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SPEED DEMONS: Thunder on the bay

by By JOHN GREGORY | Beach & Bay Press

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Jarrett Silvey's top fuel drag boat sprays a rooster tail of water as it speeds to the finish line on Mission Bay during a race at a previous Bayfair. COURTESY PHOTOS

Bayfair, the world series of powerboat racing, roars onto Mission Bay Sept. 18-20 as competitors vie for critical points while the 2009 powerboat racing season winds down. This annual event is known to locals as a time of thunderous racket reverberating from the bay and a chance to join the throngs of curious gawking at fast boats and the vast amounts of effort and expense thrown into keeping them competitive.

Less thunder this year

Unlimited hydroplanes sanctioned by the American Powerboat Racing Association (ABRA) series will not be included in this year's Bayfair

races due to the high expense of hosting the big boats.

"Basically, their price package is \$170,000," which includes prize money and sanctioning costs, said Bob Davies, Bayfair race director. "This year we've lost almost \$200,000 in sponsorship money, so the numbers just didn't pan out."

The cost to host the ABRA race was in addition to the park fees and city services fees the Bayfair committee has to contend with, Davies said.

"We're not having a lot of corporate sponsors this year. Normally, we have 10 to 12 corporate sponsors," Davies said.

The difficult economy is the main factor Davies attributes to the decline in corporate sponsors. Leaving out the ABRA race cut the expense in half, he said.

Still, the event will host between 18 and 22 classes of race boats and at least 200 race teams, Davies said. Among the boats racing will be circle boats of the American Power Boat Association, unlimited lights of the Unlimited Light Hydroplane Racing Association, drag racing boats of the International Hot Boat Association and powerful offshore ocean racers of the Pacific Offshore Powerboats Racing Association, which will be brought to the confines of a track within the bay.

"Everyone loves to come to San Diego to race," Davies said. "It's one of the last races of the season, so the points are very important."

The driver to watch this year is Kayleigh Perkins, the 2007 Rookie of the Year who stands atop the unlimited lights' point standings this season.

"She is running away with the points right now," Davies said. "She has almost double what anybody else has."

Three separate courses for racing will be set and all three could be active simultaneously, Davies said. One racing circuit will be in front of Fiesta Island, one course at Ski Beach and the drag boats will race near Crown Point Shores.

In addition to racing, food vendors and interactive displays will be part of the event, Davies said. Concerts for race attendees will be held both Friday and Saturday nights, and a fireworks display will close out Saturday night's activities. As always, the racing finals will be held Sunday.

Updates

(More Updates)

LJCPA to vote on neighborhood priorities Nov. 1

The La Jolla Community Planning Association (LJCPA) will vote on La Jolla's list of priorities for the city's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget at its upcoming meeting on Nov. 1 at 6 p.m. Th...

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