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Tres Sietes TEQUILA SLAMMER

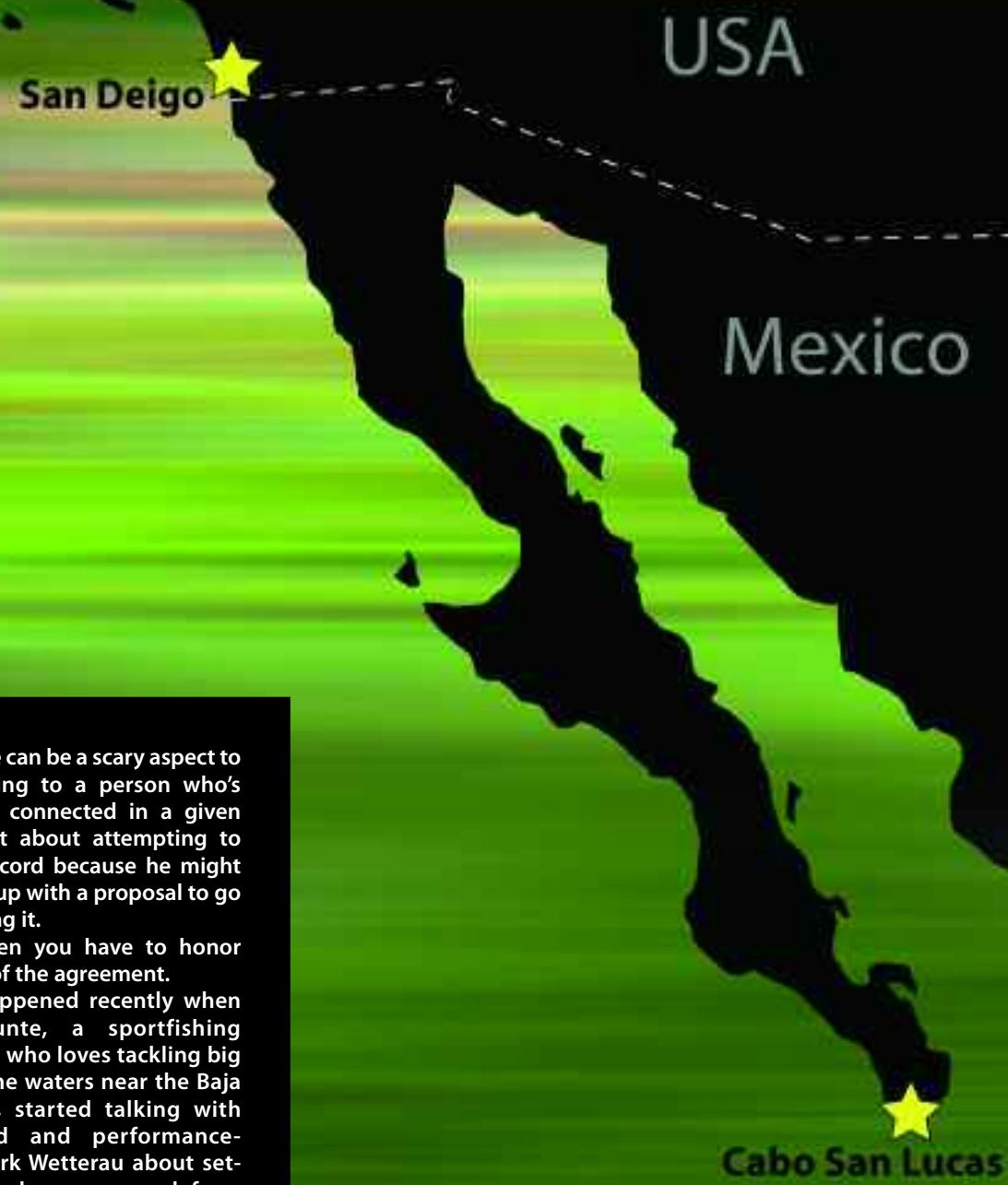


Scot Conrad and Bob Russell are attempting to set an endurance record from San Diego to Cabo San Lucas in Russell's OuterLimits 50' catamaran, *Tres Sietes Tequila*. And that may just be the beginning.

By Eric Colby



There can be a scary aspect to talking to a person who's well connected in a given motorsport about attempting to break a record because he might just come up with a proposal to go about doing it. And then you have to honor your side of the agreement. This happened recently when Brady Bunte, a sportfishing enthusiast who loves tackling big game in the waters near the Baja Peninsula, started talking with his friend and performance-boater Mark Wetterau about setting an endurance record from San Diego to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. No one's ever attempted to cover the approximate 830-mile distance in a performance boat, but Wetterau knew the guy to call, noted offshore racer and poker runner Scot Conrad. "Once you get out there and have no support for such a long run and hoping for good weather, that's what makes it so interesting to try to do it," explained Conrad. Conrad made some calls and got in



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touch with Bunte, who had originally planned to take at least a year planning the event. Then he saw what Conrad had put together in such a short time frame. "I think he was blown away when I came back to him with what we proposed," said Conrad.

The first call Conrad made was to another well-known practitioner of high speed on the water, Bob Russell. "He has the right equipment, the capability and desire to go do stuff like this," said Conrad. "He's always game."

In terms of "equipment," Russell owns the first 50' cat OuterLimits Powerboats of Bristol, R.I., ever built. The boat will be rigged at Strut Marine, a high performance marine facility in Huntington Beach, Calif. Strut Marine's VP Tommy Gaut agreed to help the team install fresh power and rig the boat for the San Diego-to-Cabo run and provide some sponsorship along with Bunte's new product Tres Sietes 777 Tequila. The boat will be called the Tres Sietes and bear the number 777 in a black and silver decal wrap for the event. Strut Marine will also have signage on the boat. Bunte also owns Cabo Foods, which makes gourmet tortilla chips, but his primary business is Trust One Mortgage Company in Irvine, Calif. In late September, Bunte was still in the pre-launch mode for the tequila and he hoped to have the drink ready for the retail market by the date of the run. Conrad is also talking with Optima Batteries and is open to any additional parties interested in providing support for the event.

Much of the cost will go towards logistics. The total distance of the run is approximately 850 miles and at the speeds that Russell and Conrad plan to run, the best they can hope for is a range of about 400 to 500 miles. That means having to stage two large vessels offshore for a re-fueling rendezvous. Most likely, the Terrible Herbst crew, Troy, Tim and Ed of Catalina Ski Race and off-road racing fame will help with support yachts and possible aircraft. The OuterLimits 50's fuel capacity will be increased and it will have four tanks

totaling 550 gallons. The crew will have four pumping systems at the ready and Conrad estimates it will take about a half hour to completely fill the tanks. Then the team will strap in and hope to finish the run under daylight conditions.

Hoping to take advantage of the motorsports media throng that will be in Cabo San Lucas for the Baja 1000 off-road race, the Tres Sietes team wants to make the run within a couple-day window of November 17, the start of the vehicle event. "The biggest challenge is fuel and making it under daylight," explained Bunte. "If we can make it under daylight, we're hoping that this turns into a big event." For that reason, they may leave before full daylight and drive into the improving conditions. Seas are usually calmer in early morning with winds building as the day goes on.

In late September, the boat was still at Lake Cumberland Marine in Kentucky where Mark Frost from Strut Marine and Russell's chief mechanic Brady Cambern were meeting to prep the boat to be taken by trailer to Strut's facility in Huntington Beach. The boat was originally rigged with some 1,500-hp over-head cam Millenium Motors with four valves per cylinder that made their power on pump gas. It will be re-rigged with milder power, which will be linked to the BPM surface drives. Since the drives are not articulating the boat is steered by rudder.

The fastest speed Russell has seen in the boat is 186 mph. He and Conrad will both need to go easy with their throttle hands to get the most fuel economy out of the motors. They're planning to try to average around 100 to 105 mph when they're in open water, and intend to set the record in approximately 10 hours. "Our intent is to try

to run 100 because it gives the motors the chance to run as close to one mile per gallon as possible," said Conrad. Once the motors for the run were selected, the Strut Marine Team planned to put the motors on the dyno at the Strut Marine shop to determine where in the fuel curve they were most efficient and then the gear ratio and propeller selection will be made. "You don't want to run out of fuel," laughed Russell. "You can break something and say oh well, but running out of fuel, you just look bad." Because Conrad used to be involved with Hering Propellers, the team will use wheels from the well-known performance company.

Because the SCS gearboxes are engineered to allow easy gear swaps, the team can decide on a gear ratio as late as the morning of the run. Russell said he will have five sets of gears in the support truck and that the team will do plenty of in-water testing. "We really want this to work," he said. "We're not going to go out there not prepared at all."

After the stop, if the boat has plenty of fuel on board, the boat is running right and the conditions are good, look for the team to pick up the pace. "We don't want to set a record that someone's going to break tomorrow," said Russell. "We want to put something out there that's going to stick around."

The boat has twin helms and centrally positioned shifts and throttles so Russell and Conrad can take turns sharing the throttling and driving duties. Also on board will be Gaut, Bunte and



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Strut Marine staff member and much of their responsibilities will be on keeping the team on as short a course as possible. The boat has a gps/chartplotter and a compass on board and the team will have redundant systems, plus paper charts just to be sure.

The 50' cat seats a total of six in full racing harnesses in the enclosed cockpit. All team members will be in racing lifejackets and helmets with an intercom communication system. Team members will have Emergency Position Indicator Beacons. There is an escape hatch in the center of the tunnel should the boat flip. Historically, the Pacific Ocean is calmest in May or October, so November should still give him and Russell the chance to find some decent conditions.

Even if the weather is less than perfect, Conrad and Russell have the offshore racing experience racing to contend with it. Conrad competed for 15 years, last teaming with Ken Bowen in the famous Skater 399 V-bottom, Spiderman, winning multiple races and a Super Vee world championship in 2005 and 2006. Prior to that he ran the Donzi factory entry in Super Vee and the 42' Fountain, Team Ettore, with Jim Richardson. One of the first boats he

Skater, Explosive, with John Pace, in the Pacific Offshore Power Boat Racing Association series in the mid-1990s and Conrad campaigned a 42' Fountain in Factory II class during they heyday of that class.

Conrad has also been a longtime dealer of high-speed boats with his company SC Performance. He also bought Spectre Powerboats and built those high-performance catamarans before current owners Frisini Motorsports took over.

Russell, who hails from Duval, Wash., is known for going fast in one brand of boat, OuterLimits, primarily because he is a stockholder in the company and is good friends with OuterLimits CEO Mike Fiore. He first made headlines setting kilo speed records and winning world championships in Russell's 37' OuterLimits Stiletto called Wild Child. After that, he and Fiore raced different OuterLimits 42 GTXs, one owned by Russell, the other by Fiore at the offshore world championships in Key West in 2001 and 2002. They also went down to Fountain Powerboats backyard and set a Super Vee kilo record of 147 mph in a pleasureboat on the Pamlico River. On the endurance side of things, Russell said the longest run he has made was about 250 miles from Alaska to the San Juan Islands near Seattle.

Russell owns a rock quarry and construction company, which explains why the word "rock" is in the name of so many of his boats.

He used to race Super Stock circle-track cars and just sold them. To prepare for the physical toll that the record attempt will take,

the 50-year-old is riding his dirt bikes every weekend.

As the title sponsor, Bunte said he may take some wheel time, admitting, however, that he is the "weak link in the boat." Most of his on-water time is spent in his 61' Viking sportfishing boat, El Gallo, and he has won more than \$1 million in sportfishing tournaments throughout the country. He has made the run from San Diego to Cabo San Lucas many times, but not at the speeds his team hopes to run.

The team is working with TV networks including Speed channel hoping for coverage and even a documentary on the preparation for the run. Bunte plans to have live streaming video on board and gps so you can follow the progress of the boat in real time on the web. Conrad is also negotiating with the American Power Boat Association and to certify the record here and with the Union Internationale Motonautique to ensure that it's ratified on a worldwide level.

If the team is successful, the boat will be shrink-wrapped and towed by a large yacht back to Strut Marine's facility in Huntington Beach. Then Russell and Conrad are looking at breaking the Los Angeles to San Francisco. "I've always had a desire to break that run," said Conrad. "If I could do that without a fuel stop, I'd love to try to set that record." Strut's Gaut said his company wants to keep going. So then it will be all up to Bunte. Once something like this gets rolling it's hard to stop.



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