

# Boat flips at OPA races in Port Huron

Nicole Hayden, Times Herald 4:28 p.m. EDT August 9, 2015



Boats take off Sunday, Aug 9, during the Port Huron/Sarnia International Offshore Powerboat Races.  
(Photo: ANDREW JOWETT / TIMES HERALD)

A flipped over speed boat had Rahman Dada, 9, on his toes during the Port Huron/Sarnia International Offshore Powerboat Races.

The Lapeer boy was enticed by the noise, speed and styles of the boats as well, but it was the unplanned mishaps that had Rahman, and the rest of the race spectators, talking Sunday afternoon.

“There was a flipped over boat and lots of boats jumping and almost flipping over too,” Rahman said. “I like it because it’s just like race cars, but it’s on the water.”

Ed Smith, OPA President, said the boat Ultimate Racing Experience flipped during the first Class 6 race.

“It happens sometimes,” Smith said. “They turn a little too hard or hit the edge of a wave. You’re at the edge of disaster at all times.”

Both racers in the boat were not injured, but could not finish race the boat.

“Once the boat gets all wet like that it will take weeks and a lot of money before it works again.”

Ed Smith, 59, of St. Clair (not to be confused with the OPA president), said danger is part of the game. Smith said he flipped and sunk his boat a year ago and has been thrown out of his boat four times.

Ed Smith has raced for 22 years and was racing The Cleveland Construction boat on Sunday.

“It’s the adrenaline rush,” Ed Smith said. “In a car racing you have the same asphalt the whole time, in a boat every foot the track changes with the water and waves. We race in rain and snow and only stop with lightning.”

Anthony Smith, 33, of New Jersey, who was racing the boat Wazzup, said a successful race is when everyone comes home safe.

The 5<sup>th</sup> annual race had 42 race boats competing hailing from California to Michigan to New York.

Augie Pensa, OPA Vice President, said Sunday’s race was one of ten races this year. He said there are eight other regular races – including the St. Clair River Classic OPA races that just passed – plus a national race and a world championship race.

As racers compete in each event they collect points at the win. At the end of the year all of the points are totaled up and awards are given out.

Pensa said the races in Michigan are friendly and allow spectators to easily interact with racers.

Vince Maloney, 68, of Port Huron, said he spent most of his weekend at OPA race activities and tries to frequent the race each year.

“The concert Friday night was awesome,” Maloney said. “But I really like the speed of the boats. This year we had one flip – usually there are no accidents.”

Dan Rivard, 53, of Macomb, said the power and performance are what draws him to the races as well.

“It’s a different kind of speed than cars have on land,” Rivard said. “On the water you have less control and there are more variables that can impact how fast and where you go.”

Cheryl, 52, Dan’s wife, said she loved the scenery of the race – the husband and wife duo spent time taking photos of the practice races on Saturday before coming back to enjoy the real thing on Sunday.

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