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What's all the fuss about?



Until recently, powerboat racing was the only motor sport managed by a single entity which applied the same rules, irrespective of the type of activity undertaken. For the past 99 years, the Union Internationale Motonautique (UIM) has been responsible for rule-making in all international powerboat competitions and, for all intents and purposes, they have been getting the job done. But not to everyone's satisfaction.

The problem came to a head following the 2005 Class One series, with a lack of continuity in the rules and the tedious procedure of sorting out international protests and appeals, which were often adjudicated by people with little knowledge or experience of the sport. This frustrated the racers and event organisers, who decided to form a new professional body to look after the interests of the pinnacle of the sport, ie Class One and F1.

Thus the World Professional Powerboat Association (WPPA) was born. Headed up by chairman Saeed Hareb, a well-respected member of the racing fraternity, council members include our very own Honda OOD Rory Power, Mohammed Al Jaidah of Qatar, Jose Jesuita of Portugal, Bill Barry Cotter of Australia, John Haggin of the USA, Marco Sala of Italy and Per Carsten of Norway.

Their aim was to promote, market and regulate the sport better and

follow some of the leads from the top motor sport organisations, ie Formula One. One of the key points they wanted to achieve was to make Class One power boating a truly worldwide series, not just Europe and the Middle East, which is why the WPPA council members appointed to its board representatives from New Zealand, Australia and America.

It sounds to me that at last somebody is trying to put powerboat racing back on the map and show

the world how fantastic and exciting this sport/business is. Although they are concentrating on the elite classes of Class One and F1 at the moment, this has got to be the right way to go because, once life has been made easier for them, then the smaller, more affordable classes will reap the benefit when racing in international waters.

So, who's in charge? The original concept was for WPPA to work in union with the UIM, but the UIM refused this at first. With negotiations still going on, the UIM have delegated a working group to work with the management of WPPA to look for a way to all work together for the benefit of the sport. It is still in discussion, though, so watch this space.

I spoke to Rory Power who was extremely passionate about the matter, "It's a small sport which is underrated and has a massive future and it would be far better if we could all work together to fulfil these aims and objectives," he said. "Over the past few months, I have worked hard keeping the communications moving forward between the parties involved – national authorities, the UIM and the WPPA and particularly the RYA, who are now supporting need for change."

Green and mean

I personally don't 'do' engines, as I have a man that does, but I have recently been looking at outboards to see which is the most eco-friendly and still puts out the power. I learned that four-stroke will always be more fuel efficient and cleaner than any two-stroke, no matter what the technology applied to the two-stroke. This is because the theory of a two-stroke always means some oil is burnt and because the reasoning for having two-stroke is for more power/torque per stroke and lighter weight. Remove those advantages and there really is no point to a two-stroke.

Since the rules on exhaust emissions were tightened

up with the Recreational Craft Directive 2006 update, this has become an ever-changing market. Every manufacturer is now trying to up the horsepower and remain eco-friendly to beat their rivals. I asked Phill Haynes of Honda Marine whether joe-public of the leisure industry is really bothered about eco-friendliness when they are buying new engines.

"They are bothered about their pocket first," he said. "If the engine burns less fuel, then it costs less to run. The quietness and cleanliness is an added bonus."



Selected two-stroke outboards

Evinrude E-tec – Cleanest and quietest two-stroke, but not as 'crisply' torquey as the Mercury.

Mercury – Most torque, dirtiest and heaviest on fuel, but this is the true 'lean-mean-fighting machine'.

Yamaha – Midway between the two above. Apparently the most reliable two-stroke on the market.

Selected four-stroke outboards

Yamaha – Breaking into the four-stroke market. Less torque than the

other manufacturers and not as reliable (yet!) as his two-stroke brother.

Honda – though obviously I am slightly biased! Honda is the longest-producing manufacturer of four-stroke outboards and can still claim to be the cleanest.

It is the only engine using the VTEC system, which increases top end torque.

It also claims to be the quietest four-stroke, but I am not convinced after hearing the Mercury Verado recently!

Mercury Verado – Latest model on the market is the new 300hp. With the super-charging technology, it lays down smooth power through the range.

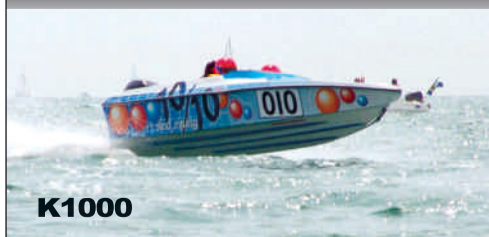


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For More Information
 Tel: Denis Swann 01634 252107

Email: denisswann@barges.co.uk
www.wandaoffshore.co.uk