

2026 a wrap for Miss Madison

Miss Madison pleased with 2026; begins prepping for 2027

BY DAVID CAMPBELL
PAXTON MEDIA GROUP

There is still one race left on H1 Unlimited's brief 2026 schedule, but for the Miss Madison Racing Team, the season is officially over.

Miss Madison President Kyle Bipes confirmed on Wednesday that the team has wrapped up its 2026 campaign. While there were some discussions about attending next month's season-ending race on Mission Bay in San Diego, the board of directors thought it was more prudent to close down the season and prepare for next season.

"There was definitely some interest from (sponsor) Royer to go to San Diego and I certainly would have been for it, but the board decided it made more sense to assess where we are and get ready for 2027," Bipes said. "I really wanted to, but to be honest, I didn't fight it much. It makes total sense to me."

Miss Madison Racing has not run a full season since winning the National Championship in 2024. After that season, all of the team's equipment was sold to Seattle businessman Bruce Ratchford, who has



David Campbell

Brandon Kennedy steering the U-6 Royer Miss Madison under the Milton-Madison Bridge during the APBA Gold Cup on the Ohio River at Madison on July 4.

used the two boats and related equipment to win six of the seven contested races since while closing in on his second points championship.

That sale forced the team to essentially start from scratch a year ago. The team attempted to run in the ill-fated race on Lake Guntersville in Alabama, but blew its only engine during testing. A wreck at Madison the following week ended its season.

There were no such issues this season. The

team and driver Brandon Kennedy started and finished every heat they entered and placed fourth in its hometown race on the Ohio River at Madison. Miss Madison failed to make the final heat at either Tri-Cities or Seattle during the Washington state swing, but Bipes still considers the season a success.

"Our main goal was to start and finish each heat and make a few finals. We made the final at Madison and somehow, despite two seconds, a third and a



Bob Demaree

Miss Madison driver Brandon Kennedy (right) receives the first place trophy from Madison Regatta Vice-President Tim Bipes after winning the Grand Prix event at Madison on July 4. Kennedy just wrapped up his second season as driver of the Miss Madison.

fourth at Tri-Cities, didn't make that one. But it was a success," Bipes said. "We're incredibly happy with the way the season went. A year and a half ago, we didn't have a single tool in the shop; we essentially started completely over. We're happy with where we are."

Bipes was also pleased that Kennedy, an H1 rookie in 2025, was finally able to get a serious amount of seat time after competing in just two heats a year ago. Kennedy has dominated the Grand Prix circuit in recent years and Bipes is convinced that if they can just give him more speed, he has the ability to put Miss Madison back in the winner's circle.

"We just don't have the equipment we need yet to go as fast as everyone else.

What we qualified with was our race setup. That's just where we are right now," Bipes said. "But Brandon is a heck of a driver; he has won at every single level. I think the fans could tell that he's getting more and more comfortable out there every time out."

With the 2026 season officially over, the emphasis for Miss Madison Racing now turns to 2027. The first question that needs to be answered is which boat the team will compete with.

The team leased the former Miss Budweiser T-3 hull from Dave Bartush of Detroit last season and spent this past off-season making numerous repairs and upgrades to the craft. The team has as option to lease that boat again next year — or even purchase it outright — but Bipes said

they are still trying to decide what to do.

"All options are on the table for 2027. We may stick with T-3, we might look at another of the boats that Bartush has, we may look at something else. We have a lot of options," Bipes said. "Brandon wants to go fast, the crew wants to go fast, and that takes more horsepower and props. The question is, which direction do we go? That's something we'll spend the next few months looking over."

Being in a position to actually plan for next season is not something Bipes was always sure was going to happen. As the team retooled from its equipment sale and essentially starting over, it has not always been smooth sailing. The last 20 months have included tough challenges, but the fact that the team is planning ahead is proof what has been done is working.

"Overall, this was a successful season. And we couldn't have done it without the support of Kenton and Roger Williams at Royer, Kelli Jo Norris and John Goodman from Goodman Real Estate and the entire community," Bipes said. "To come from where we started is a testament to everyone involved and the work they've put in. We're getting back to our roots as a floating Chamber of Commerce. We want to win races and championships, but we want to do it the right way and we're doing that right now. Overall, it was a massive success."

KENTUCKY

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2024, while fourth-grade math rose from 234 to 238. Both gains exceeded national trends, with the national fourth-grade reading score falling two points to 214.

Stafford said the improvement in fourth-grade reading represented a statistically significant increase.

"That's to be celebrated

because that's a meaningful difference," she said.

Kentucky's eighth-grade reading score remained unchanged between 2022 and 2024, while eighth-grade math increased from 269 to 271. National scores declined in both eighth-grade reading and math during the same period.

Committee Co-Chair Sen. Stephen West, R-Paris, credited recent education initiatives for the gains, saying funding has been used effectively.

"I want to give you some positive feedback," West said. "I think your implementation on Read to Succeed and numeracy

has been very effective. When we first did that, honestly, I didn't expect much results for four or five years, and I think you're way ahead of schedule."

Committee Co-Chair

Rep. James Tipton, R-Taylorsville, said legislative efforts require successful implementation to produce results. He noted that education conferences this summer have highlighted what has been called the

"Mississippi miracle."

"There is a new term out there. It's called the 'southern surge' because states in the South have followed Mississippi, and we're seeing the benefit of that," Tipton said.

BEDFORD

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butchering and cutting at his store in La Grange and orders there can be placed in Bedford with the cuts delivered to the store next business day. However, the store will also stock several traditional cuts of steaks, roasts, fajitas, and skirt steak as well as chicken cuts.

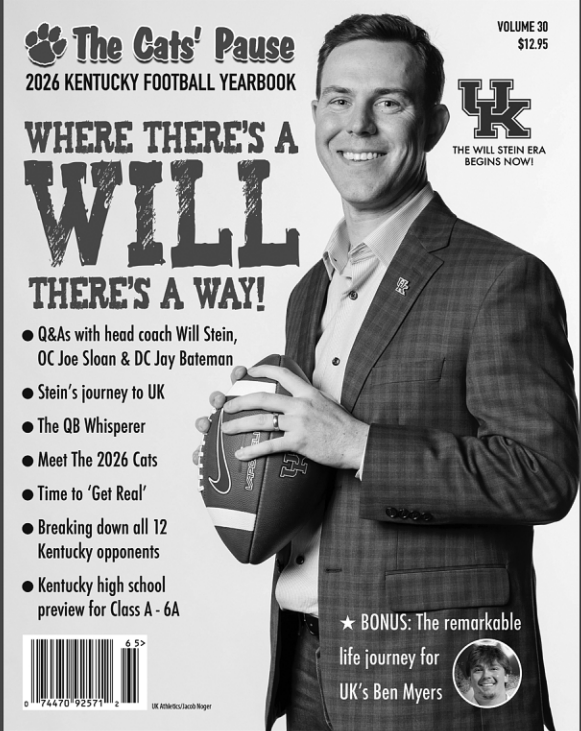
Teresa Gonzales comes from a large family of 10 children and is experienced at serving large crowds of more than 200 people since she was responsible for feeding workers on her family's coffee farm in Mexico.

Trimble County native Grant Butters already travels to the La Grange store to purchase his favorite meats but is happy to switch his business to the Bedford location for convenience. Butters' favorite is Hermanos' homemade chorizo.

The market is stocked with traditional Hispanic branded staples and beer. As the business grows, Pablo hopes to expand custom meat cutting and wrapping at the Bedford store. His plans also include providing a limited lunch menu of tacos and burritos, hearty caldos and pozole soups and traditional ham and turkey sandwiches for the on-the-go crowd.

That's a lot to take on but he hopes to also add more employees to handle the lunch menu and crowd.

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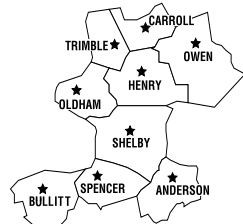
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