



WHAT DOES "RACING RESUMES..." LOOK LIKE ?

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FIRST ROUND OF THE 2020 UIM F2 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP GRAND PRIX OF LITHUANIA, KAUNAS SEPT 19th & 20th

The first round of the 2020 UIM F2 World Championship has been held in Kaunas, Lithuania in September and it featured some surprise names in the drivers' line-up.

Edgaras Riabko, double European UIM F2 Champion and organiser of the race explained that putting on an event during this health crisis had been an absolute nightmare:

"I have made thousands of telephone calls and emails regarding the situation we find ourselves in, trying to secure all required permissions to make this race happen and to allow the drivers and officials to enter Lithuania without having to quarantine for 14 days."

The news that the Abu Dhabi Team's Rashed Al Qemzi would not be defending his 2019 title was a disappointment, however, two other multi-world champions had decided to race in Kaunas.

Sami Seliö who hadn't been racing in Formula 1 this season due to the cancellation of the 2020 F1H2O World Championship, announced that he would be racing the Sharjah

Team F2 BaBa hull, normally driven by Ferdinand Zandbergen, who was unavailable to compete.

Colin Jelf announced his return to UIM F2, a class where he has won no less than three world titles.

Colin was up against his brother Owen, who had also put in a huge amount of work behind the scenes to ensure that this UIM F2 World Championship eventually did happen. Bimba Sjöholm and Johan Österberg from Sweden were on the list of entries, although Riabko was well aware of their difficult situation:

"Bimba and Johan wanted to come, but they were struggling with insurance, and even their ferry was cancelled a few days before the race, but they tried everything to find a way to get here."

Meanwhile, Norway's Frode Sundsdal and Tobias Munthe-Kaas were also looking at their logistics:

"Frode with Tobias were looking for one commercial truck to put the boats inside, and then they could fly here."

Duarte Benavente and Hector Sanz had made the long trips from Portugal and Spain to Lithuania, while Latvia's Uvis Slakteris, Nikita Lijcs and Austria's Rupp Temper were a little nearer.

"Konstantin Ustinov's Russian New Star team are waiting for support from the Lithuanian government to receive permission to enter the country with an entry visa, that hopefully will be resolved next week."

He concluded:

"I couldn't have done this without our sponsors, Vytauto paslaugos and Helvina and without our government and local Council, we wouldn't have stood a chance."

It is an incredible story of one man that will not be beaten down by the odds stacked against him.



BENAVENTE BENEFITS FROM MISTAKES AT THE FRONT AND WINS THE GRAND PRIX OF LITHUANIA

Eventually, Duarte Benavente won the first round of the 2020 UIM F2 World Championship in Kaunas, Lithuania.

In an action packed late season opener, Bimba Sjöholm relinquished her pole to Colin Jelf at the start and the veteran British driver pulled out a lead, however, the three time UIM F2 World Champion dislodged a buoy and was given a one lap penalty, effectively ending his challenge.

Bimba was aware of the situation and sat behind him for she was experiencing a loss of power steering.

The Swede who had taken the stunning pole position and won the match racing of Saturday then dramatically rolled out of the race, while in the lead.

Benavente who was lying in second seized the opportunity and took the win with a jubilant Edgaras Riabko taking the runner-up spot in an event that he had worked so hard to put up.

Uvis Slakteris was equally delighted with third.



UIM F2 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 2
GRAND PRIX OF PORTUGAL Sept 30th & Oct 1st / Oct 3rd & 4th

Nestling on the banks of the River Tejo proved to be an idyllic location to host the Grande Prémio de Vila Velha de Ródão. At the Press Conference hosted by the President of the Câmara Municipal de Vila Velha de Ródão, the President of the Portuguese Powerboat Federation Paulo Ferreira admitted that it had not been easy to host the event, because the town didn't have a huge budget. Yet, with the help of Sponsor "Liqui Moly" and thanks to a partnership with Mercedes the dream of putting on this *Grande Prémio* double header became reality. *"With the help of the F2 drivers we want to make of the River Tejo one of the best racing venues in Europe."*

'Local Hero' was Duarte Benavente, having won the opening round of the 2020 UIM F2 World Championship, the Grand Prix of Lithuania two weeks earlier. When asked how much pressure he was facing at his home Grand Prix he appeared to be perfectly serene: *"No pressure at all; being in Portugal is fun because I love racing with my sponsors watching from the shore and having some of my family members present on-site."*





BENAVENTE WINS THE 2020 UIM F2 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Britain's Owen Jelf took a 'lights to flag' win in the first Portugal Grand Prix on 1st October. Run in gusty conditions, the race was yellow flagged in lap 30 when Jelf's brother Colin crashed out of contention.

The three times UIM F2 World Champion was absolutely fine after the incident, however, his 2020 hopes were dashed.

Duarte Benavente took second, extended his series lead, totalling 35 points. Third was Lithuania's Edgaras Riabko, adding to his second spot in Lithuania, which took him to a total of 27.

The final race on Sunday 4th was the decider, with Benavente, Riabko and Owen Jelf in contention for the UIM gold medal.

Duarte Benavente finally won the 2020 UIM F2 World Championship in Vila Velha de Ródão in convincing style.

The Portuguese driver won from pole position and looked absolutely dominant in his Mercury powered Moore hull.

Edgaras Riabko finished 26.609 seconds behind him and the 15 points for second place were good enough for the Lithuanian to take the UIM Silver Medal.

In third was Owen Jelf. He was relentlessly pursued by Sami Seliö throughout the race and the British and Finnish drivers even had a coming together in the final stage.

Jelf soaked up the massive pressure and in the process claimed a UIM Bronze Medal.

In this dreadful year, it was wonderful to watch such a competitive championship and to witness one of the sport's nice guys claim a deserved world title.

F2 reporting & photos by Powerboat Racing World (John Moore / Chris Davies)



INTERVIEW WITH H2O RACING- AQUABIKE DIRECTOR, RAIMONDO DI SAN GERMANO

After a successful opening round of the 2020 UIM-ABP Aquabike European Championship in Nyiregyhaza-Levelek on the last week-end of August and a second and final act of the championship played out in Elk, Poland on the first week-end of September, Raimondo Di San Germano, H2O Racing Aquabike Director gives us his impressions of the resumption of Aquabike races and explains the difficulties encountered and major challenges met in this unprecedented context of Covid-19

What were the major challenges you met for the organization of these 2 rounds of the 2020 UIM-ABP Aquabike European Continental Championship in Hungary and Poland?

In these last difficult months our main priority was the health and safety of all stakeholders and for this reason the major challenges in the 2 European Rounds were the important changes in the organization of the Events and additional measures implemented to ensure the protection of all involved : limited aggregation opportunities, use of PPE, sanitization, body temperature monitoring, etc.

For this reason, the H2O Racing team prepared a specific "Anti-contagion safety protocol" which was shared with local organizers and implemented in combination with local rules. This gave us the opportunity to organize 2 successful and "Covid free" Grand Prix.

What do you plan to do to re-energize the Aquabike sport and to recover the positive mindset that is so characteristic to this discipline?

I am glad to say that, despite this difficult situation, Aquabike did not lose its own positive mindset: our riders have always been full of energy and ready to start over. We also received positive feedbacks from our local organizers, and we are already planning the next season with the addition of new exciting venues.





*“Aquabike did not
lose its own
positive mindset”*

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to important changes in the organization of the Events and additional measures were implemented to ensure the protection of all involved. According to you, what does the future of Aquabike/ F1 sport look like?

Of course many things will change and we will have to get used to a new way of working as well as a new way of relating to people but I am sure that the enthusiasm for this sport and our drivers' passion for their job will make very soon these new habits natural.

It will be crucial, from our side, to adopt all the measures of our "Anti - Contagion Protocol" for the ground staff to guarantee the safety of all people involved and, talking about this, we will implement it with "sanitization gates" at the entrance of the paddock.

The strength of both F1 and Aquabike is that they don't involve physical contact between the athletes, they take place in open areas and they can also take place without public, or limited public, respecting social distances.

The only "area of uncertainty" at the moment is the possibility to travel between different countries in the world.



THE VIRUS WILL NOT TAKE POWERBOATS OF LATVIA HOSTAGE

The International Ordinary powerboat race held on August 8th in Aizkraukle, Latvia, was attended by 48 powerboating drivers from Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia competing for the Latvian Championship's medals.

“Until now Latvia has done better than other countries implementing epidemiological safety measures. In other countries many powerboat events have been cancelled, that was why there were many participants from our neighbouring countries – Lithuania and Estonia. Sportsmen are eager for competitions and possibilities to demonstrate their achievements. There was a record number of youth class participants – 19 boats.” enthused Water Motorsports Federation of Latvia President, Mr. Atis Slakteris.

Winners of the Aizkraukle Event were E.Lakovica-Lakovica class GT-15, M.Snikers JTN250, K.Soodla GT30, K.Degainis ER48V, K.Upenieks TN550, R.Eglitis SN550, J.Suvorov O500, V.Lacis O250,

L.Badaukis OSY400, U.Slakteris F2, N.Lijcs F4, G.Purins RN2000, I.Millere FR1000.

There are traditionally, two additional Trophies to be won in Aizkraukle, the first being inspired by the second – legend of powerboats of Latvia. The Edvins Voits Trophy was won by Eliza Lakovica-Lakovica, and the Lotars Millers Trophy by Laura Lakovica-Lakovica.

“The Latvian championship Event in Aizkraukle was a real success. I am particularly pleased with the large number of participants in the youth classes, which proves the popularity of powerboat racing with the younger generations and allows us to hope to win European and world medals in the future. We saw fierce competition, full of adrenaline and excitement, with boats reaching high speeds. We are also very happy with Ieva Millere's well-deserved home win.

We are very grateful to the County Municipality of Aizkraukle and its

Mayor Leons Lidums who, together with his team, organized an outstanding County Festival, including a multi-colored cultural and entertainment program. The Powerboat drivers completed the sporting part of the Festival and were able to appreciate, between two races and the resolution of their technical issues, the spirit of the Festival. We regret that there was no European Championship or World Championship in Aizkraukle this year, because the Event proved that this beautiful city can host high level events, which are worth being seen and experienced by an international audience at large.”, said Mr. Atis Slakteris, President of the Water Motorsports Federation of Latvia.





UIM IS GETTING READY FOR THE UTS VIRTUAL YOUTH FESTIVAL 2020

“Do something today for a better tomorrow” – Oscar Wilde.

Five young powerboat drivers and MotoSurf racers have been selected to represent the UIM and its different disciplines – Formula Future, GT15, MotoSurf- at the first ever virtual youth festival finals which will be held on 20-22nd November, in a hybrid event from Bangkok to the world.

Over 60 organisations have come together in solidarity and unity under the Olympic, Paralympic and Special Olympics values.

Together these organisations will promote inclusion, health, equality, non-discrimination and peace.

The festival includes youth of all abilities, youth from migrant and refugee backgrounds, youth from international federations and those with different physical and mental abilities. The participating organisations share a common vision, to provide opportunity by working with and for the youth, giving them autonomy and hope.

Leaders of sport from IOC President Thomas Bach, IPC President Andrew Parsons, Special Olympics CEO Mary Davis and former United Nations General Secretary Ban Ki Moon amongst so many visionary leaders, have pledged their support towards this unique first ever world youth festival.



The festival will see the youth competing in different fun challenges, where no passports or visas are needed on this virtual platform where the hub is Bangkok, Thailand.

Those who stand on the podium, will be a part of the virtual medal ceremonies.

The world will come together for a celebratory party, focusing on the youth and where the world leaders will welcome them all. Performances by the youth will set our hearts alight under the #onespiritoneheart slogan.

This year the pandemic prevented youth worldwide from attending sport events, so the festival will bring the sport to the youth.

Education is paramount for giving the youth tools, knowledge and skills that will

help them shape their future. The Education Program will include inspirational speakers from the international sport community, to the athlete champions themselves.

Each organisation will have their own youth ambassadors representing their sport and organisation, inspiring the youth by sharing their stories, dreams and hopes through the power of sports.

This festival is for You, for the Youth. We invite you to follow your dreams, keep your eyes on the stars and your feet on the ground. Know that you can achieve anything you put your mind too.

Let's come together to celebrate life and be "UNITED THROUGH SPORTS" ...!!