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## **OUTERLIMITS RACING TEAM IS "MOLTO" IN MALTA**

Outerlimits Racing Team came to Malta as the "new kid on the block," a role familiar to owner/president Mike Fiore. His 14-year old company has gained a powerful reputation in the USA marine industry and as the young boat builder and his crew set out to test its mettle against the established European racing teams, the scrutiny level was high.

The team was welcomed with easy-going camaraderie among the Italian, Belgian, Austrian and multicultural racing community in Malta, the first stop on the Powerboat P1 tour, but it knew that it was under a magnifying glass. The Outerlimits sleek, 2006 SV-40 stood visibly out of the pack of much larger and bulkier European hulls that were built for the rigors of the rough Mediterranean seas. It was admired as "beautiful" and "sexy" but some questioned whether this aerodynamic vessel with Mercury 662 SCi's and NXT drives would stand up against the larger boats with surface drives and diesel engines.

The first day of racing was almost cancelled, as strong winds blew across the Port of Malta, creating huge swells. When the race directors and their expert consultants verified that the race would be held, they chose to alter the course. Rather than hold an endurance run of laps around the rock-based island, Powerboat P1 opted for a one-lap run around the island and a shortened 5-lap run around the oval ocean course.

As five Evolution (prototype) boats and ten SuperSport (production) boats took to the water, the high seas seemed to envelope the boats and the buoys marking the course. Outerlimits, with Fiore, at throttles and 25-year racing veteran, Joe Sgro driving, waited for the green flag to drop. They started conservatively, assessing the competition, then the boat quickly made its way to the front of the pack. "We went to work!" said Sgro, "Then we got in a groove and it just seemed easy to work our way to the front. The boat was running so well—we were really surprised how it handled in this water. We were traveling at speeds higher than we thought possible, but the boat just kept running in its prime and we saw the pack behind us!"

The euphoria lasted until the backside of the island brought on six meter waves. The Outerlimits boat landed slightly askew in a "hole" between swells, then its water pressure dropped and the temperature rose. "We knew something was wrong and suspected the water pump," said Fiore, "We stopped to assess the situation and realized we could not complete the race with this engine." Sgro added a description of the incident, "It was like we were dropped out of a third-story window! I've never been so high in a boat!" Another boat lost a drive and two racers were transported from the race to the hospital with minor injuries.

The Outerlimits team arrived at the port on one engine, having a "baptism of fire," but other racers in the pits gave accolades for performance and sympathy for the mechanical shortcomings. "No one thought that our boat was going to do as well as it did" said Fiore, "It is unfortunate that the water pump housing physically broke from the impact, but we all know that such things happen in powerboating." The team worked into the night repairing the pump and feels confident in a "catch up" round on Sunday. "We showed that we deserve to be here," said Sgro, "No matter where they look, they are going to see us!"

The series continues on Sunday with a multi-lap oval course in the Port, with prime viewing in Sliema, just north-west of the port-town of Valetta. Stay tuned!

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