**Hydroplane racer: Gold Cup denies blacks participation**

**Darren A. Nichols / The Detroit News May 6, 2010**

*Detroit* -- A black hydroplane racer claiming he's been denied entry to the American Power Boat Association wants the City Council to deny its permit for July's Gold Cup races.

Jerry Bell, who has been involved with the sport since 1995, said the Eastpointe-based American Power Boat Association has consistently denied blacks opportunities to participate in its event. His team has been denied participation in 2008 and this year.

He claims he offered Gold Cup officials $4,000 to race in an exhibition, but still was turned down.

"(The association) has been really horrible toward us and I feel the need to bring that out," Bell said. "I see it as a problem that needs to be responded to quickly. It's obvious I'm not going anywhere. I know racism when I see it."

Event officials say their denial of Bell has nothing to do with his race and everything to do with safety.

Bell's boat is in the five-liter class of hydroplanes -- about 19 feet long that reach speeds of about 120 mph -- that weren't in consideration for the races July 8-11 near Belle Isle.

"We tried it a couple of years ago," said Doug Bernstein, director with the Detroit River Regatta Association. "The problem is they get broken up. (The Detroit River) is too rough for them. There is a lot of boat damage there."

Bell said his boat can hold up as it has in the past.

"We just want to run an exhibition. It's not like we want to run a competitive race," Bell said. "We're fully [capable](http://detnews.com/article/20100506/METRO/5060473/Hydroplane-racer--Gold-Cup-denies-blacks-participation) of running on the Detroit River as we did in the past and didn't suffer any damage at all. Our boat is clearly capable of running."

Bell is set to run an exhibition June 18-20 during the Detroit River Days, but his plans are being pared down because the APBA intervened, he said. He's also having difficulty securing a state park along the river that's necessary to run his exhibition.

Others such as Mike Cashin, the founder of the North American Hydrosports Association, support Bell's claim.

"I've seen him receive the cold shoulder by people at different races," Cashin said. "The country was founded on couple of principles the APBA seems to forget: one is equality and the other is competition. Right now (the association) has no competition. (If) they don't want you to do something, you can't do it."

The City Council tabled the request for the permit during this afternoon's session. Members called for the American Power Boat Association, the Riverfront Conservancy and state officials to attend next week's session.

"We ought to know the reason and (not) give them a free pass," Councilwoman JoAnn Watson said.

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