

## **Skimming into first**

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### **Sammmamish woman wins her race at Tastin' and Racin'**



In her first season as a hydroplane racer, Bianca Bononcini has discovered she inherited her father's knack for the sport.

At the Tastin' n Racin' hydroplane races June 7-8, Bononcini placed second in two of four heats for the 1.5-litre class. It was her first time skidding along Lake Sammamish in a hydroplane.

When fellow driver Joe Perkins took first in the other two heats, their boat, Perkins Glass, won the overall four-heat competition.

Bononcini, a Sammamish resident who lives near Inglewood Junior High, discovered the world of hydroplane racing from watching her father Phil compete and win for eight years.

"I grew up going to all the races with him and I just had a love for it, so I decided, 'Hey, why not give it a shot?'" said Bononcini.

Her first race was in late April at Moses Lake.

"I didn't drive the whole weekend and then I went out for the final and ended up winning. I guess the apple doesn't fall far from the tree," said Bononcini.

Today, Phil Bononcini serves as his daughter's radio man on race days.

"Basically, he tells me who's coming up on me, who's on the outside, who's on the inside, how much time I have left; he helps guide me so I make my start on time. Without him, I would not be doing as well as I am," said Bononcini.

In spite of strong fan support both days, less hydroplane drivers hauled their boats down to Tastin' n Racin' this year, according to Jon Courtright, the race's chairman.

Last year, about 70 boats participated in the weekend event. This year, there were only 46.

"I don't know if it's a sign of the times or what. In one class we had 11 boats last year. We only had five boats show up (this year). Maybe it's the economic times right now," said Courtright, who pointed out that racers sometimes come from as far away as Spokane.

Part of the issue is the decreasing pull of hydroplane racing, said Courtright. Today, boat races need a family-oriented ambience and additional entertainment to bring in large crowds, he explained. This year, Tastin' n Racin' had Seafair pirates, 20 food booths, 40 arts and crafts booths, a live entertainment stage, and rides for children. For adults, the event also ran car and motorcycle shows, not to mention a beer garden.

"When I grew up, the race boats drew their own crowd. Nowadays, there's so much stuff to do, that you're almost fighting for the entertainment dollar," said Courtright.

The other crowd magnet at this year's Tastin' n Racin' was the unlimited exhibition class boats.

Both Miss Red Dot and Miss Beacon Plumbing made appearances for the weekend. With robust turbine engines and skidfins, the updated models maneuvered around the course with newfound control.

In addition to those modern unlimited boats, the vintage Seattle favorite, Miss Bardahl, cruised along Lake Sammamish.

Courtright said the hydroplanes almost always have a "Miss" before the vehicle's name out of a tradition that began with the Gold Cup – an annual U.S. motorboat race hosted by the American Powerboat Association in 1904.

The weekend had races scheduled every 15 minutes, including hydroplanes from the 1.5-, 2.5- and 5-litre modified and stock classes.

"Everything's here today. That's what makes the show unique," said Courtright.

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