

2009 Waitaki Jet Boat River Race

July 25th

Saturday dawned presenting a beautiful cold winter morning providing perfect conditions for racing and engine performance.

The course was the traditional Waitaki race from 1km above the main road bridge to Kurow.

In these trying times the organizers must have been happy to see 21 boats turn out and amazingly 10 of them were Unlimited class. The class bolstered by the long awaited arrival of Tony Matterns immaculately prepared boat adorned with bling. Welcome back Tony and we wish you all the best. Also Steven Shearing driving Daryl Sutherlands "Slow Poke."

Also returning after time out was Mark Freeman about to put the sport on notice.

All eyes however were on the very smart rig of father and son combo Ross and James Murdoch. They were to be kept honest by John Derry and Shaun Kelly. Regan Williamson managed to take delivery of and completely fit out his new Eagle in less than two weeks. What an effort Regan well done Turbo (Chris Campbell) dusted off the boat and Hugo and turned up as well. Nice to have you guys back. The rest of Unlimited was made up of Roger Preston, still in contention for the series and The Pooleys.

A class saw Malcolm Jenkins and Paul Collings at the start gate. Both still in contention for the series.

Nice to have Daniel Anderson back on deck racing Garth McMaster and Phil, and also Mark Agnew in his immaculately prepared boat.

Wayne McKenzie and Kruze went head to head in C class Aaron Morrison and Lex Thomas in D, followed by Craig Robertson and Tony O'Loughlon in there ever reliable Sport Jets.

The river was running at 320 (the same as the 2005 Worlds) so everyone felt the record set by hard charging Canadian Paddy Stratton may be under threat.

No one was going to have any trouble going because there were hordes of boats preboating on Friday.

Race Controller Eddie McKenzie went to great lengths to emphasize sportsmanship and safety especially reminding everyone it was the last day of duck shooting so no one was to act the duck! We had 7 safety boats and two helicopters in support.

Seeding the top end presented a challenge with the new comers and oldies all demonstrating speed. Eventually James as of right was sent away first he being the current holder of NZ1. He was followed by Mark Freeman, John Derry, Shaun, Rob Pooley then Malcolm, Roger and so on.

The river has straightened a lot with the two big dumps of water as they spilled excess in May. One spill was 1500 cumecs which almost took out the Kurow Bridge.

The run sorted the seeding nicely with John Derry and James dead heating the run up. The Pooleys, Shaun and Mark Freeman all exchanged views about the weather and river conditions as they passed each other.

Tony Matt had a nice clean run and was ecstatic to be there in one piece. Well done you. Regan had an intermittent miss he could not settle. Malcolm had a peek at a couple of routes he most definitely will not use in the upcoming worlds. Steven was a bit off the pace which further manifested itself later in the day seeing him out of contention later in the day

The battle in B Class was to see Garth take out the upstream run ahead of Mark and a very slow Daniel Anderson

Wayne McKenzie let Kruze through to take out C class but managed to pip him on the way home to take out C class for the day.

Lex Thomas was not to have a good day DNF'ng on the way up and handing the class to Aaron Morrison who had a clean run all day.

And at the tail end Craig and Tony zinged up and down in the SJ's knowing all they need for the next race is fuel.

Criterion Race.

There was plenty of discussion about seeding and format for the short course criterion race. The faster boats particularly were concerned about close quarters racing, so the organizers in the interest of safety moved the start line downstream to give good run up before the first turning buoy. None the less there was compression and plenty of spray. James had a half spin but recovered to hold off all comers. The Pooleys DNF'd and pulled out of the event having finally worn out their 520 which had been running since July last year. By all accounts a respectable run for the motor somewhere in the order of 22 hours.

Turbo never made it out again having discovered his shaft seal had gone blowing out the unit bearing's oil, very lucky to arrive with just a whirr coming from a thrust bearing lubricated by water absorbing 700 hp!!!
Steven Daniel and Lex were also not to start.

The rest of the field managed to finish with a notable performance from Garth posting a very quick 6:33, faster than most of the bigger boats.

Downstream

Everyone looks forward to the Waitaki down. It can be very fast due to water flow and is one river where down is always significantly faster than up.

Regan elected to leave his on the trailer rather than risk damage from the miss he was struggling to identify. The Pooleys may well have rued the fact they ignored the early warnings before there motor went down.

First away was James who had a nice clean run and posted a 24:15, which yet to be verified is most likely a new record for the run. Well done James, 1st in Unlimited Class and 1st overall. He was followed home by John who must be feeling good about his day and his marathon prospects, now enjoying good speed and driving as well as reliability with the machinery because there were hordes of boats preboating on Friday.

Next down was Shaun followed by Mark Freeman posting times a bit slower than the top two guys but who knows who's foxing now! Roger Preston came home clean 10 mins off the pace for the day but posted a 5th for his efforts and still in contention for the circuit.

Garth came home in a tidy 26'43 pipping Malcolm and taking out 4th overall and B Class Malcolm taking out 6th and A class after a much cleaner run downstream.

Wayne McKenzie took C class as Kruze battled with smashed grill which eventually saw him pull out, sorry to see.

Aaron of course took out D class after a respectable run with no issues.

All in all a great days racing and the perfect buildup for the upcoming Worlds in September. There is clearly some serious speed out there ready to contend the title and the latest word is Cromie will be starting as well.

The Waitaki has also sparked serious interest from one or two others so we may yet see the entry list increase. Common sense says the entries should have closed after the Waitaki so it is pleasing to hear the opportunity still exists for racers to enter without the burden of the late entry penalty.

Probably the most exciting news of late is the decision by US racer Ryan Ringer to enter. Ryan was a popular competitor in the 2008 New Zealand marathon so his entry is appreciated. To add some serious color to the event he has recently purchased Tim Hardings very famous Turbine Jet, which is undisputedly the fastest jet boat racing the rivers of the world. Ryan has often crewed for Tim when running the Turbine so is very familiar with its performance. He admits though the prospect of racing NZ waters will be a challenge. None the less his presence will provide a spectacle never seen in NZ before and one not to be missed.

Follow the build up on www.nzjbrra.co.nz