



Four boats round turn four in a qualifying heat for the F 2500 class of hydroplanes this past weekend at Thunder on the Niagara at Gratwick Park in North Tonawanda. (Photo by Karen Carr Keefe)

# Islanders do well in Thunder on the Niagara

**BY KAREN CARR KEEFE**

Senior Contributing Writer

Thunder on the Niagara lived up to its name, with loud, fast and exhilarating action in hydroplane races this past weekend.

Grand Island drivers fared well, finishing in the top three in three categories in the competition finale at North Tonawanda's Gratwick Park,

Spectators without tents got drenched in heavy rain as they watched Saturday's qualifying heats. But a day later, crowds were drenched in sunshine as they watched the hydroplanes chew through the river at break-neck speeds, spewing giant plumes of water.

Longtime race driver and Grand Islander Lyle Dinsmore led the procession Saturday to start the event. He circled the course in his vintage Miss Gangway craft, bearing U.S. and Canadian flags, while the national anthems of both countries were played

Dinsmore said the water and the weather were fine for the race.

"I made it to (age) 85 and I'm still running," he said. He added that it felt "just wonderful" to be the leader of the pack at the opening ceremony.

Grand Island drivers on the roster included Jimmy King, sponsored by the LDC Construction Co. Team of Grand Island; Ken Brodie II and his son, Ken Brodie III; and Eddie Kanfoush, all sponsored by GP:50 on the Cents-Less Team. Of these competitors,

Jimmy King came in first in the Hydro 350 finale; Ken Brodie II placed second in the Grand Prix finale; Ken Brodie III placed second in the 2.5 liter finale; and Eddie Kanfoush placed fourth in the F 2500 finale.

Kanfoush, at age 21, is in his third year of racing. He is ranked No. 1 in his class of hydroplane racers. "But it's very tight and there's a lot of races left," he said.

"I've been around it my entire life. My father (Dan Kanfoush) raced for 20 years. He raced here many times, so I'm just picking up where he left off." His dad is his crew chief and he handles the radios. "It's all in the family."

Eddie Kanfoush is a college student at the University at Buffalo, where he studies media production.

It's also "all in the family" for the Brodie family of hydroplane racers. The late Ken Brodie Sr. was a renowned driver in the Grand Prix class and received the Life Achievement Award at the Championship Gala of the Hydroplane Racing League in 2023.

Ken Brodie II is co-chair for the Niagara Frontier Boat Racing Association regatta. He has been involved in the boat races since 2006. There are seven races on the circuit.

"There's a lot of satisfaction at the end. We think that it's a worthwhile event," Ken Brodie II said. "We travel all around the eastern coast. Some of us are going to go out to San Diego in about a

month. To put one of these events on is not easy. There's a lot of work, but there's a lot of reward."

He was in Lane 3 for Saturday's Grand Prix qualifying heats, during which participants gather points for favorable lane placement in the finale. There are six lanes, and the higher numbers are further toward the outer perimeter of the course, and thus, a longer distance to run.

"What we're doing is just trying to qualify for as many points to get a good lane assignment for the final. If you're outside of more than Lane 3 – especially on this track – you're going to have a tough hill to climb to, what we call 'make the podium,' which is finishing first, second or third," Brodie said.

His son, Ken Brodie III, racked up some impressive wins in four races on the circuit before coming in second in the 2.5-liter finale in North Tonawanda. He garnered two third-place wins, as well as a co-winning first place in Brockville, Ontario.

"That was probably the best feeling I've had," he said of that first-place finish.

Brodie III comes by his hydroplane racing career quite naturally, following a family tradition.

"My father's been a driver since he was 19, the same age as me. His father before him and his father before him. So, it was just kind of, growing up, that's really all I wanted to do – watch my dad go out there every time, and I can't wait till I can do it," he said.

In the off-season for hydroplane racing, Ken Brodie III has other pursuits.

"This is a hobby sport. When I'm not racing, I'm either working for my father – he has a transducer company (GP:50) or I'm playing hockey – junior hockey in Canada," he said.

His grandfather, Don Less, owns GP:30 and his father, Ken

Brodie II, is president-CEO.

"It's a cool experience when we both go out there, have a great race, come back and we can celebrate together," Ken Brodie III said. "It's pretty special."

Thunder on the Niagara Chair John Krebs said this year's event went very well.

"With the incredible group of sponsors, advertisers and volunteers, we once again have had a successful 2024 Thunder on the Niagara," he said. "Saturday's rain was consistent 'track resurfacing' that made for some of the smoothest water we have ever had on the Niagara River.

"Prior to this weekend, I have already been setting up meetings with folks to begin working on the 2025 Thunder on the Niagara, Aug. 2 and 3, 2025."

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**WED 6AM-2PM** - Polish Sausage w/Parsley Potatoes and Sauerkraut or Fish  
**THURS 6AM-2PM** - Grilled Chicken Sandwich with Roasted Red Pepper, Provolone and Pesto or Fish - *Battered, Breaded, Baked*  
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**LIVE HIGHLIGHTS:** 20-Truck Tractors: 2014 Peterbilt 389(t/a), 2013 Peterbilt 389 Legacy (t/a), 2013 Peterbilt 386(t/a), 2016-2009 Volvo VNL(t/a), 2016 IH Prostar+ 122(t/a), 2013-2012 IH Prostar+ 125(t/a), 2012 IH Prostar+ 122(t/a), 2009 IH Prostar Ltd(t/a), 2014 Freightliner 122 SD(t/a), (2)2007-2006 Freightliner Columbia(t/a), 2005 Freightliner ST120(t/a), 1988 Freightliner Coe(t/a), 2007 Freightliner(t/a) Sleeper Tractor, 2009 Sterling A9500(s/a), 2005 Sterling A9500(t/a), Kenworth W900(t/a), **Dump Truck:** GMC Brigadier, **Flatbed Truck:** 2015 Dodge Ram 3500HD, **2-Van Trucks:** IH/Grumman Olson 16525C, Chevy P30, **Military Truck:** M931(6x6, t/a), **2-Pickups:** 2019 Ford F350, 2008 Chevy Colorado, **Automobile:** 2000 VW Beetle, **Detachable Trailer:** 1999 Talbert T3DW-51E(tri.), **Equipment Trailer:** 2000 Landoll(tri.), **Tagalong:** 1998 Agricultural Belt Trailers(t/a), **Step Deck Trailer:** 2010 Doonan 53ft.(t/a), **Flatbed Trailer:** 1996 Retnouer(tri.), **Walking Floor Trailer:** 40PO(t/a), **Concrete Pump Trailer:** Putzmeister P30, **Dump Trailer:** Aluminum(t/a), **Refrigerated Trailer:** 2008 Great Dane 45ft.(tri.), **52-Van Trailers (Dunkirk):** 2018 Utility 57ft.(tri.), 2015 Vanguard Maxcube 53ft.(t/a), 2010 Kentucky(s/a), (4)Stoughton 48ft.(t/a), 2010 Stoughton 28ft.(s/a), (2)Great Dane 53ft.(t/a), (11)Great Dane 48ft.(t/a), 2008 Great Dane 45ft.(tri.), (6)Trailmobile 48ft.(t/a), (11)Wabash 48ft.(t/a), 2006 Vanguard 48ft.(t/a), 2005 Fruehauf 48ft.(t/a), (5)2002 Manac 48ft.(t/a), (2)1999 Dorsey 48ft.(t/a), 1998 Dorsey 45ft.(t/a), 1994 Strick 48ft.(t/a), Utility(t/a), 1995 Utility 48ft.(t/a), 1991 Fruehauf 28ft.(s/a), **12-Trailer Dollies:** (4)2006 Great Dane GCD-2(t/a), 2006(t/a), (6)Tandem Axle, **Hydraulic Excavator:** Komatsu HB215LC-1, **Rubber Tired Loader:** Doosan DL200, **Skid Steer:** Omnipuq 15003, **2-Forklifts:** Hyster H120C, Yale, **Scissor Lift:** Genie GS-1930, **Generator:** Kohler Power Syst., **9-Welders:** Lincoln Idealarc DC-400, Lincoln, Miller Maxtron 450, Miller 450c, Miller Bobcat 225NT, Miller S525E, Miller Constant Potential, Hobart G-261, Mastercraft 295, **Plasma System:** Innerlogic Plasma Systems SR-100i, **2-Plasma Cutters:** Hypertherm Powermax 1000, Plasma Cutting Table, **Utility Body:** Knapeheide 9ft., **Van Body:** Conestoga, **2-Utility Vehicles:** 2010 Polaris Ranger(4x4), Club Car Carryall 6, **Snow Equip.:** Boss 9ft. Power V Angle Plow, **4-Heating Equip.:** (3) Heat Star HSP 150R Pro, MI-T-M 400K, **2-Pressure Washers:** Magnum 4000 Series, Floor Pressure Washer, **35-New & Used Tires, Excavator Bucket, 13-Attachments:** (10)Skid Steer, **24-Truck Parts & Accessories, 7-Welding Accessories, 3-Engines, 45-Support Equipment, 19-Office Equipment.**

**TIMED HIGHLIGHTS:** Rubber Tired Loader: Clark Michigan 75B, **Military Truck:** 1991 M931(6x6, t/a), **Snow Plow Truck:** FWD MDL RB4421, **43 Van Trailers (Waterloo):** 2011 Stoughton 53ft.(t/a), (6)Stoughton 48ft.(t/a), 2009 Hyundai 48ft.(t/a), (3)Trailmobile 48ft.(t/a), (9)Great Dane 48ft.(t/a), (2)Great Dane 48ft.(t/a), 2007 Great Dane 28ft.(s/a), (4)Vanguard 48ft.(t/a), (8)Wabash 48ft.(t/a), (2)2002 Manac 48ft.(t/a), 2004 Utility 48ft.(t/a), (2)Strick 48ft.(t/a), 1998 Dorsey 45ft.(t/a), **Trailer Dolly:** 2020 Wabash(s/a), **Attachments:** Rubber Tired Loader.

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