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## Harbor Beach Maritime Festival Attracts Champion Racers

Chris and Rachel MacClugage to Race in Harbor Beach!

By Janis Stein

MACC Racing owners, Chris and Rachel MacClugage, are gearing up for Round 7 and 8 of the Hydro-Turf APBA Watercross National Tour, hosted in Harbor Beach, Michigan. Traveling from Lake Havasu City, Arizona, for Chris and Rachel MacClugage, racing in Harbor Beach will be a first experience, but with their lengthy list of achievements, these racers are anything but novices.

Career highlights for Chris include 13-Time World Champion, 12-Time National Champion, 2-Time Thailand Kings Cup Champion, 2-Time Japanese Champion, Offshore Guadeloupe Champion, and 2-Time European Indoor Champion. And he's just getting warmed up.

Chris grew up in Florida and began racing at the age of 13. By 18, he moved to California where he spent the next 10 years enhancing his skills and racking up trophies. By 1998, he signed a contract and raced with Kawasaki for another eight years, proving his proficiency on the water and winning one championship after the other.

As if he wasn't busy enough, in 2005, in the spirit of entrepreneurialism, Chris started his own on-line business, MACC Racing ([www.maccracing.com](http://www.maccracing.com)), building skis and selling parts. "I started my own business, and I started racing for myself. At MACC Racing, we sell some of our own parts and other companies' parts, and we work on watercraft as well. At the same time, I picked up Monster Energy as a sponsorship. They've been helping me make it to the races, and they've been great!"

Chris also raced for an Austrian company, Hydrospace Inc., where he brought home yet another championship. Some might have grown complacent with all these wins. Not so for Chris – he's still hungry.

The streak for number 18 continues with Chris making waves on the National Tour. "I'm back with Yamaha after about 15 years. They're helping us out with a couple of skis and parts. In Harbor Beach, I'll be racing a Yamaha FZ-R in the Pro Runabout Stock Class. It's been really great this year; we've been winning a lot of races for Yamaha, Monster Energy and MACC Racing."

Though the Yamaha FZ-R is a sit-down style, Chris prefers to stand while racing. "Some people sit, but I can ride it more aggressively standing; I have more control standing."

Where does Chris get the drive and determination to keep up with his rigorous schedule? Parents, Richard and Helen MacClugage, may have had a bit to do with it. "My parents are really supportive. My inspiration comes from the work ethic that my dad instilled in me when I was younger. He spent his money, that he worked hard, for so I could race. I need to work hard for it as well."

Though an accomplished racer, Chris takes little for granted. "I practice hard and train hard and I never give up. My dad taught me that never-give-up attitude, and it makes sense. You don't know what position other riders ran or if they maybe made a mistake on the track. A lot of times people miss a buoy, and you don't know they missed it. If you give up, you could sacrifice a position when you should have been racing hard until the checkered flag. I love the challenge. It's something I've done my whole life and really enjoy."

Chris' wife, Rachel, will be traveling with Chris from Arizona to the Michigan event and, while she plans on supporting Chris in his endeavors, it's no secret she has her own agenda.

"My wife races, and she's leading the points in the women's class," says Chris. "I admire my wife because she helps me out a lot and puts up with me, and she's also an excellent racer. She is so supportive and, at the same time, she's also kicking butt in her class. She is equally talented."

Naturally, it was their combined love of watercross that brought the couple together in the first place. "I was over at a race in Portugal, and Rachel's dad is a tech inspector. He brought his daughter to the race, and I met Rachel. We got married a year later."

Rachel hales from an area near East Yorkshire, England, and like Chris, her love for the sport began in her childhood. "I started jet skiing when I was seven years old, and I began racing when I was 14 in England and Europe," explains Rachel.

England's requirements at the time mandated racers needed to be a minimum of 14 years old. For Rachel, 14 didn't come soon enough. "I was more than eager to race. You qualify through the position you finish over the year in England and through Europe. I was one of the top four girls that qualified through the Europeans to race in the World Finals." And so it was that Rachel first raced at the World Finals at the age of 15.

As Rachel gained experience with each race, she patterned her efforts after her role model, Tera Laho, a lady racer with an impressive ability Rachel hoped to mimic. "When I was a young girl and first came over for the World Finals, I was in such admiration of Tera Laho, because she was such a talented rider. It didn't matter where she started in the pack or even if she got a bad start, she would come through and still win the race. She was a very strong racer."

Though Rachel enjoyed racing, by the time she turned 19, the costs and the time commitment proved too much. In 1999, Rachel stopped racing to dedicate her time to studying.

All that changed after she met Chris. "I started dating my husband and, after we got married, Chris suggested I race again. So I did, and here I am," says Rachel.

Here she is indeed. In 2008, Rachel earned third place at the APBA Nationals in the Pro Women's Ski, and her most recent accomplishment includes the coveted 2009 Mark Hahn National Offshore Champion.

The Mark Hahn is a 300-mile endurance race. "My teammate was Jordan McLean. The race was a very good learning experience. I would do four laps, and then he would do four laps, but the laps were pretty big, and the weather was bad. It was hard work – 300 miles never felt so long," explains Rachel.

Those wins come with hard training.

Rachel and Chris train together when they can in a small home gym. "We do the VersaClimber, and a lot of cardio work. We got to kickboxing class as well, and we do a lot of running," says Rachel. The MacClugage's run with the Arizona desert under their feet, racking up two to three miles if it's a short run or as many as four or five if time permits. "There's times when I wake up in the morning, and it's six o'clock, and it's already warm out here. And you don't want to go run in the desert. Chris pushes me and reminds me what it takes. When you win the race and it all comes together, you feel like you've achieved something."

While Rachel enjoys leading the pack, what she loves more is the team effort that helped put her there.

"When you put so much energy into training and being able to run that bit further and becoming healthier, you want to succeed. But it's not just about me, the individual racer. It's a team effort. Chris puts a lot of time into making sure the skis are in the best performance. When I finish and see Chris with a big smile on his face and he's happy that I've done well, all the training has paid off. All the hard work, the training, the time going back and forth to the lake, making sure the skis are in top performance...everything comes together, and when you finish the race and the people who helped you are there to meet you, you feel like you've won it for everyone."

Those victories never come easy. "It's not as easy as it looks. Sometimes riders aren't so nice. It's tough sometimes; your race can be determined by another rider's aggression on the course."

To the young girl watching from the Harbor Beach pier and dreaming of following in Rachel's footsteps, Rachel says this, "Go for it! Any girl interested should try it, and she might find she really enjoys jet skiing. When you tour, you get to travel and meet so many fantastic people. It keeps you fit and it's enjoyable. You don't have to do tours either; just race in your local area and enjoy it. I think it's good for young people to focus on something positive."

While the race site in Harbor Beach will host Round 7 and 8 of the National Tour, the city's Maritime Festival is also home to the Can-Am Cup race on Lake Huron, and a more unofficial rivalry between the two countries takes place on land in the form of street hockey on Friday night.

"We're looking forward to coming to Harbor Beach and to see a different part of the country. I saw pictures last year, and the lake looked fairly calm. But it's one of the Great lakes, and I believe if there's some wind, there could be some waves. I'm also definitely bringing my hockey gear!" says Chris MacClugage.

"We're both really happy and feel fortunate we can take part in the National Tour. We're really looking forward to coming to Michigan!" adds Rachel.

At the Harbor Beach event, spectators will be watching number 30, Rachel MacClugage. Rachel will be racing a Hydrospace Benelli, and with her can-do attitude, it's no wonder she's a favorite.

And who will Rachel's eye be on? "The rider I admire most is my husband, Chris MacClugage. There is no other rider in the world who is more versatile. He can race any make or model jet ski and win. Chris is truly amazing!"

*The Lakeshore Guardian welcomes the APBA National Tour to Harbor Beach and wishes Chris and Rachel MacClugage great success! For more information about the tour, visit [www.apbaracing.com](http://www.apbaracing.com); for more information on Chris and Rachel MacClugage, visit [www.maccracing.com](http://www.maccracing.com); and for additional updates on the Harbor Beach Maritime Festival, visit [www.harborbeachchamber.com](http://www.harborbeachchamber.com).*

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