

Stocklin satisfies the need for speed

Tastin N Racin
directed by
Issaquah driver

Matt Thompson
Journal Reporter

Kelly Stocklin is a fast man.

He holds a world record in pro stock runabout racing, has helped construct other world record-holding boats and works on one of the premier Unlimited Light hydroplanes, Miss Budweiser.

But Stocklin, 48, took his speed from water to land while coordinating and organizing this weekend's 4th annual Tastin N Racin at Lake Sammamish State Park. Instead of racing, Stocklin is the chairman of this year's boating extravaganza. From coordinating three cranes to retrieving buoys, to getting parts for drivers, Stocklin does everything fast.

"Basically I'm a racer that happens to be putting on a race," Stocklin said.

Stocklin, a local legend when it comes to boat racing and a graduate of Issaquah High School, has been racing for almost 25 years. He has worked on some of the fastest boats in the world, helping set four world records. In 1997, Stocklin reached a speed of 103.96 mph, setting a world record in a pro stock runabouts on a 1½-mile course. Stocklin was also a part of the team that set the super stock runabout record of 100.27 mph in 1984 and broke it again in 1985.

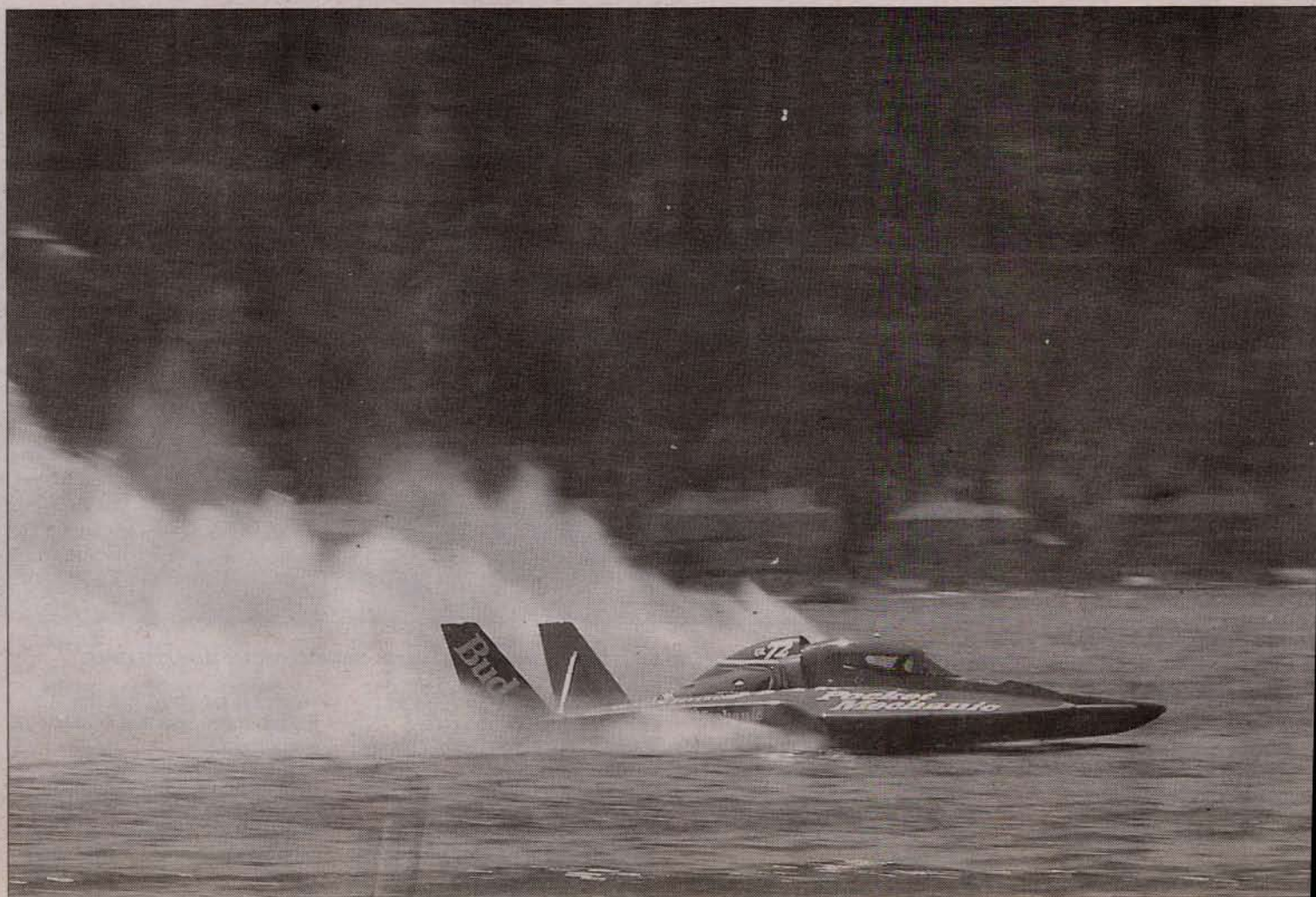
"The coolest thing about boating is going fast," Stocklin said. "The speed is so addictive."

Stocklin's need for speed started when he was a child growing up on Beaver Lake. His first memorable introduction to boats happened when he was 5 years old.

"I remember getting in my dad's old Evinrude outboard and mistakenly starting it," Stocklin said. "It shook me up. My dad came down and stopped it and then calmed me down. Afterwards, he gave me the keys and let me take it for a drive with him and the rest is history."

Stocklin continued to work on boats through the years and finally saved up enough money to buy a Mercury outboard. He later scraped together enough to purchase his first hydroplane.

Over his years of racing, Stocklin's style and priorities have changed. Instead of competing every weekend and "racing for trophies," Stocklin's main objective is breaking world records:



Steve Shelton/Jo

Phil Bononcini takes the Ms. Pocket Mechanic to the lead of the Unlimited Light 1B heat yesterday during the Tastin N Racin Regatta at Lake Sammamish State Park.



Steve Shelton/Journal

Tastin N Racin race organizer Kelly Stocklin chats with fellow boat enthusiasts in the pits yesterday at Lake Sammamish State Park.

"When I was young and single I would be out there flogging it every weekend and competing hard, but now I pick and choose the races I go to," Stocklin said. "When I race now I really want to make it happen."

Stocklin's metamorphosis can be attributed to his family, his job and simply not enough time. He now spends his time

working at Zetech (a nuclear testing company), working on Budweiser's boats, and enjoying his family.

Stocklin will race at Black Lake in July and then hopes to break another world record at Lawrence Lake in September.

He has no idea when he will hang up the sport he loves.

"It's my passion," Stocklin

said.

Good Weather

It was all sunshine and blue skies at Lake Sammamish State Park on yesterday, but more importantly, smooth waters provided perfect racing conditions for the boats. Event coordinator Chris Courtright said it was by far the best weather they have ever had in the four-year history of Tastin N Racin.

New Guy on the Block

Nick Badolato and his crew debuted their brand new Solution IQ boat yesterday at Tastin N Racin. The unlimited light hydroplane had never been in the water and in its first practice run it looked like it.

"We're taking baby steps right now," said crew member Don Courtright.

In its first heat, Solution IQ broke one of its tail feathers and placed last.

Close Call

The first heat of the super stock runabouts was almost a photo finish.

Kip Brown edged out Lenny Brown by less than a boat length in one of the most exciting races of the day.

"I've ever been in," Brown said. "But there's no better feeling than dipping in and out of boats at a 100 mph."

Wrong Turn

After cutting inside two buoys in its practice run and cutting across the course in a warm-up lap, the Pocket Mechanic boat driven by Phil Bononcini ran astray again in the first heat of Unlimited Light competition. Popular Mechanic led until the final turn of lap four when it turned inside the two final buoys, leaving the race open for Stinger to win.

Popular Mechanic would make a comeback later in the day, annihilating the competition in the next heat.

Unlimited Exposure

This year's Tastin N Racin festival marked the Unlimited Light hydroplanes' debut as the featured class of race boats at a regatta. The Unlimited Lights, which average 24 feet in length and can travel up to 150 mph, in the past had always raced alongside the bigger, more powerful Unlimited hydros. Yesterday the raced without the Unlimited hydros present for the first time. Six Unlimited Lights competed.