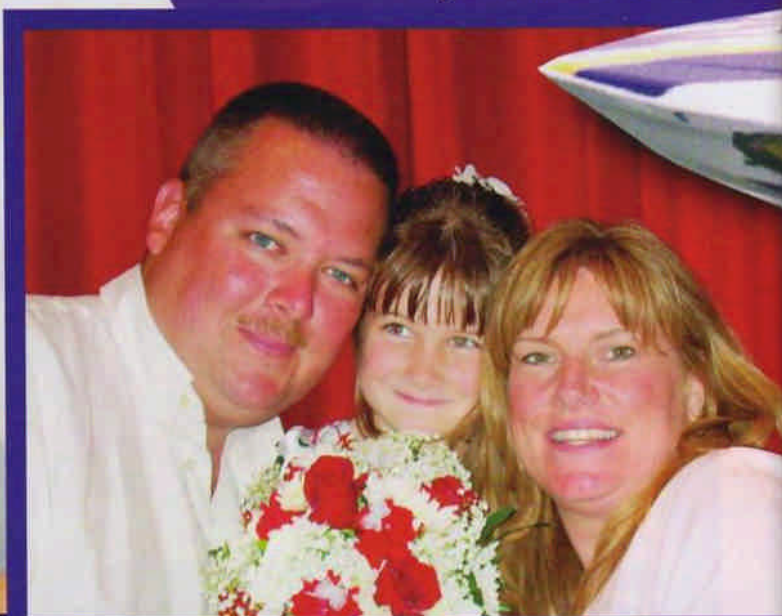
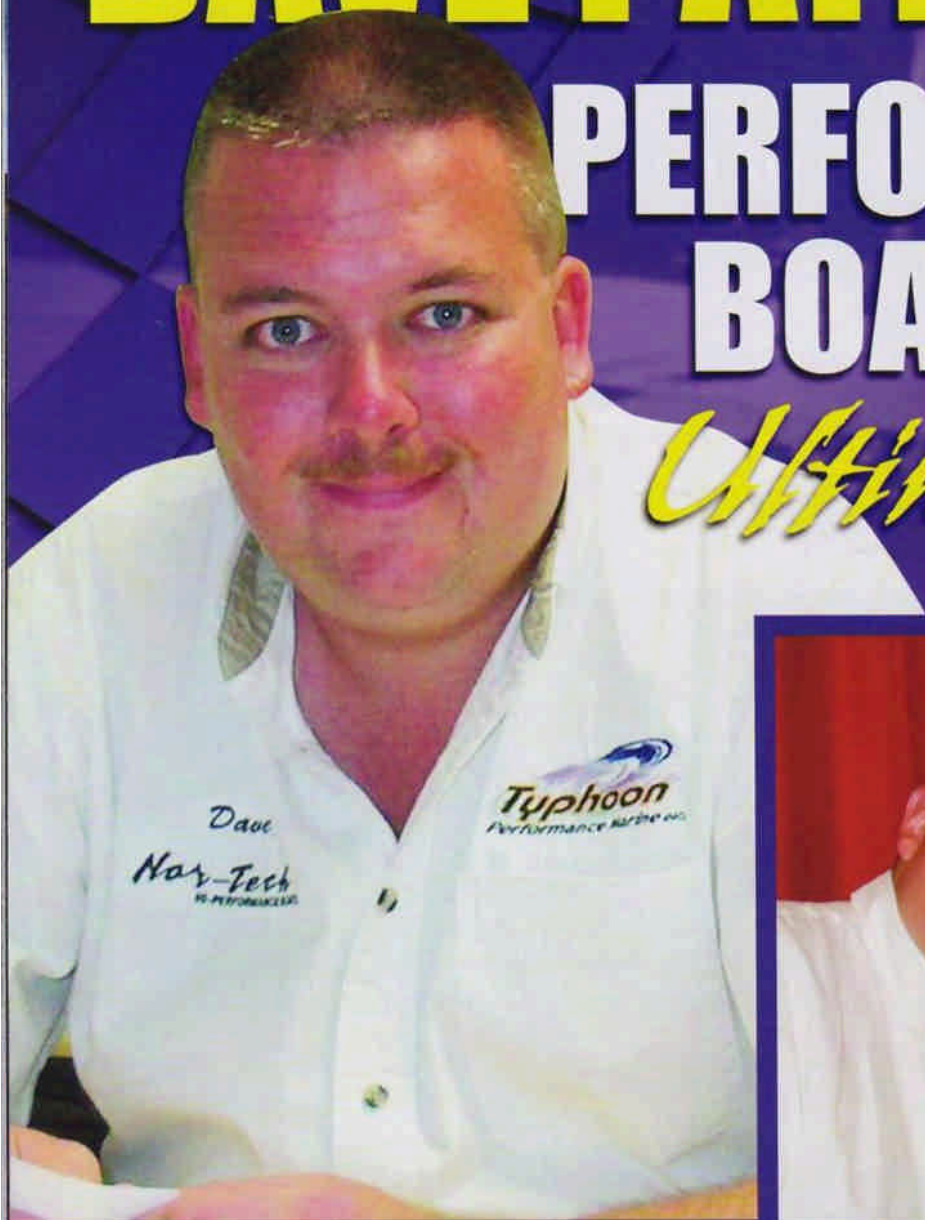


DAVE PATNAUDE

PERFORMANCE BOATING'S

Ultimate Fan

By Richard Crowder



His name doesn't jump off the tip of many tongues, when talk centers on longtime or "Hall of Fame" poker runners, or the owners of the biggest, fastest, or sexiest high performance boats, or even famous or not so famous offshore racers. But the soft spoken, determined, and to some, outspoken, Dave Patnaude, co-founder, owner, and President of the New Jersey Performance Powerboat Club (NJPPC), is a voice to be reckoned with and to be attentive to when considering the future and long term viability of our beloved

past-time of high performance boating.

You see, Dave is a fanatic. He is a fanatic about high performance boating - fanatic about having fun - and most of all, fanatic about safety when combining boating and fun. It is this fanaticism that has driven Dave to create and to steer the NJPPC into one of the largest and most respected high performance boating organizations in the country.

Born and raised in Union, NJ, Dave's love of the sport began at seven years old when he and his dad Ray, an avid offshore racing fan, went to the Point Pleasant (NJ) Benihana Offshore Grand Prix in 1976.

By 1980, Ray had become a member of the New Jersey Offshore Powerboat Racing Association (NJOPRA), basically a local enthusiasts club, but officially the sanctioning body for APBA racing in the area. Dave crewed for father Ray on the family's 26 Carver that was a patrol boat for the Benihana Grand Prix that year.

By 1987, father Ray had become Racecom Director for NJOPRA, putting him in charge of all on-water activities associated with racing, including course layout and management plus all safety aspects including turn, rescue, tow, patrol, and medical boats. Dave volunteered

L-r: Dave Patnaude with daughter Brianna at the NJPPC Wave Runner Poker Run breakfast. Dave Patnaude making a spectacle of himself at Shore Dreams Auction, 2006. Dave with his dirt bike, 1982.



Dave Patnaude in his 37 Outerlimits. Opposite page l-r: Dave Patnaude behind the desk at Typhoon Performance Marine. Dave and Kelly Patnaude with daughter Brianna at her dance recital.

himself that year for the first time at eighteen years old in his 18 foot Regal. By 1990, Dave purchased his first performance boat, a brand new 22 Scarab with a 350 MPI/Bravo. Spending his summers at a rented shore house at Ortle Beach on Jersey Shore (the popular vacation area stretching from Sandy Hook to Cape May), the twenty year old Dave chased around Barnegat Bay in his new toy. He frequented his favorite haunts like the Water's Edge Restaurant in Bayville, NJ and the Lobster Shanty in Point Pleasant.

"Jersey Shore was then, and still is, a real hotbed of performance boating"

recalls Dave. "The Benihana Offshore Grand Prix made the area very well known and a lot of racing personalities such as Billy Martin of 'Bounty Hunter' and Frank Lach of the 35 Cigarette Mistress 'Wild Turkey' all boated there.

There were great high performance dealers there too. In the '80's and '90's there was Ocean Beach Marina, one of the world's largest Scarab dealers. There was Arnold D'Ambrosia, one of the very first Cigarette dealers for Don Aronow," remembers Dave.

In the early '80's, a second boating club cum sanctioning body, the Barnegat Bay

Powerboat Racing Association, handled all racing on Barnegat Bay for the APBA and the National Powerboat Association, while the NJOPRA still sanctioned local ocean racing such as the Grand Prix. So in the early '90's, Dave volunteered as a patrol boat for both associations, working three to four races per year. (Ed. Note: The National Powerboat Association was later resurrected by Billy Frenz for his New York based poker runs.)

In 1993, Dave moved up to a 23 Velocity with a 502 and in 1996, a used 31 Scarab with twin 502's to which Dave added B & M 174 blowers. He also got

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married in 1996. His new wife Kelly encouraged Dave to get more involved with the local boating associations even though the racing part of it appeared rife with discontent, on the basis that she felt he could make a difference. Dave became a director of NJOPRA and tried to steer the club of boating enthusiasts to embrace more performance powerboat owner and fun-focused on-water events as opposed to being strictly a once or twice per year race oriented club.

As a result, in 1998, Dave produced his first two poker runs through NJOPRA. The first one was tied in with the New Jersey Offshore Grand Prix when 37 boats left Captain's Inn in Forked River, NJ and ran from Barnegat Bay, out the inlet, north to Shark River Inlet, then to Manisquan Inlet. "We learned a lot from this first event," says Dave. "In retrospect, one of the funniest things was that the Shark River Inlet card boat became surrounded by USCG and State Police boats, mistakenly thinking that it was handing out packets of drugs to the performance boats stopping alongside to pick up a card! When we finally displayed the card hands that night, they were simply spectacular because in our mad last-minute scramble the night before, we had neglected to shuffle the new deck of cards."

That first poker run was so much fun, Dave convinced the club to do a second run that year. Thus was born the first Atlantic City Overnight Run in September, 1998, with seventeen boats participating and Trump Marina Hotel and Casino as the overnight stop. But it was an uphill battle with the club and seeing what could be accomplished with fun and family on the water, Dave, along with



Dave Patnaude and Rick Engstrom presenting Bob Christie with the Fastest V Hull award at Radar Shoot-Out, 2002.

his dad Ray, plus friend Bob Cleveland, all three being directors of NJOPRA, along with poker run participant Rick Engstrom, broke away and formed the New Jersey Performance Powerboat Club (NJPPC) in the spring of 1999. Dave was owner and President of the new club.

Since its inception, the club's mission has been, "A non-profit club that focuses on providing our members exciting events including top quality poker runs." A Planning Committee of fifteen members representing every demographic of the club including age, sex, boat type and size, and economic situation has always made the decisions from the get-go. The following principles have always been followed religiously:

- Quality of the event, not the size of the event
- No profit motive – always give the best bang for the buck
- No one sponsor or one person will have the controlling say
- We will always be financially independent and not dependent on anyone

- Solicit both positive and negative feedback
- Ensure that all boaters are thought of when planning events (large or small)
- The Planning Committee always solicits and acts on group decisions

With this in mind, they used their collective decades of racing background involving organizing and producing races plus their knowledge of the principles of racing and especially of the safety requirements of racing to organize the club's first poker run. In fact, the club produced three poker runs that first year: Point Pleasant to Weehawken, NJ (a suburb of New York City); the Barnegat Bay run; and the Atlantic City Overnighter. Dave was now smitten with his new found fun on the water and was out of racing entirely.

By 2000, Dave had a 37 Outerlimits "Fra Diablo" with Typhoon Marine 600 EFI's with #4 Speedmasters and participated in his own events plus many other poker runs on the circuit. Dave and the Planning Committee of NJPPC also added radar shootouts to their events, but shut these down in 2003 for fear of potential accidents as speeds increased dramatically. Other club members had become concerned with poker run safety issues also, and in 2002, when member Chuck Sprague "aka Moses" approached Dave with the idea of setting out some simple safety guidelines like those in racing, the two of them, in Dave's words, "Put their heads together and developed 'The Poker Run Ten Commandments.' These rules were developed along the lines of racing rules, of APBA, and of what we had gleaned from other poker run organizations such as APRA and Poker Runs America."

L-r: Dave Patnaude with Manoc Safety Team at the Atlantic City Poker Run, 1998. Dave's 23' Regal patrol boat, at the 1985 races.





L-r: Dave Patnaude and Bob Cleveland present the 2nd Place trophy to Candy Kennedy, at the first Atlantic City Poker Run in September, 1998. Dave Patnaude with Jim Ross of Sunseeker at the Atlantic City Boat Show.

In 2004, to fill the void left by the absence of radar shootouts, Dave and the Planning Committee of NJPPC resurrected a long established event called "Day On The Bay" on Barnegat Bay that had been cancelled by the previous organizers in 2002. With permission of the founders, NJPPC changed the name to "Shore Dreams for Kids" and for the past three years, club members have donated their time, boats, fuel and all expenses to take special needs children and adults, and Special Olympic competitors and chaperones for high performance boat rides. Entertainment and a carnival highlight the day's event on shore.

All the while Dave had been devoting and donating his spare time to first racing and then the NJPPC, he had been earning a living in corporate America's food industry as a sales & marketing executive. In 2001, he became close friends with Bob Christie, that year's radar shootout's winning V-bottom entry. Bob was looking to retire from his corporate America CEO post and asked Dave to help him find a suitable location for a high performance boat business. Dave did, and when Typhoon Performance Marine in Tom's River, NJ was founded, Bob once again went to Dave to help find a suitable manager. When one couldn't be found, Dave said, "What about me?" The deal was done, and in Dave's words, "From a little kid dreaming of one day maybe getting to ride in one of these boats, now I was V.P. Sales & Marketing for a high performance dealership." By its second year, Typhoon Performance Marine offered Donzi, NorTech, Cigarette, and Concept and did in excess of \$7 million in sales.

It was totally exciting but all the travel to shows, meetings, races, and poker runs took a toll on family time, especially with a brand new daughter in his life. When Essex Credit came a courting, Dave left

POKER RUN SAFETY TEAMS WHO, WHAT, HOW, WHERE, WHEN AND WHY?

Safety Teams are the most important part of any Poker Run event. As an organizer this story will help you better understand how to build an effective safety team, or get the most from the team you've already got. As an attendee, it will help you to better understand the role of safety teams and what you should look for at the poker run events you chose to attend.

Who should be members of a Safety Team?

The members of a safety team should at least be Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certified. I would strongly recommend having Safety Team members that are Emergency Medical Technician • Paramedic (EMT-P) trained. Paramedics are more qualified to administer advanced emergency care. They are able to recognize, assess, and manage medical emergencies under direction of a physician. Paramedics are able to provide pre-hospital emergency care that depending on the severity of the situation could be the difference between life and death. You can visit www.nremt.org to help find EMT's that are located near you.

Since our powerboat poker runs occur on the water, it is also highly recommended that there be a few professional, well trained and equipped rescue dive team members that should participate as members of the safety team as well. Most municipalities that are located near bays, lakes or rivers have Rescue Dive Teams as part of their local fire departments.

What should a Safety Team have with them?

A Safety Team should bring a considerable amount of Safety gear with them. Just some of the items that should be packed onboard Safety Team boats include: Iron Duck BASE Board Backboards, Bandages & Dressings, Immobilization Collars, Head Immobilization Splints, Vital Sign Monitors, Trauma Bags and Defibrillators. This is just a recommended minimum list. There is a lot more gear that can be brought along depending on storage space in the boats.

Rescue Divers should bring everything that they would need including scuba gear, tanks and any additional equipment they deem necessary.

Safety Team members should also have several methods of communication with them including vhf radios, private bands radios and cell or Nextel phones.

How do you get Paramedics / Rescue Divers to be members of a Safety Team?

The obvious answer always is "to pay them for their services." Unfortunately a lot of poker runs around the country have limited budgets. They do not generate huge profits for the organizers so they can afford to pay for Safety Team members for their services. So what is a boat club to do?

The answer is to solicit people to volunteer their time. Most boat clubs only produce a few events a year. Why would someone want to volunteer their time? For Paramedics that do not own a boat or are into boating normally,

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what could be more exciting on a summer day than spending a day on the water boating in a performance powerboat during a poker run? The excitement factor is huge!

The poker run organizer should definitely pick up all meals and hotels (if needed) for the members of the safety team while they are attending the event.

Where should members of the Safety Team be deployed?

Members of the Safety Team should be deployed strategically throughout the poker run. For instance, if there are two groups in a poker run there should be one safety team per group. Each safety team should consist of at least one paramedic and one rescue diver. Also look to place them on a boat near the back of the group so that if there was an emergency, they will always be coming up on it instead of having to turn around and back track.

Whose boat should they be deployed on? I would always recommend that they be placed on some of the poker run organizer's boats are participants that are well known by the organizers and have attended the event several times before.

If you have a problem finding boats to deploy safety team members on, consider offering those poker run participants a few free poker hands for helping out.

When should members of the Safety Team be deployed?

There should always be a safety team present whenever there is an organized poker run event. Even if there are only a few dozen boats involved in the event it only takes one boat to

Dave Patnaude in his 2004 36 Concept, as a medical boat for an offshore race in 2005.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL J. COPPOLA 2005

have a potential emergency.

Why should you deploy the members of the Safety Team?

Because even some of the safest, most well run and organized poker runs still need to have Safety Teams present at their events. You can take as many precautions possible but an emergency situation is still only one human error or mechanical failure away. We all hope for safe events but if there is an emergency, you want to be prepared with having an effective Safety Team on hand.

If you have any additional questions about poker run safety teams, please feel free to contact Dave at this e-mail address:

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Bob and became V.P. / Area Manager of Marine Financing for Essex Credit, one of the largest marine financing companies in the country, a division of Bank of the West. Dave has since been promoted and is now a Regional V.P. in charge of almost half the country. Dave changed his boating lifestyle too to a more family-oriented 2004, 36 foot Concept Center Console with twin Mercury Optimax 250 outboards.

But NJPPC still occupies a hefty portion of Dave's life. "We are always focused on continuous improvements," he says. "We must look at new exciting events to keep members happy and involved with fun and excitement and in a safe way. We have gone way up in size of boats since our club started but the core of

our sport will always depend on the entry level, single engine, small performance boater. We have to remember to cater to them and we need to focus on them again." To this end, the club has established a new fourth level group for all of its events this year – a 45mph group for "single engine or smaller twin engine boats...perfect for those performance boaters that thought their boat was too small or not fast enough to participate in a poker run."

The NJPPC now has over 200 members representing boats from 18 to 50 feet with thirty local and national sponsors. This year it will produce nine on-the-water and social events including the brand new "Jet Ski Poker Run" Saturday June 9th. "It's been a lot of work but it's

been a lot of fun," says Dave. "The response and help from the members make it all worthwhile. Hopefully we'll still be doing this ten years from now and performance boating will still be flourishing because we've all been able to keep it safe and keep it fun. We might be able to do that if all event organizers were to use strict safety guidelines so that everyone could have a good time, safely. But no matter how safety conscious we all are, we still cannot control two things – human error or mechanical failure. Still, we have to be seen as doing our outmost to control both if our sport is to flourish."

To learn more about NJ Performance Powerboat Club and their events visit www.njppc.com 🌟