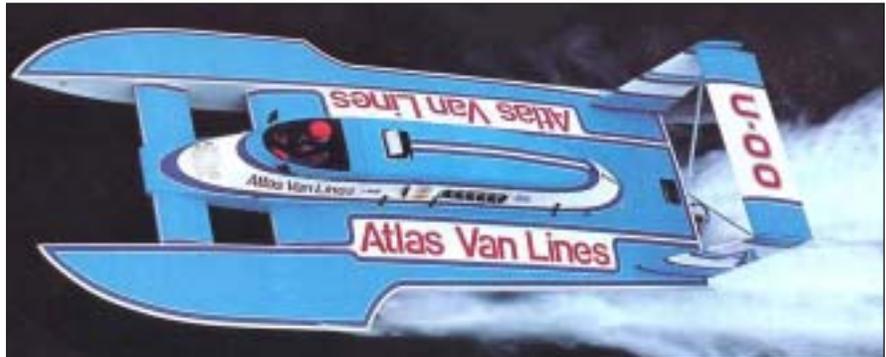


History of the Legendary 1982 Atlas Van Lines

The 1982 Atlas Van Lines unlimited hydroplane had a very long and colorful career since its debut the spring of that year. The boat last ran as Ken Muscatel's U-14 in 1998. While heading into the first turn on San Diego's Mission Bay, during a test run, Muscatel lost the skid fin and barrel-rolled the boat tearing off the left sponson among other major damage. Ken was OK, but the boat never saw the water again. In 2001, vintage car racer and hydroplane enthusiast John Goodman, of Seattle, purchased the hull with the dream of restoring the boat to its original 1982 configuration.

Through all of its reincarnations over sixteen years of racing, the '82 Atlas is probably best remembered as the boat Chip Hanauer drove to his first two Gold Cup wins. This also marked the last time a piston powered unlimited



would be victorious at the Gold Cup. The boat also set numerous records both in competition and qualifying.

The '82 Atlas was a "Phoenix" of sorts, rising from the sports darkest time following the death of Bill Muncey in Acapulco in 1981. During that winter, Fran Muncey struggled with question whether to continue racing. With the support of her many friends, including Atlas Van Lines Chairman O.H. Frisbie, Fran made the decision to honor her late husband and continue the Atlas tradition.



Original construction of the Atlas in spring 1982.

It was also decided to not repair Bill's famous "Blue Blaster" for racing, but instead, build a brand new Jim Lucero designed hull. Fran's easiest decision was who to get as driver for the new boat. She knew Bill admired Chip Hanauer, and everyone involved agreed he was the best choice. But time was running out. It was already early 1982 and construction of the new hull had not yet began. But in an amazing one hundred days, Jim Harvey, Jim Lucero and the Atlas crew completed the boat in time for the season opener the first week of June in Miami.

Bill Muncey's "Blaster" with one unique difference. The boat was the first "vented" unlimited featuring a spar/canard between the sponsons and a much shorter center "ram wing" section. The design was intended to move the hulls lift further aft to keep the boat from packing too much air and possibly blowing over. Although Lucero's theory was sound, the boat was very loose early in the '82 season. Sometimes only Chip's driving talent kept the boat on the water.

By Detroit's Gold Cup, Harvey and the crew had made several careful changes to the boat



Famous Bud-Atlas duel up the backstretch in Detroit 1982.

to tame it down. Although still frighteningly loose, Hanauer's stunning victory on the Detroit River was a very jubilant and emotional win for the team. It was the culmination of their exhausting dedication over the past six months. Fran, Chip and everyone involved credit Bill Muncey's spirit for the accomplishment

Over the remainder of the 1982 season the Atlas Van Lines team won four more races, set several qualifying records and walked away with the High Point and World Championships.

Driver safety had become paramount following the death of Bill Muncey and then Dean Chenoweth in 1982. Following the '82 season Jim Lucero and the Atlas crew re-fitted the boat with another first, a safety cockpit. Driver Hanauer was lowered down in the boat and strapped in with seatbelts. He was also surrounded with a super-strong honeycomb and fiberglass cowl. When the Atlas appeared for the 1983 season it sported a new look with its streamlined "Indy car" like cockpit.

The 1983 season was very competitive as the Atlas and the Budweiser, with new driver Jim Kropfeld, went at each other at every race. But the Atlas again grabbed the Gold Cup and season title.



The Atlas in 1983 with its new safety cockpit.

For the 1984 season, Jim Lucero and the crew gambled on a new turbine powered hull and sold the High Point champion to Bob Steil of the Squire Shop. Jim Harvey was drafted as crew chief for the brightly red painted boat. Mickey Remund had a great year as the Squire's new driver winning in Syracuse and finishing 2nd in High Points. And in a ironic twist, almost won the boats third Gold Cup in a row

at Tri-Cities. Making an incredible start, Remund held off Chip Hanauer in the turbine Atlas Van Lines for three laps until a blown Merlin forced the Squire to the infield.

Over the next two years, the Squire Shop was a steady competitor driven in 1985 and '86 by Tom D'Eath.

At the end of the 1986 season Bob Steil decided to leave the sport and offered the boat to Jim Harvey. Jim was able to purchase the hull becoming a first time unlimited owner. He landed Oh Boy! Oberto as a sponsor and kept the piston powered boat in the hunt against a growing number of superior turbine entries.



Jim Harvey with the Squire Shop in 1986.



Mickey Remund at the controls of the U-2 in 1984.

The boats career almost went up in smoke in early 1987. While traveling to the season opener in Miami, the teams truck caught fire and was destroyed along with several engines and equipment. The boat, however, luckily escaped the flames.



(above) Oh Boy! Oberto in 1988, and turbine powered in 1990 (right).



Harvey knew the boat very well, to say the least, making several improvements over the years and in 1988 added an F-16 canopy. Driver George Woods won two races with the U-2 Oberto that year, proving that the aging Merlins could still compete with the turbines. But the writing was on the wall and Harvey was already planning a conversion to jet power. Knowing that both '88 wins came on salt water, typically problematic for turbines, Harvey wanted to somehow still run his trusty Rolls engines on salt water courses and switch to turbines for fresh water. In 1990, the Oberto, with its new "day glow" paint job became the first unlimited in history to be powered by either piston or turbine engines.

Unfortunately for Harvey and the team, the Oh Boy! Oberto sponsorship came to an end. They had to

rely on a few pickup sponsors for the 1991 season including The Brake Shop, Arc Construction and T-Plus. The switching of power plants also proved impractical, so the crew made the permanent move to turbines.

1992 brought Jim Harvey good news in the form of a multiple season sponsorship with T-Plus, an oil and fuel additive company. This provided the funds to upgrade the aging ten-year old race boat. New Ron Jones sponsors were added along with rear triplets and a striking new black, red and yellow paint scheme.



(above) First T-Plus paint scheme in 1991.



(left) T-Plus in Miami 1993.

For three seasons the T-Plus was a crowd favorite on the race circuit with Steve David at the wheel. In 1994 Jim Harvey's long and close association with the 1982 Atlas came to an end. His

new two-wing hull had taken center stage and it was time to sell his old friend.

Ken Muscatel stepped forward and purchased the famous hull and gave it the U-14 designation. From 1996 to 1998 the boat served Ken well under various names including Computers & Applications, Miss Northwest Unlimited, Jack-Son's Sports Bar and Tveten's R.V. Mart.



Ken Muscatel's U-14 prior to the restoration.

2002 marked the 20th anniversary of the '82 Atlas Van Lines. The restoration took quite a bit longer than the original "100 days" construction, but the boat is back better than ever. The Atlas project was the Hydroplane and Raceboat Museum's most exhaustive to date. Completed December 2002, a full year after the initial demolition, the boat represents the highest level of craftsmanship. Led by the skill and expertise of Ron Brown and Jim Harvey, a

crew of dedicated volunteers put in hundreds of hours each on the project. From assembling the internal framework to the final touches of the paint job every square inch of the boat was painstakingly attended to in fine detail.

Admittedly, not a lot is left of the original 1982 hull. Over its long career, the boat was rebuilt and updated several times. Nearly every component was modified or revamped at some point. Jim Harvey points to a few frames and sections of the rear airtrap as being original. Several hardware items including the rudder and skid fin mount were also on the boat in '82. The best news, however, is in the cockpit. The dashboard and some instruments are original as is the drivers seat. But the best original piece of equipment in the entire boat is none other than the guy sitting in the drivers seat; Chip Hanauer!

-Don Mock



Newly restored 1982 Atlas Van Lines returns to the Hydroplane Museum December 2002.