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In this image we see a group of boats in an off-shore powerboat race. The photo, by Tom Newby, was published in the *St. Petersburg Times* on October 16, 2003. On the same day, the paper published an interactive graphic which allows viewers to virtually examine what it might be like to race in such a powerful vessel.

Lush landscapes, coupled with incomparable views of the ocean, are part of the Hawaiian experience. So are water sports.

For surfers, Hawaii's waves are among the best in the world. Sailing, snorkeling, scuba-diving, kayaking, paddle-boarding and whale-watching are all part of the fun.

Offshore-powerboat racing doesn't quickly come to mind, when thinking about key Hawaiian water sports, but a racing accident is a key part of this story. Let's examine a bit of its history.

Still a sport dominated by males, offshore-powerboat racing involves expensive equipment. It's been a sport since the early 1900s, after it began in Britain.

By 1935, a newly designed boat could travel at a high rate of speed (for the time):

...the thrill of thrills for the fellow who loves speed promises to be mile-a-minute outboard motorboat racing. Traveling at sixty miles an hour in a tiny craft only a few feet over-all, you have a sense of lightening flight through the rushing of mighty elements in uproar - a thrill unobtainable in any other sport. (Popular Mechanics, May 1935, pages 680-81.)

Today's powerboat racers routinely travel at speeds exceeding 100 miles an hour. New designs, incorporating jet engines, can more-than-double that rate.

The sport is different now in other ways as well. Most racing boats require two experienced people to run them. The driver steers the boat; the throttle man manages the speed and trim.

Managing a speeding boat together, both people have to maintain clear and constant communication. If a driver turns the boat, without coordinating with his throttle man - for example - he runs the risk of losing a passenger or flipping the vessel. A flipped boat, hitting the water at a very high rate of speed, will often produce a fatal result.

Elizabeth King - played by Patricia Hastie in the film version of *The Descendants* - loved powerboat racing. Usually the driver, she agreed to change places with her throttle man so he could experience the thrill of steering a racing vessel.

In his first outing as a driver, Elizabeth's boating partner launched their forty-foot Skater catamaran off a wave near Waikiki. When the boat began to spin, she was ejected (since powerboat racers rarely wear seat belts).

Hitting the water at 80 mph, Elizabeth sustained profound injuries. Comatose, in a hospital, she could no longer make decisions for herself.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ELIZABETH-KING-S-ACCIDENT-The-Descendants>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ELIZABETH-KING-S-ACCIDENT-The-Descendants>

Do Speed and Danger Attract Spectators?

Offshore powerboat racing remains a male-dominated sport. In the novel and film, "The Descendants," a female named Elizabeth ("Joanie") King is also an offshore powerboat racer.

How easy (or difficult) would it be for a female, like Elizabeth ("Joanie") King, to be part of the offshore powerboat racing world? Explain your answer.

Today's racing powerboats travel extremely fast and attract large crowds of people to watch them run. What makes this such a popular sport?

Do speed and danger play a role? Why, or why not?

When Dependant Team Members Fail to Coordinate, Do Bad Results Follow?

Media Stream



Powerboat Race Underway - World Championship, 2011

Photo by Chester Kalb - online, courtesy Chester Kalb's blog.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Powerboat-Race-Underway-World-Championship-2011>



Skater Catamaran - Flipping

Photo of "Big Thunder" - taken November 9, 2011 by Chester Kalb - online, courtesy [Chester Kalb's blog](#).

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Skater-Catamaran-Flipping>



Skater Catamaran - Elizabeth King

Photo of 40-foot Skater Catamaran, online courtesy Bullock Marine.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Skater-Catamaran-Elizabeth-King>



Elizabeth King - Racing at Waikiki

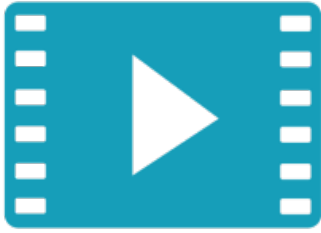
Photo by Jeffrey Allen. LICENSE: [CC BY-NC-ND 3.0](#).

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ELIZABETH KING'S ACCIDENT

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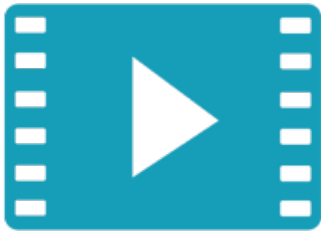


Offshore Powerboat Racing - Close Calls

Video compilation by Kim Leachman, online via YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Offshore-Powerboat-Racing-Close-Calls>



Power Boat Racing - Flipping the Boat

Cat Can Do flips during a power boat race. Video online, courtesy YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Power-Boat-Racing-Flipping-the-Boat>



Offshore Powerboat Racing - Driver and Throttle Man

Video clip online, courtesy YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Offshore-Powerboat-Racing-Driver-and-Throttle-Man>



Powerboat Racing - Man Overboard

Clip online, courtesy YouTube.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Powerboat-Racing-Man-Overboard>



Offshore Powerboat Racing - What Can Go Wrong

Video clip online, courtesy YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Offshore-Powerboat-Racing-What-Can-Go-Wrong>