

THE PLEASURE OF LAKE POWELL

Service, scenery and some guy named George have turned the Lake Powell Challenge into a one-of-a-kind event.

words and photos Jimmy Biro

When Jason Johnson called me a couple of months ago asking if I would be interested in representing speedonthewater.com at the upcoming Lake Powell Challenge, accepting the assignment was a no-brainer. I've always wanted to explore Lake Powell, the magnificent Colorado River waterway that borders Arizona and Utah, by boat.

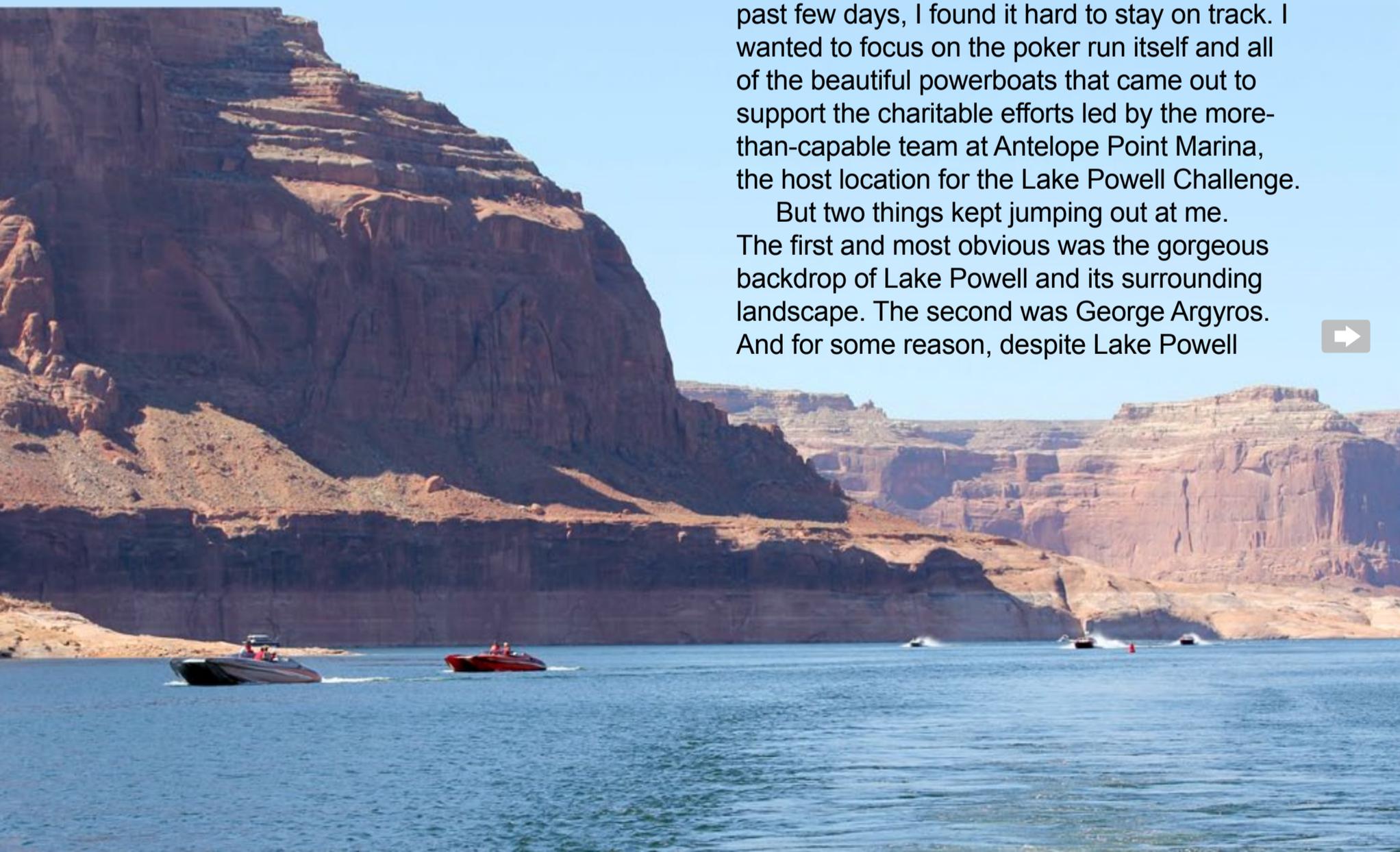
Thanks to some leeway with a new job I started earlier this year, and the opportunity to fly to Lake Powell rather than make the long drive from my home in Southern California to Page, Ariz., I was all in for an adventure with some guy named George Argyros, whom I had never met nor had any idea how to pronounce

his name. Johnson, who knows Argyros well, told me how, but it's not a name that rolls off the tongue easily.

Back to Argyros in a minute. Leading up to the trip I was both excited and anxious. I don't know about you, but I can be a little uncomfortable meeting new people let alone spending a few days with a group of individuals I didn't know in a close-quarters houseboat. But my passion for performance trumped whatever social anxiety I may have, so I said yes. And I am so glad I did or I may have missed out on the trip of a lifetime.

I have a newfound respect for Johnson and speedonthewater.com founder Matt Trulio. While writing this article and reflecting on the past few days, I found it hard to stay on track. I wanted to focus on the poker run itself and all of the beautiful powerboats that came out to support the charitable efforts led by the more-than-capable team at Antelope Point Marina, the host location for the Lake Powell Challenge.

But two things kept jumping out at me. The first and most obvious was the gorgeous backdrop of Lake Powell and its surrounding landscape. The second was George Argyros. And for some reason, despite Lake Powell





From left: Elite Marine's Robbie Willis joined George and Shannon Argyros and the owner of the *Panty Dropper* MTI, Brett Baur, and his friend, Justin Dearden, at the Lake Powell Challenge in Page, Ariz. Argyros, bottom right, is the owner of *Mayhem*, a 44-foot MTI with twin Mercury Racing 1100 engines, and is one of the primary supporters of the event, which raises money for JDRF.

offering some of the most stunning scenery in the country between its deep clear blue water, stark red sandstone rock and cliffs that tower hundreds of feet above the water, it's the image of Argyros and his gigantic smile that I can't seem to get out of my head.

Thanks to Argyros, there was a shuttle waiting for me once the nine-passenger, twin-engine plane I caught after switching planes in Phoenix landed at the airport in Page. I arrived at Antelope Point Marina in search of *Equinox*, which would be my resting place for the event. An out-of-body experience is the best way I can explain what happened when I spotted *Equinox*, a 75-foot Bravada houseyacht.

Yes I said a houseyacht, not a houseboat. This was far from an oversized RV on the water, which is what I'd liken past experiences with houseboats to. It's clear that Bravada does not spare any expense when building these types of luxury vessels. See for yourself on Bravada's website and you'll be blown away.

A couple of days before my trip I spoke with

Argyros, a very busy guy who lives in Florida and owns a home in Lake Havasu City, Ariz., and he told me that when I arrived at the event he and his wife, Shannon, would be out on the water enjoying a late-morning ride. Argyros asked me to go ahead and choose a room and make myself at home until they returned.

There I was taking a self-guided tour of this three-story treasure feeling like I owned it. I mean who invites some guy they've never to their home for the first time and gives him full reign and privileges without reservation? Argyros, that's who. I found my five-star bedroom with its own private bathroom and shower, and proceeded to settle in.

Not even an hour later I heard the smooth rumble from a beautiful 44-foot MTI powered by twin Mercury Racing 1100 engines arriving in the marina. Several people lent a helping hand as Argyros gracefully docked the masterpiece he calls *Mayhem* and proceeded to *Equinox* with Shannon.

As anyone who knows Argyros can attest,



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he is not an ordinary individual. He walked straight up to me and said, “Hey, are you Jimmy?” I nodded. “Good, let’s go meet some new friends,” he said.

We walked into the restaurant and were treated with first-class service. As I later learned, this type of treatment is given to anyone who stays at Antelope Point Marina. For the next 10 minutes, he and I talked and got to know each other. Based on the people he interacted with on the docks and the staff at Antelope Point Marina, I felt like I was face to face with a celebrity. I don’t get star stuck when I see celebrities but I felt privileged to be a guest of this individual known by so many at the Lake Powell Challenge.

From this point I was introduced to many welcoming people, some very active individuals in the performance boat industry and others who just come to the event because it takes place at their favorite destination and because of its charitable contributions. I was truly in my element. I didn’t feel shy, intimidated or anxious meeting many of these successful business people because we all have a common desire—performance boating.

This year Argyros brought his MTI along with his Donzi 38 ZR dubbed *Donzilla*. Fortunately for Brett Baur, Argyros’ friend and fellow MTI owner, Argyros had *Donzilla* on hand. It came in handy since Baur’s *Panty Dropper* MTI broke a gear ring and was unavailable for the event.

The high jinks ensued (it’s a long story and is best explained by Argyros and/or Baur anyway), but basically Argyros taunted Baur about bringing a broken boat to the run—I’m told the razzing goes back to a time when Argyros broke down and Baur poked fun at Argyros for requiring his assistance—and for having to be driven around by Robbie Willis of Elite Marine in the Donzi. Luckily Baur was a good sport about it all...even the toilet paper.

Willis was one of several go-to industry guys who came to the event to support customers. Between hanging out with him, Chris Hamlin from Prestige Marine and Adrian “AJ” Barrett from Barrett Custom Marine, I appreciate the mechanics and boat haulers who support these



From top: The NUTTZ jet boat club hosted a party at Lone Rock Beach during the Lake Powell Challenge. The Antelope Point Marina facilities were as top notch as they come for a poker run. Chris Hamlin of Prestige Marine in Lake Havasu brought his Scarab to the event.

poker run “teams” even more than I did before.

The term “team” shouldn’t be taken loosely because in order to own some of these boats, you really do need a team. I can get away with my wife and I in our single-engine LaveyCraft, but that’s a different story.

It also was cool to see Bob Teague on hand to support his customers and participate in one of the fastest-growing poker runs in the country with his family, including his 1-year-old grandson.



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Between houseboats, runabouts, cruisers and performance boats, there were plenty of ways to get around on the water during the seventh annual Lake Powell Challenge. If it wasn't bad enough that Brett Baur couldn't run his MTI, his "friends" had a little fun and toilet papered his catamaran during Saturday's fireworks show. Surely payback plans are in the works.

Like many events in the country, the primary goal of the Lake Powell Challenge was to raise money for a great cause. In this case, the money raised goes to JDRF, a cause Argyros supports and works hard to promote. The event began seven years ago and raised a few thousand dollars. In mid-September, 67 boats registered and more than \$200,000 was raised. Anyone who had a part in this event should be proud of that contribution.

I'll tell you what—if it weren't for many of these large contributors, guys like Argyros who are willing to raise huge amounts of money to fight diseases, support local services or help wounded service men and women, our poker run community wouldn't be what it is today.

Riding with George and Shannon, who deserves special recognition for going out of her way to make me feel welcome, the poker run itself went by quickly. When you're a passenger in a 44 MTI with 2,200 hp averaging about 110 mph, a 40-mile cruise doesn't last long.

Of course there were participants in non-performance boats with much less horsepower who were probably on the water for several hours hitting the different checkpoints. I have



to say, if there was one boat company that dominated in numbers, it was DCB Performance Boats. Everywhere I looked there was another beautifully colored DCB. Talk about a tight family and a sizable group that contributed to the fundraising efforts thanks to the registration numbers alone.

And that's what it's really all about. Just ask George—and don't worry about trying to pronounce his last name. **SOTW**