

BIG BOYS, FAST TOYS

Fads come and go, but boys will always have their toys.

Southwest Floridians' flare for fun is perfectly encapsulated in the high-speed, high-thrill objects of obsession some men collect. Here's a peek at five fabulously decadent indulgences from grown boys who — like girls — just wanna have fu-un.

[By BETSY CLAYTON]

[Photos by GARTH FRANCIS]

TESTING THE WATERS



[Ken Kasten and David Borman]

Ken Kasten (at right in photo) and David Borman (left) are equally thrilled by things fast, loud and revolutionary. They met in 2000, when Kasten was a rookie in offshore powerboat racing at the throttle of a state-of-the-art batboat.

"I could make a turn faster if I dipped the wing in the water," Kasten says. "But occasionally the wing would break and I'd be out of the race."

After observing a few such bad breaks from the crew pit, Borman produced a sketch and suggested some design adaptations and carbon-fiber reinforcements in the wings.

Kasten, who owns the Shell Station on Sanibel, took time off from the race circuit and the two went to work. Four years later, from unassuming headquarters in a warehouse off Summerlin Road, Maritime Flight Dynamics, Inc., had its initial prototype. Kasten fills us in on things since then.

Q: What exactly is it that you've built?

A: It's a boat that "flies" just above the wave crests, on proprietary foils.

Q: How big is it, and how fast does it go?

A: It's 30 feet long and 18 feet wide. We haven't achieved the speed we need yet. We've had it up to 70 mph in the Gulf of Mexico; we need to get it to 100-plus mph to make it totally effective.

Q: Effective for what?

A: For military and commercial fleet travel on the open sea. And for civilian pleasure, too, of course.

Q: What might one cost for personal use?

A: They should start between \$400,000 and \$600,000, much like a high-end poker run boat.

Q: What's next in the development process?

A: We're taking it to Marine Turbine Technologies in Louisiana, where Ted McIntyre, who built Jay Leno's jet-engine-powered motorcycle, will put a turbine engine in it, mounted midship to a long drive shaft with a surface-piercing propeller. Then we hope to run it in the Offshore Powerboat Racing Association's PX class. We'll blow around the track at about 150 mph.

Q: What's your street car?

A: A Saab, which is really more airplane than car.