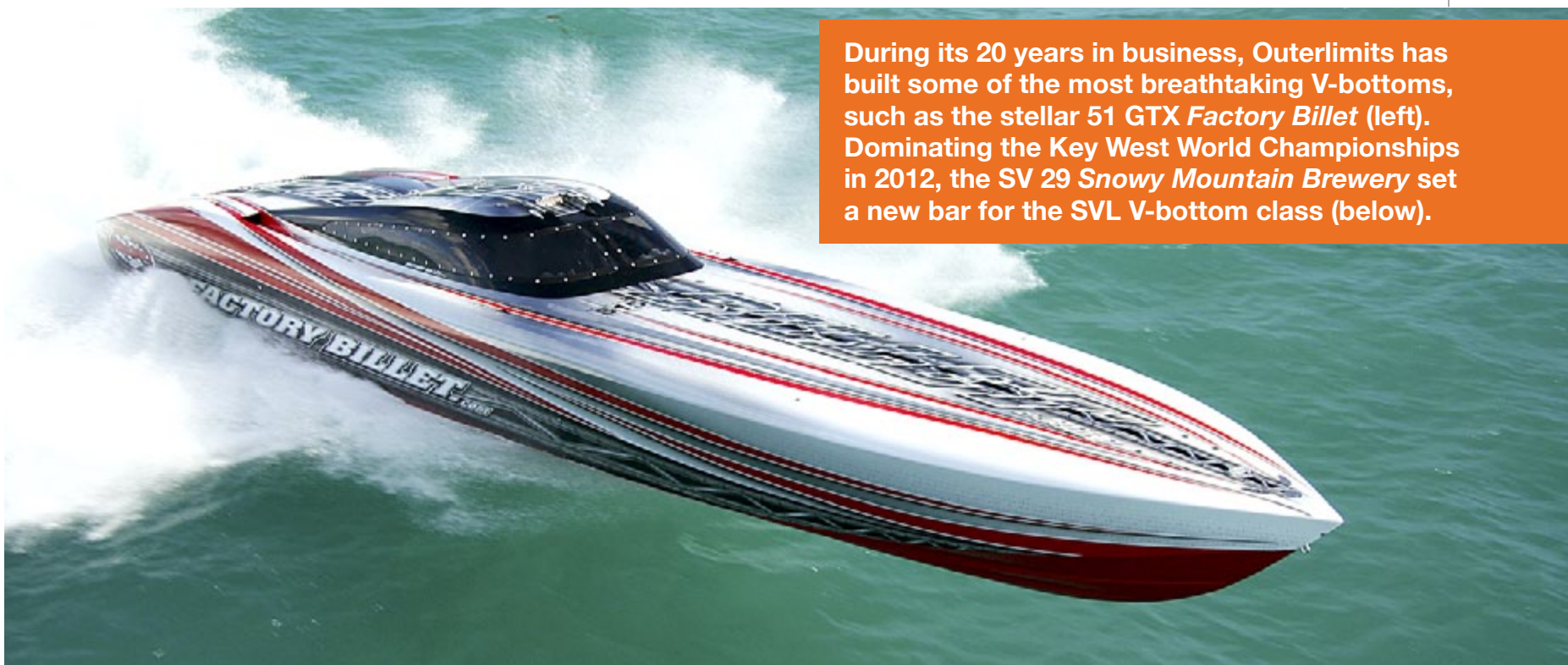
Located in the fertile

Central Valley, the agricultural hotbed of Fresno, Calif., is several worlds away from the East Coast environs in which Mike Fiore, the owner and founder of Outerlimits Offshore Powerboats in Bristol, R.I., has spent most of his adult life. And yet, sitting in his backyard shade on a 90-degree day, Fiore couldn't look more at home. His wife, Shonda, is busy in their home office paying bills for Whipple Industries, the Fresno-based supercharger company her father, Art Whipple, founded in the late 1980s, while their 2-1/2-month-old son, Jet, sleeps in a room just a few steps away.



Outerlimits founder Mike Fiore on the beach in Florida's Biscayne Bay with his then-new SV 29 in February 2012. Says Fiore: "There's nothing else I really want to do other than get up and build boats."





During its 20 years in business, Outerlimits has built some of the most breathtaking V-bottoms, such as the stellar 51 GTX *Factory Billet* (left). Dominating the Key West World Championships in 2012, the SV 29 *Snowy Mountain Brewery* set a new bar for the SVL V-bottom class (below).

In a nod to the company he created 20 years ago this month, Mike Fiore and his infant son sport shirts with Outerlimits logos. Both Fiore boys, Jet sleeping and Mike sitting at a patio table, are as chilled out as they ever get. That's because both are exhausted—Jet because being a baby is hard work, Mike because he travels weekly between his custom boat company in Rhode Island and his family in California. (Sophia, his 10-year-old daughter from a previous marriage, lives with him when he is back in Rhode Island.)

Here's how you catch up with Mike Fiore, at least if you're a journalist and friend who knows he's almost always too busy for more than a three-minute interview. You wait until you know he's dead tired—too tired to argue at least—and text him to let him know you're driving to Fresno. You know he'll be there for a few days and doesn't have anyplace to hide because Fresno isn't that big.

Then again, Fresno is at least as big as Holbrook, Long Island, N.Y., where Fiore built his first 37-foot Outerlimits V-bottom in 1993. Today, Outerlimits builds some of the finest custom high-performance V-bottoms and catamarans from 29 to 52 feet with price tags from \$300,000 to more than \$1 million. Toys for the wealthy, for sure, but beautiful toys, handcrafted and exotic toys. Fast toys.



Maybe Fiore seems so comfortable in his backyard because Outerlimits has survived the worst economic period since the Great Depression and he can exhale, at least a little. Maybe he's satisfied, some 400 boats after he built his first model 20 years ago, with where he is in life. Maybe California living has mellowed the 43-year-old. Or maybe he's just happy to be with his family. One thing's for sure: He's ready to talk.

When you started this company, did you think you'd be around for 20 years?

(Laughs) When you are 23 years old you don't have the capacity to think 20 years down the road.

You grew up in the boat business—your father, Paul Fiore, founded Hustler. That would have chased a lot of people away.

Well, building boats is all I know how to do. I mean since I was a kid, that's all I did, just go to work and build boats. It's not like I really understood a whole lot else.



Your dad was your boss. That must have been challenging at times.

Yeah, but my dad is pretty easy going and I was also very motivated. He was a pretty easy boss. Nobody really needed to tell me to go get something done. I just did it because it had to get done.

Other than Hustler, were there other companies or models that influenced you before you started Outerlimits?

I always liked the stuff I saw as a kid in the Hustler days, and I liked what Mark McManus had done with Apache. He always built some pretty cool stuff. It was good looking and it was well built.

You started with a 37-foot V-bottom. Your next model was a 51-foot V-bottom. Was there any rhyme or reason to that?

There was not a master plan. When you are 23 you really do not think that far ahead. The



Mike Fiore (second from left below) and his team during the 2007 Powerboat P1 Grand Prix of the Sea in Malta. “Here I am, halfway around the world in my own raceboat,” says Fiore of the experience. “That will never happen again.”

“master plan” was to tool up a really nice boat that rode really well, and was fast and was built extremely well. Quality was always really important to me—building a product that was bulletproof—because, you know, when I run a boat I run it very hard and very aggressively. Always have, always will.





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So how did you decide on new boat sizes?

Anytime we looked at a new model, it was client driven. That was always the catalyst.

You started with conventional resin and fiberglass but now you only build epoxy and carbon-fiber boats. What piqued your interest in that construction technology?

I remember the first introduction I had to carbon fiber. I think it was in 1999, and we had a Factory 2-class raceboat. I was trying to take weight out of it, and the hatch we had weighed about 130 pounds. A buddy of mine was there building an America's Cup boat and was like, "Well, hell, we can build a carbon fiber hatch." We built the hatch and it weighed 32 pounds—and it was as strong as a 130-pound hatch. That opened my eyes. I was like, "Wow, we have to learn to use this somehow, someway."

You had good success with stepped V-bottoms throughout your career. And then in the mid-2000s you introduced a 48-foot catamaran. Why?

Again, that was client-driven. We had clients who wanted them and we were trying to keep our clients happy, so we started building them.

From an outsider's perspective, your first cat appeared to be more of a struggle for you than any of your V-bottoms.

(Long pause) I think it was a struggle from the standpoint that we paid a designer, Michael Peters, to give us plans for a cat but then we had to figure out the rest on our own. I mean, we spent a lot of money on the design and blueprint but all the rest of the bits and pieces to make it work didn't come with it. The V-bottoms are easy—I've done a lifetime of V-bottoms. But the first cat was a bit of a learning curve for us.

That boat reportedly had significant issues with the first power choice.

Yeah, with the power supplied, the first boat was a train wreck. We had to set it up with customer-supplied engines with centrifugal

superchargers, and they didn't last three miles. I finally called Mercury Racing, bought a pair of 1200s and put them in there. It ran 162 mph and worked really well. We knew we had a good boat but, yeah, that was more of a struggle than it needed to be.

Did you ever look back at that project and wish you hadn't started it?

No. I've never thought that bad about any project I have done. There was a learning curve with the cat and we learned a lot. I know a lot more about cats now than I did years ago. We know why they work and why they don't work. So I have no regrets.

**“IF I'M NOT GOING
200 MPH, I'M OFF
TO CRASH AND
FALL ASLEEP.”**

All businesses go through cycles. What has your toughest cycle been?

Surviving the economic implosion of 2008. That was by far the hardest struggle.

What did that mean for your business?

Well it was a total departure from the norm. I mean, we were building 25 to 30 boats a year, had a handful of dealers and dealer floor-planned financing. You have clients and things are rolling, and all of a sudden things aren't rolling anymore. We kind of saw it coming, I mean, we aren't smarter than anyone else but we got back from the Miami Boat Show in 2008 and said, "Well, things aren't as strong as they were last year maybe we ought to do something about it." We started to get rid of some employees, started thinning the herd a bit with some of the new guys who weren't so important. Coming to grips with the implosion and knowing it was going to be a problem for a long time is what allowed us to survive. We made the necessary sacrifices and changes.





New models such as the SV 50, caught here one week after its introduction during the 2013 Miami Boat Show Poker Run, have always fueled Fiore's creative fire. *Photo courtesy Florida Powerboat Club*

Did you ever consider closing the shop?

Never, absolutely not.

Did you seek outside investment? And do you have any ongoing investors in the company at this point?

No, not at all. We have not brought a dime from investment into the company in a long, long time.

Has anyone tried to buy Outerlimits?

Yeah. We had someone about a year and half ago fish around and try to buy us. We entertained it for a little while, but then it all just didn't work out.

Bi-coastal commuting every week has to make running a boat company in Rhode Island and tending to your family in California a lot more challenging.

(Laughs) Eh, you know, it works out good. It works for me because I have a very short attention span and I have to go and go and go. I'm not very good at being complacent. If I'm not going 200 mph, I'm off to crash and fall asleep.

I also need to be out here for Outerlimits reasons. We're just getting production of the 29 started at Eliminator Boats in Southern California, and when that happens and hulls start getting produced, we have to rig them

at the Outerlimits West shop we started in Fresno. You know, in California, before the recession, there was a very large performance boat market. It was huge, and it is going to be big again. So I want to be on top of it, and I feel like we are poised to ride the next wave.

Could you see a time where you would move all Outerlimits production out West?

No, I wouldn't do that ever. My staff in Bristol is way too talented, way too committed. I can't replace those people anywhere on the planet.

If you had to pick a favorite moment in your boat-building career over the past 20 years, what would it be?

I think my favorite moment was the first race that we ran in with Powerboat P1 in Malta. That was in 2007. I remember idling out to the milling area, and saying, "Wow. Look at this. Here I am halfway around the world, in my own raceboat, in all of my own stuff, going out to compete against all the other guys in the world in their boats—in Malta." That will never happen in my life again.

How about your lowest moment?

My lowest moment would be when we had to cut staff back and cut things back to survive the recession. That was pretty bad.



Do you still enjoy building boats?

Yeah, I certainly wouldn't do it if I didn't enjoy it. When I make a decision to build a boat, it is based on the boat and the client more than it is based on making money. Money was never my first priority in the business. It was never about the money, ever. It was always about the boat and it still is. If that is your priority, the money will come automatically.

A number of boat builders and buyers have questioned Mercury Racing's engine prices. You have a different perspective.

Yeah. You can complain all you want, but there isn't another engine builder on the planet that puts the same amount of time, engineering and research and design that Mercury does. Period. That 1350? It's a bargain. We all sit back and we say, "Wow, that's a lot of money." Well, yeah, it's a lot of money—people could buy a real nice house with what that engine package costs. But for what it does? No one else can touch it.

Like engines and propellers, stepped hulls have evolved. How different is the stepped hull of the original Outerlimits 37 Stiletto from the hull of something newer such as the SV 50 or 52?

They're not even in the same ballpark. Just

sit back and look at it. Our original 37 with a pair of HP500s would run about 85 mph. Our new 36-footer with a pair of 565s will go about 105 mph. Yes, the 36 is lighter than the 37, but between bottom technology, drive technology and propeller technology we are just leaps and bounds ahead of where they were. Everything works hand in hand. Without good propeller technology we couldn't put the drives as high. It wouldn't work. So it's all evolved together.

As a hull designer, you are self-taught. Are there any keys to the success of your designs you would be willing to share?

Not really, just because it's taken a lifetime to learn them. So no, I probably wouldn't talk a lot about them. Stepped bottom hulls are tricky and complex, and I still hold that very few people understand how they work and why they work.

Do you see yourself building go-fast boats 20 years from now?

Yeah, of course, what else would I do? There's nothing else I really want to do other than get up and build boats. If I won the lottery tomorrow, I would still do the same exact thing. Nothing would change. It'll be that way I'm sure until the day I die. **SOTW**



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EYE OF THE STORM

Thanks to a kick-ass street party, couldn't-ask-for-better weather and almost every type of performance boat you can imagine, the Desert Storm Poker Run is as strong as ever.

words Jason Johnson | **photos** Jay Nichols

It's called the Desert Storm Poker Run, but like many events today, it's more than just a poker run. It's a boat show, a shootout, a charity event and more wrapped up in a great big package. And based on the consensus from the ninth annual Desert Storm, the event is only getting better.

Taking over Lake Havasu City, Ariz., and the beautiful Colorado River waterway that borders California and Arizona at the end of April, the poker run is unlike anything that comes to the desert town. Between custom haulers that tow 40-plus-foot catamarans on tilt trailers to cars and motorcycles painted to match the boats, there's plenty of eye candy on and off the water for performance boat lovers.



Desert Storm Poker Run

Much of the credit for the event's success has to be given to the street party, which happens from noon to 9 p.m. on McCulloch Blvd., on Thursday, the day before the poker run. With many of the participating boats on display, as well as the latest and greatest from boat builders, engine manufacturers and other marine vendors, the street party has become one of the best "shows" in the industry.

This year was not any different as the weather cooperated perfectly, the public attendance appeared to be as solid as ever and many of the boats on display were flat-out jaw dropping.

"The street party gets so much positive feedback—people just love it," said Jim Nichols of Lake Racer LLC, the organization behind the event, which also includes Krusin-4-Kids, a day designated for charity boat rides the day before the street party, and a top-speed shootout the day after the poker run. (For more on the shootout, see sidebar on page 44.) "I still can't believe

how big it is. It's become a must-attend event for many companies in the business as well as a great social event for like-minded boaters."

Nichols didn't actually say that the event would be less successful without the street party, but he didn't need to. Not only has the party become integral to Desert Storm, it's one of the primary events for manufacturers to get out in front of their customers early in the boating season.

Nichols also pointed out that the event continues to attract first-time participants, which is a good sign.

Although their boats are quite different, both Craig Caron and Jason Gundersen were new to the event—and both had a blast. Gundersen, who owns a 2007 Lightning 24XS from Ultra Custom Boats wasn't sure if he wanted to participate in the poker run until Nichols informed him that a majority of the boats in



On Friday, the day after the eventful street party on Lake Havasu City's McCulloch Blvd. (below), the poker runners left for the first stop (right), which was presented by Wozencraft Insurance.



Desert Storm Poker Run

the run are like his—a single-engine model less than 30 feet long.

Caron, on the other hand, has had his sights set on the event for many years. A dedicated boater and lover of all things fast, Caron waited until he had a larger boat before signing up for the Desert Storm Poker Run, his first poker run ever. That boat came in the form of a 3600 Super Cat from Nor-Tech Hi-Performance Boats with twin 1,150-hp Gellner Engineering engines.

“I’ve always looked at Desert Storm as being a premier poker run event, so when I finally got my big boat the run was on my bucket list of things to do, so off we went,” said Caron, who lives in San Francisco, hence the boat’s name,



Longtime boater Craig Caron opted to haul his Nor-Tech 3600 Super Cat to Lake Havasu from San Francisco to take part in his first poker run.

Frisco Cat. “Everything was first-class about the organization and the destination was great, especially the area with all of the beautiful red canyon walls. My only complaint is that it went by so fast. I’ve already booked my reservations for next year—I can’t wait.”

Along with praising the street party, longtime event advertiser and participant Fred Inman Jr., was excited about the poker run for a new reason this year.

“I can’t believe we actually won a poker hand—after all the poker runs we’ve done, we finally won something,”



Jim Nichols and the Desert Storm girls present the King and Queen of the Desert awards to Don London (right) and his daughter, Summer.

DESERT ROYALTY: THE LONDON FAMILY

With the London Bridge in town, chances are he’ll never be the best-known “London” in Lake Havasu City, Ariz. Still, at the pace he’s going, Don London is giving the relocated bridge, which spanned the River Thames in London until it was dismantled in 1967, a run for its money.

London, who resides in Castaic, Calif., and has been frequenting Lake Havasu for more than 30 years, earned his second-straight King of the Desert crown by winning the Desert Storm Poker Run shootout in his 388 Skater Powerboats catamaran. Registering 180 mph on the radar gun in the 38-footer powered by a pair of 1,800-hp Brummert Marine engines connected with No. 6 drives and 38"-pitch Hering forged propellers, London was happy to defend the title he won in 2012 with a 157-mph run in his former F32 catamaran from Dave’s Custom Boats (DCB) with twin 1,335-hp Teague Custom Marine engines.

But even more important to London was that his daughter, Summer, earned the Queen of the Desert crown awarded to the fastest female participant after she ran her DCB F32 with twin Teague 1025EFI engines to a top speed of 136 mph. **(For complete shootout results, [click here.](#))**

“Unfortunately Summer had a couple of problems with her engines that day or else she probably could have gone faster,” said London, who added that his GPS showed a top speed of 192 mph in his Skater that he bought last October from Chip Romer. “I’m really proud of Summer, yet it doesn’t surprise me. She’s very womanlike, but she still likes to tear it up out there. Last year she rode with me so I could walk her through different scenarios, but this year she was on her own.”

A self-proclaimed gearhead, London is very fond of going fast—he raced drag cars and drag boats in the ’80s and ’90s before graduating to what he called “family performance boating.” Along the way, he worked his way into

Desert Storm Poker Run



Ian Hawkins and Jason Mast of Ilmor Marine run a Formula Boats 353 FAS³Tech with the new Ilmor MV8 570 engines in the poker run.

said Inman, who with four eights had the third-best hand.

Inman wasn't 100-percent sure, but he believes he's been involved with the event for more than 13 years since the days when it was the Arizona Hot Boat Association HeatWave Poker Run, which Nichols helped start in 1999. For the last 10 years, Inman has handled the pace boat duties for the first group. This year he drove the IMCO Marine 39-foot V-bottom from Nordic Boats, which is powered by twin 1,000-hp GT Performance Engineering engines. Joining Inman in the boat for the poker run was his father, Fred Sr., his brother, Frank, and Lynn Nash and Rick Taylor.

"It's been a lot of fun being the pace boat throughout the years," Inman continued. "It's neat to lead all the boats out through the Channel and under the London Bridge, and then to get all those guys rolling is incredible. We've been able to get some great photography out the deal, too."

Although this year's poker run was overshadowed by an accident when an M35 catamaran from Dave's Custom Boats rolled en route to the first card

catamarans from the former Southern California boat builder, High Torque Marine (HTM). After three HTM models, he stepped into the F32 with big naturally aspirated motors and soon realized he needed to go the supercharger route so he chose Teague 1200EFI engines.

"Don's quite an accomplished boater," said Teague Custom Marine's Bob Teague, who calls London a friend. "He comes from the world of drag-boat racing—I've seen him race, and he did a damn good job. During the shootout, he did a respectable job of laying down a nice safe pass. And I know he was ready to go back out and try again if his speed didn't hold up."

Fortunately London's speed was enough but not without some serious competition from fellow Southern California resident and Skater owner Jon Roth, who posted two 179-mph runs in his Brummett-powered 38-foot Skater.

"I have to give Carson (Brummett) some serious kudos—the motors are 1,800 horsepower on E85 fuel and they run like clockwork," said London, who has been married to his wife, Connie, for 32 years and has another daughter, Bree, 22. "And I'm not just racing the boat, I drive it around for pleasure a lot."

London, who also owns a 100-plus-mph twin-engine 30-foot deck boat from Magic Powerboats, said he plans to return in 2014 to defend his title, which is all Desert Storm organizer Jim Nichols could ask for.

"Seeing Don put up a big number like he did was fabulous," Nichols said. "I don't want to take anything away from Jon Roth, who was right on his heels. Those two put on a great show in their Skaters. It definitely made it a little more exciting because nobody ran away with it."

London, who plans to do the Monster Bash Poker Run on Lake Havasu in the fall, said he would like to bring the boat to the legendary Lake of the Ozarks Shootout in Missouri, but it will have to wait until 2014 as Summer is getting married about a week after this year's Shootout.

One thing's for certain, London and company will be back for the 10th annual Desert Storm Poker Run next April. He wouldn't miss it—or his chance to win a third-straight King of the Desert title—for the world.—JJ



London runs his 388 Skater down the shootout course.

Desert Storm Poker Run

stop at Havasu Springs (the two people in the boat avoided serious injury), the poker run was once again a huge success with thousands of dollars raised for local charities.

“The charities are a big reason why we continue to support the event,” said Bob Teague of the event’s title advertiser, Teague Custom Marine. “From the charity rides on Wednesday, the seats provided to military service men and women for the poker run and the money donated from Saturday’s party, giving back is what it’s all about.”

A constant evolution, the Desert Storm Poker Run and all of its surrounding events are no doubt a showcase of some of the country’s finest boats. But what makes the event even better is that those boaters who strive for an offshore catamaran or could never really dream of owning a boat like Jon Roth’s 388 Skater, can run alongside them or get to know Roth and his crew.

You may want to add the event to your calendar now—the dates for the 2014 Desert Storm Poker Run are set for April 23-27. We’ll see you there. **SOTW**



From the *Team CRC MTI* to a *Lightning* sportboat (top), you’re sure to see all types of boats at the Desert Storm Poker Run. The crew from IMCO Marine had fun leading the first wave of boats out to Havasu Springs in the company’s 39-foot Nordic.

Gary Colledge brought his new Douglas Marine Skater 388 LE Hardtop and took home Best in Show honors.



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Pure Pleasure

The performance of Mystic's first 50-footer with twin Mercury Racing 1350 engines matches the boat's sheer beauty.

words Jason Johnson
photos Jay Nichols, Chip Miller

IT'S BEEN JUST about a year since the first 50-foot catamaran from Mystic Powerboats with twin Mercury Racing 1350 engines hit the water. Owner Tom Borisch debuted the stunning C5000-S at the Boyne Thunder Poker Run on Lake Michigan in July and a month later he brought the boat to SuperCat Fest, which was part of the Lake of the Ozarks Shootout festivities in Missouri at the end of August.

Boat Customs in Michigan took care of the original paint, rigging and interior in the boat, which has gone through several notable changes since last summer—including new ownership. Currently in the hands of Ron Szolack, for who knows how long, the catamaran is

sitting pretty on a lift at Szolack's one-of-a-kind home in Harrison Township, Mich.

The chances of the boat being in Szolack's boathouse next summer are pretty slim. You see, Szolack is what you could call a connoisseur of performance boats.

The list of go-fast powerboat brands he hasn't owned is shorter than the list of those he has owned. Currently in his possession are a trifecta of Douglas Marine-built Skater Powerboats catamarans. Along with a new 30-footer powered by twin 300-hp outboards and a new 388 with 1,500-hp Sterling Performance engines, Szolack recently bought a used 46-foot canopied race boat.



PROFILE: MYSTIC C5000-S

All three of the Skaters, as well as the Mystic, could be gone by the end of the summer. Then Szolack, who has owned more than 30 performance boats from the likes of Cigarette, Fountain, Hustler, MTI, Nor-Tech, Outerlimits and more, will have most likely moved on to the next build.

Interior Makeover

Anyway, let's get back to the boat, after all Szolack may use this story to help sell the gorgeous 50-footer. After running the boat last season, Borisch went to Cutting Edge Interiors in Punta Gorda, Fla., and had Jamie Borg redo the entire cockpit.

"We basically took the theme of the boat and continued it in the cockpit, making sure we matched the inside with the outside," said Borg, who put in more than 200 hours wrapping the dash and steering wheel, building custom side panels and seat bases, and cutting down, reshaping and upholstering the six cockpit seats and the two rear-facing lounges. "The previous interior didn't really go with the boat and the upholstery didn't match the paint so we

Featuring updated paint from Boat Customs, the Mystic C5000-S (below) is a showstopper.

were given the go ahead to redo everything in the boat to Tom's liking."

After the interior makeover was complete, Borisch sold the boat to Szolack, who sent the boat back to Boat Customs to modify the paint job. He said he liked the overall graphics package, but wanted it without the Mystic name on the sides and deck.

The Long Run

Looking brand new, the boat, which is going to be featured this fall on the Travel Channel's Extreme Toys Show, was delivered to Szolack in June and Mystic owner John Cosker flew up to take the boat out with him and address any questions or concerns.

"I love the boat—it handles unbelievably well and turns like it's on rails," said Szolack, who owns Flight Club in Detroit. "We kept it wide open between 140 and 150 mph for like 40 miles. It was an awesome ride and so

40 MILES SZOLACK AND COSKER RAN WITHOUT DROPPING BELOW 140 MPH DURING A SHAKE DOWN CRUISE ON MICHIGAN'S LAKE ST. CLAIR IN JUNE.



PROFILE: MYSTIC C5000-S



smooth in the 2- to 3-footers. The fastest I've had it is 158 mph, although it will go faster if we turn the props out. We have them turned in because it handles better that way."

In a brief test run near Mystic's facility in DeLand, Fla., in April, TNT Custom Marine's John Tomlinson got the chance to run his first Mystic pleasure boat, and was quite impressed.

"The boat was comfortable although we didn't run it in any rough water," said Tomlinson, who has a lot of seat time in Mystic race boats from his days running with legendary racer David Scott, who owns Nauti Marine in Lake of the

From left: To make over the interior of the 50-foot Mystic catamaran, the owner turned to Cutting Edge Interiors. Twin Mercury Racing 1350 engines power the boat, which features six bucket seats and rear-facing lounges.

Ozarks. "It ran nice and flat like a Mystic does. And it was flawless in turns at all speeds.

"The Mystic is a big boat," he continued. "It's heavier than a lot of other boats so it's not going to be a rocket. Still, it accelerates well with the 1350s and gets right up on plane."

Tomlinson said visibility from inside the boat was excellent and the seating inside the spacious cockpit was very comfortable. He also said the workmanship was well done, which was something Cosker and his crew had to

apply extra effort toward as the priority when building a race boat isn't always on the finishing touches.

Final Thoughts

"I'm very happy with the boat," Cosker said. "It really looks beautiful and the 1350s are a great package for it. They are so nice and quiet. I'd like to see Ron hold onto the boat and do some poker runs with it, but he'll probably just run it this summer and sell it. Either way, it's still nice to see him in one of my boats finally."

For now, Szolack is having fun with the cat, which he called one of the prettiest boats ever built.

"The lines are awesome," Szolack said. "Combine them with the paint job and the interior design, and it's one of the sexiest boats ever built. I pretty much buy everything just to sell it, but put it this way, I'm in no hurry to sell the Mystic." **SOTW**

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