

FUL TROT



Daniel de Kort, a former asst. managing director of a local bank in charge of treasury turned petrol head, now runs the non-profit SDDK Motorsports which, among others, seeks to promote Curacao motorsports to a more sustainable level. Daniel is a former go kart racer with a couple of podium finishes and a professional mountain motor pro stock car owner and driver. Unbeknownst to most, he's the local Curacao International Raceway track record holder, a FIA-accredited race photographer, a classic car owner and restorer, and a reluctant motorsports event organizer. Daniel will be contributing to Curaçao Sports Weekly with a wide variety of topics regarding motorsports.

Building a J-Hydro

As a teenager, I was mesmerized when watching Unlimited Hydroplane racing on TV. The sheer speed combined with the fine balancing act of riding that cushion of air was amazing. It all came back to me as I got more involved with curating the motorsports museum. The costs of building any type of racetrack on land remains a herculean task. But what if we don't need a purpose built track?

I grew up in the time of Big Boss, ChaCha Cha, The Bullet, Damn Carrera and Muchacho, to name a few; ocean racers with greater than life drivers. Actually, organized boat racing has been practiced around the globe by almost a century already. It all started pretty simple: gather comparable boats and race them on a clearly marked course, naturally, with the necessary safety features. And this is what Powerboat Racing Curacao (PRC) will start doing in 2020, starting off with hydroplane racing... or J-Hydro, as it is affectionally called abroad.

Firstly, all the hydroplanes need to be similar. Hence, we'll be using the J-Hydro classification, which is a

hull that's both versatile and sturdy enough to satisfy two categories. A J-Hydro can be built by anyone who has carpentry skills and the necessary tools, but most importantly, the time to see it through. Although entirely made up of 3 and 4 mm Oukume plywood and 1x3 ripped lumber, the hull gets its strength from precision carpentry [read: how tightly everything fits together]. And since this is crucial, PRC will monitor the process of each build in order to ensure the boat building plans are adhered to. Only then will boats be allowed to compete in PRC-sanctioned races.

All of the plywood and lumber required for the construction will be sourced locally. Additionally, the latter must be brought to a carpenter shop to rip specific sizes of wood required for the build. Where to build it? Preferably, a covered area with a fairly straight floor and a good size table. Stainless steel staples and wood screws, and copper boat building nails are used throughout the boat; all joints are glued together and clamped for hours at a time. The nose gets a healthy dose of epoxy. The hy-



Completed J-Hydro's

droplane hulls are not fiber glassed, as this will make them too heavy for competition. Again, all this in conformity with international standards. However, both the inside and outside are sealed and finished with 4 to 5 coats of oil-based paint. Conform the regulations, rigging (steering wheel, throttle, etc.) is imported from a certified builder, and attached to the finished hydroplane.

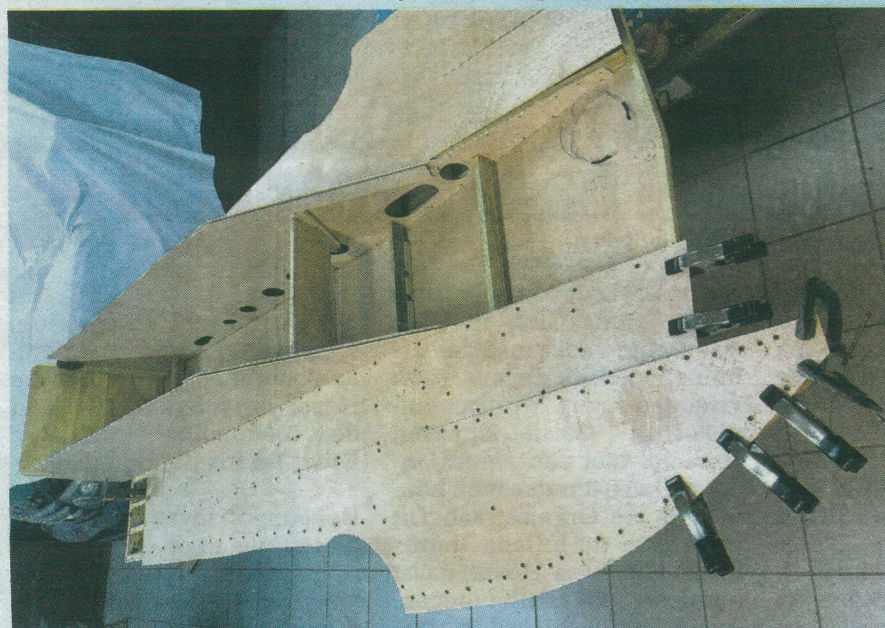
All that's needed is an outboard engine, depending on the class one wishes to run in. The brand of engine ge-

nerally used is Mercury, but one can enter any make, just as long as the PRC can confirm its legality as per category rules. Last but not least, is the mandatory personal safety gear: full face waterproof helmet, special race jacket (floatation device) and cut-resistant clothing.

PRC will assist anyone wanting to build their own hydroplane with the necessary explanations, tips and suggestions, as we've already built two J-Hydros. The latter are available for sale if one doesn't have the time, the necessary skills or tools.

Interested persons may get in touch with us to get more information on how to get the hydroplane building plans, and the rules of the PRC.

As with any type of motorsports, there are a great deal of rules and regulations that must be adhered to in order to guarantee safety. Additionally, it's important to note that hydroplanes are not intended for recreational use, for they have not been designed for this. As such, hydroplane use for recreational activities is strictly forbidden.



Attaching the deck



View of the bow without the deck.