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Performance News

Turning a Dream into Reality: P4-33 Ultra Team Racing

Terrah Lee

They are Sun Microsystems computer engineers during the week... on the weekends, Brian Bunch, Jim Lijana and Bob Morrison of Michigan turn into a trio of professional Offshore Powerboat racers known as Ultra Team Racing. Team owner and throttleman, Brian Bunch of Gibraltar, MI made his long time dream of racing in the American Powerboat Association a reality this season, turning his family pleasure boat into a offshore racing machine.



"My ultimate goal is to compete in the Super Cat category, I think that is every racers dream... but, the next step will likely be a canopied V-bottom. Until then, I am working with what I have," says Bunch.

Like a scene out of the '80's movie, "Weird Science", Bunch and his friends spent hundreds of hours in his home garage creating the ultimate machine. The outcome: a 10 meter Fountain of Youth, rigged with twin Mercury Racing Hp500's, built to compete in the 70-79 mph Performance 4 class registered as boat #P4-33.

Jim Lijana of Harrison Twp., MI drives the boat and Bob Morrison of Taylor Michigan serves as the navigator. Morrison has been involved in the boating industry for more than 25 years serving as a safe boating instructor, coast guard auxiliary and for the Wayne Country Sheriffs Marine Division as a reservist.

"We take each race as it comes, day by day and one race at a time, sometimes you are faced with a mechanical or some other boating problem and you deal with it. Regardless of the outcome at the end of the season, we are having a blast in our first year racing," said Lijana.

Ultra Team Racing doesn't travel with a crew chief to handle their problems when things go wrong, in fact they don't have a lot of the expensive extras some professional teams posses. P4-33 won't pull into the dry pits with a big semi truck clad in sponsors and a spectacular paint job, team apparel for sale, fancy sports cars and custom motorcycles. This is a "do it yourself" team priding themselves in their thick friendship, obsession with safety and shared love for boating.

"Ultra Team Racing was put together from a group of computer guys who have worked together for the last 15 years. We have all shared a passion for powerboating over the years, with combined experience of 65 years or so on the water... Funny thing is, this is our first time racing in competition," said Bunch.

The team is now four races deep into the Great Lakes Silver Cup Series season, meeting all the frustration that can be expected in a rookie year. The team's first GLSCS race in Eastlake, MI was a total flop after blowing an engine during testing a week prior to the race. It wouldn't have mattered much anyway because race #1 ended up getting cancelled due to extreme weather and water conditions. The teams that made it to the race site received 27 points, and that is turning out to be a big factor in the points standings for P4. Event #2, the Cincinnati offshore Grand Prix was much the same story; in fact it didn't get any more exciting than the parade lap. Third time is a charm and indeed it was in Metro Beach, MI for Bunch, Lijana and Morrison when their charm became a checkered flag and trophy. The team finished three minutes ahead of the second place boat for their very first offshore racing victory.

"This race gave us an experience more than we could ever asked for. We had to keep pinching ourselves due to the unbelievable race we were having. Bob kept saying, no one is in site, I kept thinking, we must be following the wrong course," said Lijana.

Ultra Team Racing pulled it off again just last week in Mentor, OH, taking another First Place in the P4 category. The first race was shortened on Sunday after tragedy struck the GLSCS family when driver Tim Walters of Erie Stinger apparently suffered a massive heart attack during the first lap. The Fountain of Youth Team took this loss hard. Just two weeks earlier at Metro Beach, both teams celebrated their first victories together.

"The Erie Stinger folks are a Class Act, and Tim's presence will be missed. We look forward to seeing Mark and the rest of their Team carrying on with their Father's wishes," said Bunch.

Ultra Team Racing has only two races left in the GLSCS Series, as it stands, they are only 16 points behind P4's points leader. This means Ultra Team Racing must win both races to capture the championship title. Back to back wins should put this team in the mental and physical state it takes to become number one.

Look out for P4-33 Ultra Team Racing as they continue to excel on the Great Lakes Silver Cup Series tour. The next races take place in St. Clair, MI August 2, 3 and the Grand Haven, MI Offshore Challenge on Aug. 29-31, 2003. For more information on #P4-33 Ultra Team Racing visit their website at: www.UltraTeamRacing.com. Brian Bunch: (313) 283-8148 and Terrah Lee at: Terrahmaria1@aol.com or (513)

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