

Flatwater Newsletter March 2009

At last the new issue of the newsletter is with you for the new season. It seems to be getting into full swing now with the Watersides as preparatory for Devizes. If you are planning to do the race I hope your training schedule is on course and the recent cold weather has not put you behind. Hopefully the water levels will be good and the race will depend on the paddlers and not the weather.

Regattas

The Holme Pierpont Regattas are looking good right now with the first one not that far away on April 4/5.

Yearbooks

The Flatwater Yearbooks are now out and you should be contacting Di Bates to get your copy on **diane.bates@dial.pipex.com**

International Items

The international Marathon scene is developing as the ICF Marathon Committee has now met and their newsletter is attached to this one. The name has changed following the ICF Congress in November last year and is now known as Canoe Marathon. The committee goes under the acronym of CAM.

The ICF Sprint Committee title is now, would you guess? Canoe Sprint!

In fact all the committees have the same style if title with one exception and that is the Wildwater Committee. I am not quite sure why there should be the difference but I expect there is a good reason.

The organisation for the Marathon Worlds in Crestuma, [Portugal] is gathering shape and the problems that were found for the World Cup last year have been identified. A great deal of effort from CAM, the Portuguese Federation with the Crestuma club has gone, and is going into making sure there will be a good event.

The First World Cup is at Lake Bagsvaard just outside Copenhagen, [Denmark] on June 13/14 and those with memories will recall the place from the second Marathon World Championships in 1990 and the last "World Cups" in 1997. This last race was when there was only a World Championships every "even" year and the "Cups" event was the culmination of the "odd" years' major events. As a matter of minor interest, Tim Brabants was 3rd in the men's' K1 that

year to Thor Neilson who won his home event and Chad Meek of Australia. Lake Bagsvaard is a very pleasant place to spend some time for those looking for a short holiday break. Come and support your team.

The second major event is the European Championships in Ostroda about 2 hours drive from Gdansk in Poland. 24/26 July.

In addition to the ICF Canoe Marathon newsletter mentioned above the revised World Cup Rules are also attached for those who need to advise their paddlers and the paddlers themselves of course.

There have been some changes that are relevant. Especially the shortening of the course for Junior Girls and Boys C boats from 5 laps of 4.3km to 4. There is a consequent reduction in the number of portages. Under 23 classes will NOT be run for the World Cups in Copenhagen but WILL be there for the European Championships and the World Championships.

The new course concept has been restricted to two types. One is essentially for rivers and lakes and one essentially for regatta type courses. The diagrams spell out what they are. If coaches have any queries then I will be pleased to try and answer.

The ICF have announced a Masters Sprint event and attached to this newsletter are the details.

Clarification

In the last newsletter I commented on the ICF Congress elections and Andrew Train brought to my attention that the item mentioning Istvan Vaskuti may well imply some criticism. This was most certainly not what was intended. Mr Vaskuti is a man of the highest integrity and has voluntarily spent many years working to improve canoeing and the organisation of both the Hungarian Federation and the ICF. I am sure we offer our congratulations to him on his election as ICF Vice President and are sure he will fill that office with considerable success.

Canoeing Ergo Competition 17th March

I recently sent round details of a canoeing ergo competition that is to be held in conjunction with the National Indoor Junior Rowing Championships on March 17th the North Road end of Battersea Park in London. For more info see the BCU website or call Howard Blackman at the BCU office in Bingham as he is in charge of all the arrangements.

Interview with Andy Train

Having seen the interview with Ivan Lawler in "Canoe Focus" it occurred to me that we had another paddler of the same era who had similar success both as a singles C boat paddler and with his brother Steven in C2. As a consequence I am pleased to be able to include an interview with him here. I hope it will become one of a series and perhaps readers would like to suggest other successful paddlers they would like to know more about.

Andy, When did you start paddling?

I started out with my family when I was about three years old. We paddled on the Staffordshire canals in canvas kayaks.

When did you win your first race?

Although I started racing when I was about eight, I don't recall winning races as a youngster. I was always small for my age and not that good technically so age group racing didn't suit me!

Why flat water racing and why canoe?

We joined Viking Kayak Club in Bedford when I was young. My Dad's first race was the Devizes to Westminster and he continued with racing when he founded Fladbury Paddle Club so flat water racing was the obvious choice for me. At Fladbury, the interest in Canoe began because we made a mistake making a kayak. One of the lads forgot to put catalyst in the resin for the deck so we only had a hull, which became our first 'racing canoe'. The late Ron Emes (President of the BCU and Olympic Team Manager) and a good friend of my Dad, saw us messing about with canoes and suggested we develop it further because it was a shame for Britain not to be fully represented at internationals.

What has been your best race to date and why?

Winning a bronze medal in the C2 1,000m at the World Championships in 1997. Successes in the Olympic disciplines are always going to be the most sought after. Our quest began in 1981 so it was a long wait! 6th places in the Barcelona and Atlanta Olympics were very satisfying for such a 'skinny' paddler and showed just how far we'd brought canoe paddling in Britain.

Are you naturally competitive?

In a sporting context, yes. When I was racing, I always wanted to do my best and in training, even now, I have to push myself.

Which club is your base and how long have you been there?

Fladbury Paddle Club, which was founded by my Dad in 1973. We've been here ever since.

Your father is heavily involved in the sport. How much has he inspired you?

Enormously. His interest in sport began when the first thing he saw on television was Roger Bannister running the first 4 minute mile. He gave us our vision of competing in the Olympics and was very good as a mentor so from a very early age we developed self-motivation and took responsibility for our training. He was never possessive over us as athletes and is always happy to ask others for help when they have greater expertise. That's why we were able to work well with the Hungarians.

How do you think we can teach/encourage fair play amongst our paddlers?

I think we're lucky that those running the clubs and introducing children to canoeing do so for the love of the sport and all the right reasons. It's a sociable sport so your competitors are your friends. In 1987, we were less than 500m away from a gold in the 10,000m when the Hungarian crew turned us and we ended with a bronze. The team management wanted to protest but I said no because without the help of Hungarian coaches, we wouldn't have been there in the first place. Following Tim's successes in Beijing, many people were impressed at the camaraderie between the paddlers. It projected the sport in a great light. From a tactical point-of-view in distance races, it makes no sense to get involved in conflicts because you'll just waste vital time and energy.

Your favourite canoeing moment?

So many to choose from, but these days our annual Bell-Boat regatta. We get well over 400 children and their parents having a go. It's very busy, hard work but a great atmosphere and very satisfying.

At the first ever Marathon World Championships in 1988, you won gold with your brother Steve. Since then the number of nations has not significantly increased. How do you think the ICF can encourage more nations to attend?

If marathon was the Olympic discipline, suddenly everyone would be taking part! But, I think you have to look at a much wider picture. Canoeing across all disciplines is a small sport and unless we change our thinking I suspect it always will be, like many Olympic sports. Tim's win in Beijing was fantastic, but at our club we didn't get one single enquiry as a result! Any increases in numbers we make, whether nationally or internationally are only

measured in tens at best. The structure of these sports has been massively influenced by our ability to travel so we've ended up with small numbers of people driving or flying to too many poorly attended events with no incentive to develop a local structure. Canoeing as a whole needs to use the team boats that are already out there (Bellboats, Dragon Boats, Outriggers, War Canoes etc.) and take a 'festival' approach, rather than the typical Western approach of always having to turn everything into a serious competition. Just about everyone can grasp a paddle and take part in a team boat and there are already thousands of festivals across the world that could incorporate paddlesport. Off the back of that, you would have some who would want to take canoeing more seriously but we have to accept it would take time to evolve.

What does the sport of canoeing give to children?

Sport can be a great education, a great leveller, an opportunity to have friends and a sense of belonging, and of course a means of keeping fit and healthy. Canoeing enables you to be outside in a special environment and it's a long-term sport. The State seems to have forgotten all this as it pours millions of pounds into Olympic sports, politically motivated by greed for gold. The consequence for children is that they're forced to take an ever more structured, target driven path. It's the Eastern Bloc philosophy of natural wastage so you don't worry about all those who drop out, just as long as you have an Olympic champion at the end. That's why I'm so against talent selection. Under that system Ivan Lawler, Ian Wynne, Lucy Wainwright, myself, in fact pretty much anyone who ever got to a final or won a medal, would have been discounted.

You won several medals at the World Championships in 10km. Removed from the international racing calendar, would you like to see it revived?

Yes, or at least some sort of distance race. Mac Gregor chose a kayak rather than a rowing boat for his 1,000 miles round Europe as it had the advantage of maneuverability but all we do is race in straight lines! However, we need to look at the big picture. Too many people are spending too much time arguing about what distance to race or what events to have. Our best scientists are telling us we have to take drastic action now to avoid catastrophic climate change. James Lovelock, an eminent scientist, talks of sustainable retreat. In a world of scarce resources, we should be using what we have (rivers, canals and lakes) and adapting, rather than building new soul-less 2,000m courses. Our natural resources would provide us with far more opportunities to make racing exciting for all.

Would marathon canoeing and/or 10km be a good sport for the Olympics?

It's ridiculous that our Olympic discipline caters for only one type of athlete. How about 200m, 2,000m and a 2 plus hours race? You may still get exceptional paddlers who can compete at all three but at least everyone would feel there was something for them. But in view of what I've said previously, making these changes alone would have little bearing on the future of our sport.

What have been the toughest moments and how do you keep yourself motivated?

All the politics that surrounded the introduction of Lottery funding into our sport. I'm sure there were things that I said and did that I'd now do differently. Pretty much everything we predicted has happened and many people have said we were right but just didn't like the way we went about it. Despite the millions of pounds spent, I think we have hardly any more paddlers than ten years ago, less strength in depth at the top end and fewer top paddlers prepared to have a go at marathon racing. Worst of all, the BCU, in my opinion, is far less democratic now as a result of the money. Tim clearly needed the level of financial support to achieve what he did, but he came from a club-based system (Elmbridge) and stuck with his coach, Eric all the way through.

I'm kept motivated by all the work I'm now doing with my dad with the Paddle for Life, a 'brand' of a systems approach to life where all need to take part if we are to solve the problems we face. Paddles for Life, have been signed by the leaders of all the political parties, American Senators, the Chinese Ambassador, the Mayors of Beijing and London, various lords including Lord Coe and Lord Rees and many more. We're very close to the Presidents of America and China signing. We're trying to make sure there is water left in our rivers and lakes, rather than worrying what distance to race on them.

You have two daughters. Have you encouraged them to become canoeists?

Hannah, 18, has gone for running. She's been Worcestershire County cross-country champion. She's recently been offered a place at Oxford University to read Biology so she'll be working hard to achieve A's in her exams this summer. Jojo, 15, is very sporty and has gradually become more interested in canoeing. She's trained hard this winter on her land-work and is looking forward to competing this summer, although she's got GCSE's to take as well.

Do you paddle much now?

I'm at the club most evenings coaching so although I'm out on the water, I'm not training myself. However, I still run a lot and do weight training and circuits. Since I finished competing in 2001, my running times and the weights I lift have stayed fairly constant but I'd be much slower in the boat now!

Two Opportunities for a week of Racing in Scotland

Scottish Racing Week 17th -24th May 2009

The first event, on Sunday 17th, is a marathon on the Grandtully to Dunkeld stretch of the River Tay. Midweek there are two evening 10km events the first on the regatta course at Strathclyde Park, on the Tuesday, and the second on the Forth & Clyde Canal near Kilsyth on the Thursday. Both these venues are within 30mins of Glasgow and 45mins of Edinburgh. The week culminates with a weekend based at Loch Lubnaig in the Trossachs. There is a marathon event on the Saturday and the Scottish K1 10km, 6km & 3km Championships on the Sunday. Immer Voulin Campsite at the north end of Loch Lubnaig is our base for the second weekend.

Throughout the week paddlers accumulate points and at the end of the week Racing Week Trophies and prizes will be awarded.

The Series of races :

Sun May 17 th	12 noon	Grand Dunk (Divs 1-9)
Tues May 19 th	7.30 pm	Strathclyde Park 10K, 6K & 3K (2K for Lightnings)
Thurs May 21 st	7.30 pm	Forth & Clyde Canal (10K, 5K)
Sat May 23 rd	3.00 pm	Loch Lubnaig (Divs 1-9 and Lightnings)
Sun May 24 th	11.00 am	L. Lubnaig K1 Championships 10K, 6K & 3K (Lightning 2K)

Scottish Sprint Week 16th – 23rd August

In August there is another opportunity for a week of racing in Scotland, this time all sprint events. The First event is the Scottish Sprint Championships held on the regatta course at Strathclyde Park. This is an Open event with age group classes from Over 45 to Under 8. On the Tuesday evening there will be an evening 10K for K1 and K2 also held at Strathclyde Park. On the Thursday evening we move across to the east of Scotland with an evening 10K time trial on the Union Canal in Edinburgh. The week finishes with another regatta, this time on Kinghorn Loch in Fife, just over the Forth from Edinburgh. Once again a whole range of races will be on offer for all ages in both K1 and K2.

The Series of races :

Sun Aug 16 th	12 noon	Scottish Sprint Championships, Strathclyde Park
Tues Aug 18 th	7.30 pm	Strathclyde Park 10K, 6K & 3K (2K for Lightnings)
Thurs Aug 20 th	7.30 pm	Union Canal 10K time trial, Edinburgh
Sun Aug 23 rd	11.00	Kirkcaldy Canoe Club Regatta, Kinghorn Loch, Fife

If you are interested in attending any of the events during either of these weeks and would like more details either contact Margaret Chapman e-mail mhckayaking@aol.com or check the SCA website www.canoescotland.com.

