

# An Italian job well done



Crowd pleaser: The #77 Lucas Oil boat in action



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SHELLEY Jory is one of the UK's leading powerboat racers and the top female in her sport. Last year she became the face of Honda Powerboat Racing. Each month Shelley gives *All At Sea* readers an insight into her amazing life. This month Shelley shares her experiences of the racing in the Italian Grand Prix with *All At Sea*

**TO SAY I was nervous was an understatement – this was a big leap for me in my powerboat racing career.**

I had spent my winter waiting for the boat to arrive from the USA as wisely as I could, working on fitness, watching DVDs of Lucas

Oil racing in the USA and making sure my bridal business and staff were ready for the busy summer ahead. After all I will be away racing through the busy wedding season.

For the first time in five years of racing I am going back to navigating and driving the

boat, just as well I know my Raymarine GPS backwards.

In P1 Evolution class it is mandatory that the driver and throttles are separate. I had only met my team owner and throttle man, Nigel Hook twice before and now he has hold of all my power and speed in the boat. Now I know what my "Honda" navigator Libby Keir must have felt like!

Nigel and I used Friday's pole position race as another test session. The plan was to just finish the first race, take it easy, no heroics and get some points in the bag. We did just that.

The weather was good on the Saturday – hot, but pretty calm waters. The Supersport race was first to go. # 44 *Conam Yachts* – the Italian Supersport reigning champion took an early lead with *Silverline Buzzi Bullet* in second UK and *Voom Voom.com Hustler UK* in third and that is how they finished too.

A 30 minute delay to the Evolution start a the teams sat in their cockpits getting very hot. Not a good omen! Eventually we were on our way and I was on my first P1 start line. Then we were off.

We got a great start and suddenly all my nerves were gone. Nigel and I immediately gelled as if we had been together for years. Nigel was brilliant, throttling the boat to keep us in the front but still on the safe side of every corner. He put a lot of trust in me during those first laps – a brave man.

We went out in the lead so my navigation was crucial. By the third lap all the gauges on the engines shut down, not the best position to be in with two brand new 700-plus hp Mercury Engines.

Then, to add to the problems the canopy hatch kept opening, so we spent the other 12 laps of the race often throttling or driving with one hand and the other on the canopy hatch lever.

With no gauges on brand new engines we tried to race conservatively as much as possible. Ship to shore communication failed too so we just did not see *Fountain Worldwide* creep up on us and take the lead in the last lap. But a second and podium finish was way more than the team had dared to hope.

Sunday's weather proved slightly different. The wind had picked up and there was a good swell on the sea. We got another great start and were one of the first boats to the first very tight corner. I then made a navigational error and could not find the new mark laid for the Sunday race.

The concentration level when travelling at speeds over 100 mph on an uneven surface is hard, but that is no excuse. I finally saw the mark and the rest of the fleet heading towards it but we had now dropped to seventh place.

Once again Nigel and I got on with the job in hand as if we had raced together for years and started to battle through the fleet in front of us. Once again our engine gauges decided to shut down and then, just to add to the fun Nigel's five-point harness sprung open. Not good a situation to be in.

He tried to do it up at first with one hand still on the throttles as we could not afford to stop for a moment but that was impossible. So I had no option but to throttle and steer with the other hand while Nigel got harnessed in. Second race in P1 and I am throttling and steering – an amazing week-end!

Despite all the odds we got third position on Sunday and stepped up on to the podium again. What a result – second overall in the Italian Grand Prix.

Little did we know but a protest had already been filed at the UIM against leading boat, *Fountain Worldwide* during the Sunday race.

After several days of discussions *Fountain Worldwide* team were allowed to keep their win in the Sea Endurance race but they were disqualified from the Sprint race.

As a result of the 100-point loss they lost their cumulative Italian Grand Prix of the Sea victory and championship lead, both of which went to us in #77 *Lucas Oil* crew!

Team Lucas Oil has a long way to go and we need to stay focussed. There are 12 races across the world and some very tough competition. But a brilliant week-end and start to the P1 season.

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