

BRITISH CANOE UNION

FLATWATER NEWSLETTER – JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2006

Christine and I hope you had a good Christmas and wish you a Happy New Year.

At this time of the year there seems to be little important activity. That is until you look under the surface and see all the beavering that is going on in and around the clubs. Nothing lasts forever and this winter will be no exception. Before we know it spring will be knocking on the door and if there is no planning and activity now we will not be ready.

The Marathon committee have certainly been busy with two meetings in the space of a few weeks and the Sprint committee have also met.

The MRC have decided to go for the younger look this coming year not only electing Steve Harris but also co-opting Di Bates and James Hinves. Their new ideas and action are already being felt with Steve Harris, Dyson Pendle and James Smythe organising training weekends and days with more planned for the New Year. If you want to know more then contact Steve Harris. Di is well on with the production of the Yearbook, which will be out as usual in February.

The 2006 National Championships will be at Reading, on the promenade as usual. The exact details of the course are still being worked out but will include an artificial portage as before so spectators can see as much as possible. Full details will appear on the BCU and Reading web sites in due course.

The MRC finances have been tightly run with a small overall loss. The committee have only two sources of income with which to cover both domestic and international expenditure. These are the Hasler race levies and the grant received from BCU central funds. The BCU grant follows the overall BCU plan that has been accepted by Sport England and UK Sport. Without this grant we would not be able to send the GB teams to the events we do. This year saw a very expensive international programme with the worlds being in Australia. The team size was much larger than originally planned due mainly to the money raised by Jim Rossiter with his sponsored raffle. The results have already appeared but it would still be right to thank the team members, the coaches and Jim for the success of that trip. None of the Hasler levies go towards the GB teams. This money is used for running the domestic programme

The main International Marathon events this year will be the World Cups in Zamora, Spain in June and Trencin Slovakia in July. The Marathon Worlds are in Tremolat. This is in the Dordogne region of France and there will be a Master's event held on the days before. Some of you may recall the world cups held there in 2004 and it will be on the same course but on the new format of five 7.2km laps for senior men, 4 laps for ladies and Canadians and 3 laps for all juniors and masters. It is not yet clear if the portage will be used for masters as it was in 2004 so it might be as well for masters to get in some practice. It is likely the course will be run the same way round as 2004 but the details will be confirmed in the New Year. The portage is going to include the same dug out re embarkation point but it will be much enlarged. The disembarkation pontoon will also be much bigger than 2004. The writer has seen the draft of the first bulletin but this needed amendment and should be out soon. The Spanish course is a slightly modified version of the 2001 World Cup and the 2002 World Championships. The Trencin course is new. Both follow the 7.2km lap format.

Club representatives to the ACM had raised a number of items and the MRC Chairman, Brian Gandy, felt that the committee should seriously consider and respond to these items. There is after all no point in having a meeting if the views of the clubs are not taken acted upon. The problem with some of the suggestions in the past however is that they often cover a very small section of the paddling membership and it is all too easy to skew the rules, adversely affecting many more paddlers than originally intended. The suggestions from the ACM are below with the results of the MRC deliberations.

- A review of the K2 divisions was outlined and the MRC has set up a sub-committee to consider how best to deal with this. An announcement will be made soon on possible changes.
- The age cut-off for Lightning Series is confirmed as 1 January.

- There was a discussion as to whether the Lightning divisions are to be ability based. The committee decided that these should stay as age related. It was felt that the Lightnings are raced too infrequently to produce a realistic ability system.
- There was a request that Clubs should be encouraged to run Fun Races. It was agreed that the HRM be modified to show a "Fun Race" file as well as "Lightning" file.
- It was suggested that Clubs should be encouraged to give prizes for 1st Lady, 1st Veteran, 1st Junior etc. Rule 22 already encourages this but it was felt that the individual race organiser should decide the actual prizes awarded. It is intended that the publicity given to this issue from the newsletter should ask race organisers review their own policy on this issue.
- Request for an U14 C2 National Championship class. This has been implemented for 2006.
- It was commented that there was a general lack of enthusiasm for canoes. It was felt that the promotion of canoes had to be down to individual clubs where there was a coach with an interest in them. The committee commented that in the past it had put considerable time and money into the development of canoes but with a distinct lack of numerical success. However it should be noted that the situation in GB only reflects what is happening in the rest of the world and particularly Europe. International marathon canoe classes are getting smaller and smaller. Even in Sprint it is possible to say that the Olympic classes are being artificially supported by the ICF to maintain numbers of medals in the Sprint Olympics. This must be quite distressing to those active supporters of this class of paddling which has both history and technical skill to its name. In the international world there are those who ask whether the poorly supported canoe classes should be replaced by more women's kayak classes, or even heretically, if there should be marathon kayak classes in the Olympics.

The committee has also been considering the current promotion rules and finally concluded that the HRM system of promotions from the automatic calculations is the one that should be applied. Whilst there will be exceptions these should be few and far between and should put aside many of the delays that might happen from a non-automatic system. Paddlers will also know from the results on the day whether they have been promoted and this will make race entry for the next event more accurate. Especially for those racing most weekends. Mike Head will still receive requests to override the system but there will need to be good reason.

Demotions were also considered as a separate subject. There was a wide-ranging discussion of the options for demotions. The HRM calculation is as agreed at previous meeting, 110% as the present rules but currently with no automatic demotions. It was pointed out that the HRM calculation is the same as the 110% option. The decision was to proceed with the HRM system operating an automatic demotion system. That is there will not be a requirement to receive 3 'D' notices, demotion will be automatic. The only change was to agree an over riding limit of a maximum of one division demotion at one race result.

This reliance on the HRM system shows how important it is to the overall running of marathon in the country and from this flows the plea to ALL RACE ORGANISERS to use the *system as it was intended and not altered or amended in any way*. There are some race organisers who feel with the expertise they have they can improve the system for their race. This might be so for their race, but it cocks up the system for other people. One of the basics of the system when designed was to make the race records officers job easier. It does, *if it is left alone*. However the number of race results that come in altered, are increasing PLEASE send them first THEN alter as necessary for printing and sending to participating clubs.

There are now about 70% of race organisers who use the HRM and that is an increase on last year and they are to be thanked for this increase. It would be good if we could get all events onto this system and it be used as it was intended.

There is a bottle of wine to all those organisers who send in their race results on the system used in an unaltered form that works as intended. Claim from the editor.

There was discussion on how to improve the standard of race administration at regional races. Whilst many are well run there are those who suffer from either inadequate knowledge or helpers. Regional Hasler Organisers are to be asked to contact race organisers in advance of their race, offering advice and help.

As a first move Andy Rawson and James Hives will be arranging a race organiser's training day in the Southern Region. This will not be limited to Southern region race organisers. The date will appear shortly on web sites and in the annual letter to race organisers from James Smythe as calendar compiler. Another suggestion was to ask race organisers to attend a well-run race in advance of their own race.

Each year Christine sends out letters to clubs to update the list of active Marathon paddlers so the ranking list can be updated for the yearbook and the results system. Every year we are both surprised and disappointed at the level of response. This year exactly 100 letters were sent out but to date only 67 have been returned despite reminders. Funny how many e-mails disappear into the ether! However it's not all bad as this is 10 better than last year. Thanks for those returning in time. Please can the others try and help in 2006.

The Sprint committee met in December and discussed a wide range of subjects. They were also on the co-opting trail. Anne Hoile of Leighton Buzzard Canoe Club and Alan Laws of Lincoln CC were accepted onto the committee for one year with this non-voting status.

Laurence Oliver has relinquished the post of Junior Team Manager after many years in this role. He has taken the role onto new heights and the success of the Junior Sprint squad is due in no small way to him. The SRC wish to express their thanks to him for his years of service and congratulations for the excellent way he has carried out the job. He will be missed but the team goes on from strength to strength, as does Laurence in that he is still a member of the SRC

Veteran classes may in the future be called Masters but the classes will remain unchanged.

In the summer of 2005 Peter Morley went to the ECA Sprint Championships to gain more knowledge as to how major regattas are run today. This in advance of the project to run a major regatta in the UK either in 2007 or 2008 depending on the international calendar and the necessary funding.

It is a pleasure to congratulate John Handyside on his appointment as National Development Coach starting 9.1.06. Attached to the Coaching Service under Mike Devlin, John will bring a lifetime of experience to Flatwater and WWR canoeing. He has competed in the national teams of all three disciplines over the years and has been Team Manager and coach too. We look forward to the results of his work.

The Chairman Roland Lawler reported that at the latest meeting of the World Class Management Group the number of Sprint paddlers on Performance Aid now numbers only eleven with only nine from Slalom. More worryingly the formula for the paddlers selection is on a "scientific" basis from previous performances and does not take into account coaches views and experience.

Looking at the system as a whole over the years that WCP has been in operation it seems that the original target of long-term development has been reduced dramatically. Firstly to a large extent the disconnection of Marathon. There was a previous recognition of the innate connection to Sprint there is from this discipline. Secondly the concentration on wanting Olympic medals *now*. It has to be acknowledged however that *WCP has* recognised the connection and has helped Marathon in the limited number of ways it can. The fault and the problem lays in the way the Government want instant results from a decreasing amount of money. This was emphasised in the way there was no new money for sport to develop and make the most of the 2012 Olympics allocated from the November 2005 budget. Most sports administrators and coaches recognise that if GB is to reach its medal target it needs to start pumping money in NOW and not in 2011. The IOC and the Olympic ideal also recognises that there should be a payback in developing *long term* sport and the legacy needs to start NOW not in 2013. The BCU can only try to exert pressure on the paymasters and they are not really Sport England and UK Sport but Gordon Brown and his gang. Did anyone buy them hearing aids for Christmas?

Year Book additional reminder, contact Di Bates for the new issue due out in February.

Alan and Christine Laws

Does the Funding of Olympic Distance Athletes Devalue and Discourage Others?

Recent experiences have, once again, focused my attention on a problem that has concerned me for almost ten years. The question arises again and again.

What is the main objective of the performance Department of the BCU?

Is it there merely to serve the medal hungry interests of UK Sport, or does it also provide for the wider interests and ambitions of **all** our participating athletes?

Whilst the department was certainly created as the stimulator for in-depth performance it has been corrupted by continuous changes which have caused a dramatic bias towards the Olympic medallists of the sport. It should be remembered that the original idea was that there was to be a three pronged attack on the development of athletes on a long-term basis. Performance to deal with the elite athlete who had already "arrived", Potential for those with, er, potential and had nearly arrived and Start which was to take the youngsters and develop those with inclination and talent. The programme started with a statement of it being "at least 8 years". Sadly that longer-term expectation has now been reduced to "medals now please"

Recently, investigating an athlete complaint (unsubstantiated) against Performance coaches and athletes, I was prompted to study athlete listings in the 2002 Handbook. I was horrified that over the following three years there was a 75% drop out from those Potential and Start groups listed. This drop out rate of established athletes is a disaster for the sport. Are we actually driving athletes away?

At the Marathon World Championships several teams, including our own, included top sprinters. The assumption seemed to be that they would automatically prove superior to the regular marathon paddlers. From the sprinters that took part, only one gained a medal and that was a bronze. The sprinters were not superior athletes, but then neither are the marathon paddlers. They each have their own strengths and skills and should receive equal recognition. However, the funding and attention lavished on the sprinters, because theirs is an Olympic sport, purely by its existence, seems to devalue and discourage the efforts of the non-Olympic distance paddlers.

All participants in a sport are of equal value. The system we have evolved for both marathon and sprint tries to ensure good competitive sport for everyone. It looks after beginners and international standard paddlers alike and recognises the worth of both, and all abilities in between.

Winning an Olympic medal is a great achievement, but it should not devalue a child's first win in Division 9.

The question that remains unanswered is how can we change?

We must recognise the reality that Performance funding is here to stay at least until 2012 and until the London Olympics have gone, the Olympic disciplines will reign supreme from a funding point of view. The performance department already helps from a funding and resource point of view where it is able and for that the marathon team recognises this and appreciates it.

The real problem is twofold. The funders cannot recognise that Marathon feeds Sprint and vice versa and so the two are complimentary. The second is that it seems from the outside that the sprint coaches feel the need to protect their position by restricting the activities of some paddlers and not allowing them their own choice of event. This situation becomes self evident when you compare the performance of the GB Marathon team with that of 5 years ago. Where is it now? All the up and coming good paddlers are whipped into the Sprint camp and rarely seen again in major Marathons Perhaps Marathon is failing to attract them strongly enough but how can it compete with the lure of the money that is available to Sprint?

I have tried for many years to get the elite sprinters to fully integrate their activities with the rest of the sport. There has been but a token effort in this direction and I am led to the conclusion that the current situation is detrimental to the long-term development of competition within our sport.

When it comes down to financing sport with the sole object of winning medals at Olympic Games, surely The Government has lost the plot. We accept the principle of financial help for highly motivated athletes to enable these competitors to reach their full potential, and perhaps win medals; but the driving force must come from the athlete and only the athlete.

Roland Lawler

TEAM MANAGER'S REPORT, TOUR DE GUDENAA, 10-11 SEPTEMBER 2005

Team - The team comprised two senior women, and thirteen juniors in U18 and U16 classes:-

SWK1 Harriet Farish NOT, Becky Schofield NOR
JMK2 (U18) Ben Bradshaw (BAD), Gary Rowell (LEA)
JWK2 (U18) Fay Lamph (WEY), Lizzie Broughton (RIC)
JMK1 (U18) Bernard Maurissen (BOA), Matt Guy (LBZ)
JWK1 (U18) Hayley Blackwell (WOK)
JMK1 (U16) Robert Poole (LBZ), Tim Pendle (NOR), Ben Haynes (LBZ),
Tom Bridge (WEY)
JWK1 (U16) Kathryn Hall (WOK), Emma Dougal (LBZ)

Management Jim Rossiter, David Enoch, Kari Martin, James Smythe

Selections were made following the K2 assessment race at Nottingham in June.

Transport

The team with Jim and Kari travelled by air on Thursday 8th September, from Gatwick to Billund airport, which is around 50km from the team's base at Silkeborg. The minibus with trailer was driven by David and James via the Wednesday overnight Harwich-Esbjerg ferry, which arrived in good time to pick the athletes up at the airport and continue on to Silkeborg.

The team intended to hire a second minibus at Billund, but in the end we were equipped with two Volvo saloons. This actually helped with logistics on the second day, as one vehicle was able to follow the races while the other two vehicles covered the stops at Tange and Langaa.

On Monday 12th, after the races, the minibus and cars dropped the athletes, Jim and Kari at Billund airport at around 11am, and continued on to catch the Cuxhaven-Harwich 5pm ferry. Unfortunately, 6 hours did not prove to be quite enough time, and the ferry was missed by 5 minutes, meaning that David and James had to drive through the night via the Calais-Dover ferry. This has almost happened in the past, and future trips should consider waiting for Tuesday's Esbjerg-Harwich ferry, or setting off from Silkeborg at around 8am.

Accommodation

As in previous years, the team stayed at the Silkeborg Youth Hostel. The accommodation in rooms of 4 was comfortable and quiet, and the food was up to its usual excellent standard.

The Youth Hostel is situated on the river only 500m from the end of the Saturday stages, so is an ideal base for the weekend's racing.

Race Organisation

The race ran very smoothly, with only one minor issue. Although the rules published in English make no mention of it, all paddlers are required to carry buoyancy aids on all stages, either in the back of the boat on the river stages, or worn for the lake stages. Some negotiation with the starters at Tange, and some fast driving by Kari Martin, allowed us to solve this without incident.

The Course

As in previous years, the course ran over two days and a number of stages between Skanderborg and Randers in central Denmark. U18 and Senior Men raced over 120km, U18 and Senior Women over 87km, and U16s over 57km.

Although the course has a reputation for severe weather, particularly wind and waves on the big lakes, and fog on the second day, conditions for the weekend were nearly perfect with temperatures of around 20 celcius and a gentle breeze. As a result, the neoprene spraydecks that had been packed for the lake stages were not needed.

Planning the logistics of seven separate starting or stopping points over two days required an Enoch Master Plan, executed to perfection. With athletes covering three different permutations of the course, some starting at the same time 30km apart or finishing three hours apart in the same place, having three vehicles and four staff proved helpful.

Performances

The final results were published in the last newsletter these are now expanded.

Our U18 Mens and Women's K2s were obliged to race up in their respective Senior classes, as the race rules require a fairly high number of competitors for a race to be quorate. This did not mean having to race a longer distance.

The headlines were:-

- Fay Lamph and Lizzie Broughton rose to the challenge of racing the seniors by winning the overall Women's K2 title, the first GB senior title since Robin Belcher won the SMK1 in 1985.
- Ben Haynes won Silver, and Tom Bridge Bronze in the U16M K1
- Kathryn Hall won Silver in the U16W K1
- Harriet Farish won Bronze in the SWK1

Hayley Blackwell retired after stage 1 with a back injury.

James Smythe

Hasler Race Organisers – please mind your “P’s” and “D’s”

Amongst articles in this Newsletter is one that outlines changes to the bases for promotions and demotions at Hasler races which are to apply for all future races. The new rules will be in the 2006 Racing Handbook which will be available in February.

The changes are little more than an extension of the test programme that has been used in the HRM (the computer race system) in the past 4-5 years and the HRM is being up-graded to include the new rules for promotions and demotions.

The principle on which the Hasler divisional system is based is that competitors race in their appropriate division. To work equitably promotions and demotions need to be known promptly by competitors, their clubs and by Race Organisers. There are over 60 races annually in the Hasler Series. Your race – indeed, each race - is an important part of the whole system.

The standard practice the Marathon Committee wishes to see applied is that all promotions and demotions take effect immediately from the day of the race. This will be possible where the HRM is used to calculate results at a race but, regrettably, there will still be a delay in advising promotions and demotions where the HRM is not used.

As Race Organisers we owe it to those that come and support our races to make every effort to ensure that results are accurate and are displayed promptly at the race..

To achieve this I ask all fellow Race Organisers **please:-**

1. **Use the HRM computer system at your race;**
{if you presently do not use it, please speak to you Regional Hasler Adviser who will get you help if you need it} **The HRM works out promotions & demotions automatically – to the second – Please do not ‘round up’ using whole minutes at the start**
2. **Publish results promptly at your race;**
3. **Send results within a day or two of your race to the Rankings Officer (Mike Head) and the records officer (Christine Laws)**
4. **Pay the race levy and event ticket money promptly.**

Thank you for the time and effort you put into your race organisation, it is much appreciated.

Brian Gandy
Chairman, MRC
January 2006