

R/CU Racing Rules - An Overview

by Don Mock

Clockwise

R/C Unlimited hydros race under rules very similar to the full size boats. The one obvious difference is their direction around the race course. R/C hydros travel "clockwise" (opposite of the real boats). The engines in the models turn their propellers counter-clockwise causing the boats to "prop walk" to the left making it easier for them to make right hand turns.

Pit-Person

As the drivers head to the "driver's stand" you will notice that they each have another person with them. This required "pit person" serves as a second set of eyes for the driver, informing them of hazards on the race course, number of laps completed and other information.

Start of a Heat

When a heat is about to start you'll hear the race referee announce to the drivers, "You are on the clock." This means the three minute period before the start has begun. The racers have 2 1/2 minutes to get their boats started and launched. All boats must be up and running at the 30 second mark before the start. Any boat launched or not on a plane under 30 seconds is ineligible to race.

During this 3 minutes, you'll see the boats milling around the course attempting to put themselves in position to hit the starting line at full speed as the clock hits zero. The boats are allowed to "cut" the course during the 3 minutes but only from the front straight-away to the back-stretch. This rule helps avoid a possible head-on collision in the infield. At the 5 second mark before the start, any boat cutting the course will be assessed a one lap penalty. Once the hydros round the right hand turn heading for the start, they must maintain their lanes from the exit bouy to the start line. A one lap penalty goes to any boat that "jumps the gun".

Racing

Racing infractions occur when a boat misses a bouy or cuts off another boat. A boat is allowed to touch a bouy on the outside, but if more than 50% of the boat goes over the top of a bouy, a lap penalty will be assessed. The hydroplanes must have at least a five boat-length lead when taking over the lane from another boat. Boats are to maintain a parallel course around the bouys and must be driven in a safe and controlled manner. Unlike the full size unlimiteds, the models keep racing if there is an accident or crash. The race will only be stopped if, in the opinion of the referee, the debris on the course is a hazard to the remaining

boats. After the course is cleared, the heat will be re-run. Any boat(s) that was the cause of the stoppage of the heat is ineligible to re-start.

The "sacred" rule in R/C hydro racing is to NOT hit a dead boat. When a boat crashes or stops on the race course, the referee will announce the "dead boat" along with its location. The drivers are to, at all costs, avoid the dead boat. Hitting a called dead boat carries the stiffest penalty; disqualification for the rest of the day and a \$75 fine.

Pit Area

The pit area is arranged so all drivers can set up their equipment, which includes a table, tool boxes, spare parts, etc. and have clear access to the launching area. The "Hot Pits" are restricted and only drivers, pit crews and race officials are allowed. The outer "cold pits" are set up for the teams to work on their boats or set up a picnic area. The "cold pits" are usually open to spectators who are invited to come in any time to view the race boats up close.

The Race Course

The courses used by R/CU vary in size (depending on the site) from 285 to 400 feet long straightaways and 60 to 120 feet diameter turns. The course is marked by 16 bouys. The entrance and exit bouys to the turns are orange and yellow, and the straightaway and turn bouys are orange. The start-finish bouy is orange and white. R/CU race formats call for either five-lap or three-lap "sprint" preliminary heats. Consolation and final heats are always five laps.
