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**Contact:
Ron Wahl
VP, Communications
ISM-USA
412.427.4893
rwahl.ismusa@gmail.com**

After a Year's Absence...Bradenton Area River Regatta Returns in 2022 Even Bigger and Better

BRADENTON, Fla.— The largest spectator event in Manatee County—the Bradenton Area River Regatta—returns to the banks of Manatee River Saturday, Feb. 12 after a year's absence, and organizers are promising a plethora of FREE high-end family fun and entertainment.

Led by Mayors Gene Brown and Shirley Groover Bryant, the Bradenton City Council and Palmetto City Commission unanimously approved the return of the popular River Regatta along the Bradenton and Palmetto shorelines, which was postponed in 2021 in an abundance of caution due to the COVID pandemic.

The seventh annual extravaganza has evolved into the region's signature event, delivering major entertainment on both land and water. Event manager, ISM-USA, promises the same jammed-packed slate of high-speed watercraft racing, family-fun interactive activities, and chart-topping musical entertainment from dawn to dusk...and it again will be **ALL FREE**. An amazing pageantry of kaleidoscopic imagery produced by the first family of fireworks—Zambelli International—cap the day's events as it has in the past.

"The Bradenton Area River Regatta is returning to our beautiful shorelines this week, and we cannot be more excited," said Groover Bryant. "The postponement of the event in 2021 left a definite void and the anticipation has been building for this year's event for more than a year. We are grateful to have it back."

"We are so happy for the return of the fabulous Bradenton Area River Regatta," said Brown. "It has been a long, difficult year and the return of this prestigious event has everyone looking forward to this year's event."

"We are thrilled to see the return of one of the Bradenton Area's top signature events," said Elliott Falcione, executive director of the Bradenton Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. "Historically, the Regatta has brought upwards of 100,000 spectators to the streets and shores of downtown Bradenton and Palmetto, while generating an economic impact of close to \$10 million for the region. Our seventh Regatta is shaping up to be our best event to date, and we cannot wait to begin welcoming visitors back for all of the action."

Many of the fan-favorite attractions will return, including the featured attraction and marquee event, high-speed racing of the F-2 powerboats. Powerboat Superleague, the oldest and most respected racing circuit in the F-2 division, will rock the Manatee River with powerful and agile watercrafts for the largest single-day racing event on the APBA Circuit.

add one...river regatta returns for seventh year

New to this year's Regatta are the dynamic racing class called SST-45 "Formula Lights." These nimble but powerful vessels are smaller and lighter watercraft than the Formula-2 big boys, but they are nearly as loud, and just as entertaining. At roughly 12-feet long and 700 pounds, the 45-footers get their nickname, "Formula Lights," by navigating their stealthy frames with superior skill, while hitting speeds of 70 mph. Regatta fans have a front row seat to it all.

In addition to the powerboat racing, returning to the waves of the Manatee in 2022 is World Flyboard Champion Kristen "The Destroyer" Smoyer, who will entertain spectators throughout the day with her incredible and improbable stunts that have garnered her world-wide accolades.

On land, top musical acts are always a staple for the River Regatta, and this year there will be multiple headliners, including the Blooze Brothers (4:45 p.m.) and Almost "Abba" (5:45 p.m.) tribute bands on the Bradenton Riverwalk Pavilion Stage; and Florida-native son, Andy Pursell—and the Andy Pursell Band—in Palmetto (5:45 p.m.).

Other featured entertainment generating diverse soundwaves throughout the day includes: Bradenton's Sam Woolf; the Randy McNeeley Band; the American Made Band; Happy Few; Under the Moon; Citrus Ave; Moxy; and Bella Garland. Talented musicians from the Del Couch Foundation—representing the newest "up-and-comers"—kick off the music on both stages beginning at noon.

Uniquely Powerful and Sleek SST-45 Powerboats Join Electrifying Racing Action

The Bradenton Area River Regatta has established a reputation as the largest day of racing on the APBA circuit. This year, it will not disappoint, adding a new class to the schedule...the sleek and powerful SST-45s.

These lighter but mighty speed vessels, referred to as the "Formula Lights" class, may be smaller and lighter than the F-2s, but they nearly produce the same menacing roar and excitement as their "Big Brothers." Five of the nation's Top 10 contenders are participating: Jose Mendana Jr, J.W. Nelson, Ricky Sober, Thomas Schlarb, and Randy Partch. Mendana, Sober and Partch are from the greater Bradenton area.

Meantime, the F-2 racers always bring it. Many of Super League's top pilots, including former-champion Ashton Rinker of Tampa, FL, and Bradenton's Mike Quindazzi, who moved from Arizona to Bradenton, Fla., right after the 2020 race because he loved the Bradenton area. They join a talented field of highly skilled drivers, who will have to negotiate the tight turns and tricky Manatee surf to win the day. The racing is an electrifying demonstration of speed and maneuverability in watercrafts capable of climbing from 0-100/mph in less than four seconds, all of which leads to another promising day of breathtaking drama in one of the most explosive spectacles on water.

A series of qualifying runs and time trials for each class precede championship racing. Spectators can also get an up-close look at some of these awesome watercrafts on display all day near the Riverside Park Area in Palmetto.

Throughout the day and in between the racing action, Smoyer, the 2016 Pro Ladies Flyboard World Champion, will dazzle the audience with her uncanny flips and stunts in one of the newest crazes in watercraft entertainment—the fly board. She also will perform a special post-Regatta show beginning at approximately 7:15 outside Pier 22 Restaurant.

add two...river regatta returns for seventh year

Mike “Thrasher” Traster, from Fort Lauderdale, FL, joins Smoyer between races with his jaw-dropping, championship-caliber jetpack flips and stunts. Currently ranked number-one in the world, Traster has flown jetpacks for nearly a decade, gaining national and international acclaim.

Zambelli Brings World-Class Fireworks Extravaganza to Palmetto-Bradenton Skyline

A dazzling fireworks pageantry by the king of pyrotechnics, Zambelli International, brings the entire day’s events to a climatic ending.

The brilliance of Zambelli designers assures a kaleidoscopic display like no other to create the perfect conclusion for the evening.

By staging multiple firing points, including the Green Bridge, with at least a third of the shells exploding over the Manatee River, Zambelli creates amazing views from both sides of the river. Cleverly choreographed to music and featuring a brilliant array of pyrotechnical excellence, the climatic explosion produces aerial visuals rarely seen in the state of Florida and will surely leave spectators in awe.

Crowds can hear the music through speakers staged along the Riverwalk.

Almost ABBA, Blooze Brothers Tribute Bands Lead Impressive Collection of Headliners on Regatta Stages

Powerboats and top-charting musical acts have been staples of the River Regatta in years past, and the 2022 event promises even greater brilliance.

Five headlining acts, led by two highly acclaimed tribute bands, top the collection of impressive entertainment on the main stages in Bradenton and Palmetto. Headlining on Bradenton’s Riverwalk Main Stage are the American Made Band, Woolf and tribute band sensations...“Blooze Brothers” and “Almost ABBA.”

Authentically costumed, “Almost Abba” recreates the magic and nostalgia of ABBA in an audience-interactive experience. The band has performed for the U.S. military, NBC, Universal and the release of MAMMA MIA! “Almost Abba” has appeared before audiences as large as 50,000 spectators and was recently asked to open for Cher on her “Here We Go Again” tour of Australia.

The “Blooze Brothers” re-live the antics and performance prowess of Jake and Elwood, who are on a mission to sing and perform as the popular band from 1980 musical comedy movie.

Across the River, “The Andy Pursell Band” tops the Palmetto Main Stage. Blending country with a rock edge, the band keeps fans on their feet with an energetic mix of originals and cover songs. Started by lead singer/songwriter Andy Pursell in 2015, the band has performed at venues such as: Grand ‘Ole Opry, Hard Rock Café, and the Whiskey a GoGo. Joining the Palmetto stage top billing is a up-and-coming group, the Randy McNeeley Band. A singer-song writer who plays 11 instruments, McNeeley was basically born with a guitar in his hand and is best known for his mastery of the guitar. His soulful voice and the way his fingers effortlessly glide across the strings mesmerize audiences across the nation.

add three... ...river regatta returns for seventh year

A super collection of musical entertainers performs on both stages all the day. The Bradenton Main Stage lineup includes: Happy Few and Under the Moon. Meantime, popular regional and national groups performing at the Palmetto Main Stage are: the Citrus Ave. Band, Moxy, and Bella Garland.

Talented students from The Del Couch Music Education Foundation open all the musical entertainment on both stages, beginning at noon.

Other activities throughout the day along the Bradenton Riverwalk include two separate nationally-acclaimed stunt dog troupes: the Team Zoom and Dare Devil Stunt Dogs. Spectators will not only be treated to incredible tricks and feats, they can meet and interact with a few of the remarkable canine athletes after each show.

A variety of other activities and interactive fun are available on both sides of the River at the Bradenton River Walk and Palmetto River Park area. On the River Walk Main Lawn, the Pittsburgh Pirates/Bradenton Marauders-sponsored Family Fun Zones has a cornucopia of activities including interactive sports fun and face painters; pitching machine and corn-hole pitch; and Hernando De Soto Historical Society food festival featuring an assortment of Bradenton Area's finest cuisine. At the Palmetto Riverside Park, families can enjoy an expo area sponsored by the U.S. Army and The National Guard and many top local food vendors.

Kicking off the festivities is the De Soto Little Anglers Fishing Derby (at Palmetto Fishing Pier).

Full details, schedule and additional information are available at bradentonregatta.com. Follow all the fun and activities on Facebook: www.facebook.com/RiverwalkRegatta.

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The Bradenton Area River Regatta is produced and managed by ISM/USA—a sports event management and marketing firm with offices in Pittsburgh, PA and Lakewood Ranch, FL.

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