

ISSAQUAH PRESS

50,000 expected at Tastin' n Racin'

BY BOB TAYLOR

John O'Brien will be focused mainly on the unlimited hydroplane, he also plans on watching some other engines perform at this weekend's eighth annual Tastin' n Racin'. In particular, O'Brien wants to get away for a few minutes from the pits on Lake Sammamish to view the precision work of the Seattle Cossacks Motorcycle Team.

"I remember watching those guys when I was a little kid," said O'Brien, a hydroplane owner and co-chairman of Tastin' n Racin'.

Tastin' n Racin', held at Lake Sammamish State Park, combines hydroplane racing with a variety of attractions. The Seattle Cossacks Motorcycle Team performs stunts on vintage Harleys from the 1930s and 1940s, and is one of the new additions.

"Every year the event has been fine-tuned," O'Brien said. "We



FILE

Two mini-hydros race to the finish during last year's Tastin' n Racin' at Lake Sammamish State Park.

think this will be our best yet."

Tastin' n Racin' officials expect a crowd of at least 50,000 this weekend.

Although the festival doesn't really get going until Saturday, O'Brien invites people to come down to the lake 4-8 p.m. Friday to

take advantage of free parking that day. Admission to the event also is free Friday. Although there won't be racing, spectators can look at the boats.

Parking is \$5 Saturday and Sunday; admission is \$3 with children under 6 free.

Bands will provide music in the evening and there will be a carnival with rides, cotton candy and other traditional treats.

The festival runs 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. For many people the highlight of the weekend are the unlimited light hydroplane races. Qualifying heats begin at 10:30 a.m. both days with the Baker Equipment Cup championship race scheduled for 5 p.m. Sunday.

"We try to have a lot of different things for people to do, a lot of things that appeal to people of all ages, things that appeal to the entire family," said the event's executive director, Chris Courtright.

The festival includes 15 food booths with a range of cuisine; an arts-and-crafts section featuring Northwest artists; a children's area with face painting, clowns

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and inflatable rides; boat displays from the Hydroplane Museum and the Antique & Classic Boat Society; displays of water ski tournament boats; a climbing wall; a motorcycle show on Saturday by the Eastside Harleys; and Sunday's Diamond Lil's Classic Car Show of hot rods, sports cars and restored cars.

Musical entertainment includes The Machine, a rock 'n' roll dance band; the '80s dance band Rock Candy; The Penguins playing rhythm and blues; and the funk band Soul Flight.

O'Brien and Courtright are excited about two new attractions: the Cossacks and the nostalgic circle boats.

The Seattle Cossacks perform at 1 and 3 p.m. Saturday on the beach. The club, formed in 1938, performs stunts similar to those by their famous Russian namesakes. The Russian Cossacks were known for their masterful horsemanship.

The nostalgic circle boats are old onboard flat-bottom boats called the hot rods of their day because of their large engines and high speeds. The Northwest Water

Competition Hydroplane Racing Club of Spokane has created a racing fleet for these boats. Most of the boats are 31 years or older and drivers range in age from 16 to 70. The nostalgic boats race both days.

"We think our lineup of events this year is pretty cool," Courtright said.

There will be another class of boats racing this year: the lighter than lights. These boats are slightly smaller than the ones competing on the Unlimited Light Hydroplane Racing Association (ULHRA) circuit.

Once again the ULHRA kicks off its season at Tastin' n Racin'. Defending national champion UL-1 Mike's Hard Lemonade/Happy Go Lucky, driven by the father-son team of Jerry and Greg Hopp, is one of the favorites to win the Baker Equipment Cup.

Local entries include O'Brien's UL-40 Thunder Valley, and the UL-72 Red Rocket co-owned by Phil Bononcini of Sammamish and Joe Frauenheim of Issaquah. Both boats have new drivers. Harold Mills is driving for Thunder Valley and George Woods is driving the UL 72.

Tastin' n Racin' has signed a five-year contract with the state parks department for use of Lake Sammamish State Park.

"It's good to know that we can keep coming back to the park," O'Brien said. "I truly believe we have a great event."