

PRESS RELEASE – Contact David Luneau, [hq@solarsplash.com](mailto:hq@solarsplash.com)

*Springfield, Ohio, June 14, 2021* – Nine collegiate engineering teams gathered at Champions Park Lake at the Clark County Fairgrounds to compete in the 27<sup>th</sup> annual SOLAR SPLASH® competition in Springfield, Ohio, June 8-12. Sponsored by UPS Battery Center, SOLAR SPLASH provides a showcase for the students' innovative boat designs and gives awards for endurance, sprint, and slalom on-the-water events, plus awards for technical reports, video presentation, workmanship, and engineering design. SOLAR SPLASH is a sanctioned American Power Boat Association event.

SOLAR SPLASH 2020, which was to be held in Springfield last June, had to be canceled because of COVID-19 restrictions, breaking a 26 year run of annual events. With the beginning of college terms in the fall of 2020, teams began to prepare for 2021 not knowing how or if the event would be held. University rules required some teams to work remotely on their projects. Most teams cited limited lab and workshop time as additional challenges. Even as COVID restrictions in some areas were being lifted, some schools were still hesitant to allow student travel. SOLAR SPLASH event organizers worked with local health officials to make sure that all possible COVID safety procedures were implemented and were very happy to announce that the competition would take place. Thirteen competitors signed up for the event and nine were ultimately able to travel to the event and compete.

Each competitor is a student team that spends the previous year designing, constructing, and testing their solar boat. The boats, driven by a single skipper, vary greatly in appearance but must conform to size, power, and safety specifications. The boats compete in qualifying and endurance events with solar panels in place on the crafts. Skippers must be able to safely steer the boats around set courses. The same boats then compete in sprints but may have a different configuration which often does not include onboard solar panels. Batteries, however, must be charged by solar panels, many of which the students construct themselves. Rules for the event, as well as results and photos from the past 26 years, can be found at [www.solarsplash.com](http://www.solarsplash.com).

The University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez team, after having lost in 2019 to first place Cedarville University by a mere 1.56 points, returned in 2021 and scored 954 points out of 1000 to take 1<sup>st</sup> place in the competition and receive the George Ettenheim Memorial World Championship Trophy. The Puerto Rico boat proved to be the fastest in the sprint event and finished the 300-meter championship heat in 23.04 seconds.

Defending champion Cedarville University finished second overall with 832 points. Their boat won the endurance competition by completing 76.75 laps on the 615-meter course for a total of 47.2 kilometers (29.3 miles) in the four-hour competition. The University of New Mexico team finished in 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

Despite intermittent inclement weather, the teams were able to complete all phases of the competition, and the awards ceremony was held on Saturday afternoon. Teams received competition awards for their boats' performances as well as design awards as judged by teams of engineering judges. The Innovation award was given to the team from Cornell University for their customized modular drive train.

Cooperation and teamwork are important elements in the event so a sportsmanship award, a teamwork award, and a perseverance award are given. This year those awards were won by Cedarville University, the University at Buffalo, and the University of Southern Indiana, respectively. The Best Rookie team was given to Wright State who finished 5<sup>th</sup> overall and the Most Improved award went to The College of New Jersey who finished 4<sup>th</sup> overall. The Video Presentation award went to Puerto Rico at Mayaguez. The winning video and all other submitted videos may be viewed on the SOLAR SPLASH YouTube channel.

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The students, typically numbering three to a dozen or more on each team, spend the five days in the tented paddock area or near the water while their boats perform. Launching and removing the boats from the water are group efforts from each team. Pre-launch inspections include safety checks and verification of certified batteries and radios. While out of the water, teams must be ready for inspections by SOLAR SPLASH inspectors and by volunteer judges who question the teams regarding engineering decisions and designs.

A morning meeting is held each day so event officials, called Redshirts, can update the students on the day's schedule and answer questions. Lunch is provided on site each day and the afternoon ice cream break is a favorite with the students and faculty advisors. An opening day welcome dinner is held each year on the first day of the event.

The first SOLAR SPLASH competition was held in Milwaukee in 1994. Eleven competitors participated that first year. Since the initial competition, more than 90 American universities, 10 international universities, and five high school teams have participated. Other competition locations have included New Orleans, Louisiana; Buffalo, New York; Fayetteville, Arkansas; Cedar Falls/Waterloo, Iowa; and Dayton, Ohio.

Champions Park Lake at the Clark County Fairgrounds in Springfield, Ohio will be the site of the competition again in 2022

SOLAR SPLASH is a trademark of Solar Splash Inc., a non-profit organization formed to promote engineering education and interest in solar innovation. Solar Splash Inc. seeks to involve college and high school students in hands-on educational activity by hosting the SOLAR SPLASH competition each year in late spring or early summer.

By partnering with engineering societies, corporate sponsors, and local volunteers, Solar Splash Inc. facilitates the event by managing competition rules, arranging for the competition site, and providing meals and extracurricular events for the students participating. SOLAR SPLASH "Redshirts" are the officials who manage the five-day event each year. Dr. Jeff Morehouse, Professor Emeritus-University of South Carolina; David Luneau, University of Arkansas at Little Rock; and Dr. Roy Hogan, formerly of Sandia National Laboratories, are the engineering officials of the event.