

Wildwater 2007 Highlights and Challenges

Wildwater Continues to Make GREAT Progress

A Report to the USACK Board and the Paddling Community

by John Pinyerd - USA Wildwater Committee Chairman

I am very proud of the continual progress that we made in again 2007. We had solid international results which included wining medals in 3 events and several top 12 finishes. And through the efforts of many folks, including our sponsors, the Wildwater Board, our volunteer coaches, and our race and training camp organizers, we continue to grow the sport of Wildwater in the USA.

Highlights and Race Results:

Junior Worlds: We took 15 athletes to the Junior Worlds and won medals in 3 events. Figuring that our best chance to medal was in the newly created Sprint Team Race, we organized a Junior Team Training camp at Charlotte the week prior to the event and focused on the sprint races. Our efforts paid off as Tierney O'Sullivan, Sara Kunz and Anna Peirotti won a World Championships medal in the K-1W Sprint Team Race. And thanks to the recruiting efforts of Denny Adams and the tenacity of our athletes (Craig Adams, Logan Hartle and Cody Beach) we won two sets international medals in C-1 team.

USA Junior Wildwater Team - 2007 Worlds Results

	<u>Best Individual</u>	<u>Best Team</u>
<u>K-1 W</u>		
Tierney O'Sullivan - Roswell, GA	16	3
Laura Adams - Grand Junction, CO	17	4
Sarah Kunz - Durango, CO	18	3
Anna Pierotti - Durango, CO	19	3
Micki Reeves - Grand Junction, CO	19	4
Sarah Dodge - Boulder, CO	21	4
 <u>C-1</u>		
Craig Adams - Grand Junction, CO	11	3
 <u>C-2 (individual) C-1 (team run)</u>		
Logan Hartle - Grand Junction, CO	7	3
Cody Beach - Grand Junction, CO	7	3
 <u>K-1</u>		
Chandler Jones - Franklin NC	17	6
Lucas Palko-Schraa Durango, CO	21	6
Peter Lutter - - Bethesda, MD	22	6
Alex Dodge - Boulder, CO	31	9
Michael Turvey - Boulder, CO	33	9
Nathan Hamm - Pittsburgh, PA	34	9

Women in Canoe: Lisa Adams was awarded the first international medal ever in C-1 W (at the 2007 Junior Wildwater Worlds). We found a way to have Lisa race as a forerunner in every event in C-1W and she earned respect. My perspective on her ability is that "I have not observed such a natural switch hitter in C-1 since Fritz Orr and Andy Bridge." The IFC was also impressed and Lisa ended up being awarded a special medal for her runs in C-1W to demonstrate what women in canoe-sport are doing. (Note: We are hopeful that C-1W will become a class at the Worlds soon).

World Cups: We took 8 athletes to the 2007 World Cups. I'm thrilled to say that half of the team was new to international competition and we look for continuous improvement from them. Tom Wier (C-1) led the team with several top 12 finishes and ended the year with an overall ranking of 6th in the World. Jennie Goldberg finishes 6th on the extremely demanding Sprint course at Ivera Italy.

USA Wildwater Team - 2007 World Cup (World Cup Combined Results)

C-1

Tom Weir of Snohomish, WA – 13th

C-2

Rich Roehner of Bellingham WA and Mike Baker of Bellingham WA – 12th

K-1W

Jennie Goldberg of Seattle, WA – 17th

Hollie Noble of Frederick, MD - 30th

K-1

Rodney Rice of Morgantown, WV – 28th

Jeremy DiCasolo of White, PA - 35

Doug Ritchie of Seattle, WA – 52 (Team Manager – only raced once)

Performance Funding: Thanks to our sponsors, for the third year in a row, the USA Wildwater Team was able to raise enough money to support a modest Performance Fund. To qualify for the funding, individuals must finish within certain percentages of the winners at the Worlds/World Cups. This year we had a record number of 8 athletes qualify for funding which included our top two juniors (Chan Jones and Tierney O'Sullivan). Tom Wier was the top earner followed by Rodney Rice. My vision is to quadruple this fund going forward.

Our Keys to Success: We are successful because of the organized efforts of many folks such as our volunteer coaches, our race and training camp organizers, and certainly our sponsors. Individual sponsors are a real key for our growing success. Due to their generous donations, we were able to partially fund housing for our World Cup Team and fully fund housing for our Jr Worlds Team and help our coaching staff with expenses. We are truly grateful.

Another real key to our progress over the past 4 years has been the gradual transformation in the focus of our board from being less like paddlers and more like professionals who understand what it is like to wrestle with budgets, P&Ls, goal setting, and management challenges. As a result, we are addressing our challenges and achieving results in many areas. Please allow me to highlight just a few of these areas.

Wildwater's Challenges and our Solutions:

Budget Process (revenue uncertainties): We all face fluctuations if not huge uncertainties in the amount of money we can raise as well as cost/expense pressures. The Wildwater “Tiered Budget” process (wherein each level must be fully funded before you can spend funds from the next level) has been called “**pure genius**” by several professionals who have reviewed it (see the complete budget on www.USAWildwater.com). Why?

- We can not run a deficit. No funds equals no (or reduced) expenditures.
- It allows our donors to have a real part of the process and assume ownership. It is rare for anyone to feel good about donating to a general fund, but if you allow folks to donate to specific budget need such as the Senior Team housing, to the Jr Worlds, or even to the USACK deficit, it gets done!
- We reach consensus on what is most important to fund first and we put what is least important last. The result is that an expenditure that is last on the priority scale can not rob funds from something that is more important. Our priorities and the tiers in our budget stack up as follows:
 - 1) Operating Expenses/Uniforms/Training Camps for Development
 - 2) Banked Reserves
 - 3) Funding for Coaches
 - 4) Senior Team Funding (note: this is a partial funding with athletes making up the difference)
 - 5) Junior Team Funding
 - 6) Team Performance Incentive Program

2) Communication: Communication is key in any organization. Thanks to the efforts of Chuck Brabec, www.USAWildwater.com is one of the best websites of its type in the World. Want to know where the events are?...see the Calendar tab. Want to know the results?...read the articles. Want a coach?...see the coaches/mentors tab. Want to have all of this sent to you?... sign up for the E-Zine. But knowing how paddlers love to chat, Doug Ritchie also started the Wildwater list serve email group a year ago and it has rapidly grown to nearly 150 members on 4 continents (note: we have found it necessary to put in some controls against “flamers” on the list serve).

3) Boats: One of the largest barriers to the growth of our sport is the lack availability of boats. North American production is very limited. No boats equates to an eventual death of our sport. We have worked hard to come up with ways to supply them. And contrary to the basic principles of supply and demand, we have found that giving racers access to boats is actually increasing the demand (because even more athletes want to race). USA Wildwater continues to address the boat shortage challenge on several fronts.

1. First, we request that retired racers put their extra boats back in circulation. We do this through our website and a personal presence. This makes a huge impact especially when you consider that new racers want used equipment.
2. We maintain an “Equipment” section for both vendors and individuals on USAWildwater.com.
3. Vice Chairman Doug Ritchie coordinated a group order of 26 boats from Zastera early this year. We will repeat this process each year.

4. With the Junior Worlds being in the USA this year we approached all of the federations early on about selling their boats after the event. Many of them complied and the USA had a net gain of about 35 boats. Many of the boats were purchased by individuals at the event and the remainder of the boats was purchased/financed by board members and all but a few of the boats have been put in circulation.

4) Many Juniors are not able to travel for races: We addressed this challenge by utilizing an East/West team trials concept. In addition, we modified our bylaws to ensure that we take the maximum number of athletes from each trial venue. As a result we fielded a junior team of 15 racers this year. All of our racers participated at the Junior Worlds.

5) Junior Worlds Funding Housing/Coaching, etc: It was imperative that we hold a full blown training the week prior to the Jr Worlds, have a world class coach and team management staff, and keep all of our kids together in one place. Obviously this meant that Wildwater had to come up with a way to fund these requirements. We achieved these goals by the following:

- Coaching – veteran racer and Coach Maurizio Tognocci of ITA/USA volunteered his time and USA Wildwater picked up his expenses. Thanks to Maurizio’s efforts our team received “world class” coaching. John Pinyerd served as assistant coach for the canoes and we utilized two college age racers (Blake Sparks and Lisa Adams) as assistants.
- Team Management – Two parents were the backbone of our on-site management. Denny Adams (a parent of 2 of the team members and coach for 5 of the kids) specialized in logistics and boat repair while Tom O’Sullivan (Tierney’s dad) handled the finances and was the “go to guy” for special projects. This freed up Maurizio to focus on coaching and John Pinyerd to focus on Team Management, ICF meetings etc. Blake Sparks also served as Pinyerd’s assistant.
- Housing – When the race organizers fell short of providing low cost housing we worked hard to find our own. Ultimately we cut a deal with Belmont Abby College to utilize their apartments at a rate of \$16 per night per room. We even toughed it out and drove to Columbia race venue for 5 of the 14 days we were in town to stay within our budget. In the end, the Belmont Abby accommodations worked out extremely well as they allowed us to keep the team together, fund the housing, and have great accommodations for things like boat repair. Belmont Abby may also be a great place for kids to attend college and work out with the National Slalom Team in Charlotte.
- Meals – Tom O’Sullivan cut a deal with Belmont Abbey to provide most of the meals and as a result our team meals were together and on schedule (and this made for great team meetings). And thanks to Dave Mason, we were able to have a special Team Meal at a local steak house.

6) Airlines don’t want to fly our boats and when they do it’s really expensive: You better believe it. We are addressing this issue by coordinating for our team members to buy new race boats in Europe and have them delivered to the venue. The reduction in the total airfare cost sometimes even pays for the entire cost of the boat. We are also arranging for storage in Europe. Domestically we have contracted with Old Dominion Freight lines to handle our boats and we have negotiated for the program to be open to all USACK members.

7) USACK Deficit: We were somewhat surprised to receive an email from USACK Director David Yarborough in September stating that USACK incurred a deficit when they ran the Junior Worlds. USACK's challenge with the event was identified as inadequate revenue, sponsorship and fundraising (due in part to the loss of the USACK Marketing Director). Obviously the Wildwater Committee could ignore the situation and take the stance that we did not run the race and this is not our issue. But finger pointing is not what we are about. The Wildwater Committee has rolled up our shirtsleeves with fundraising efforts. In addition we have donated the entire funding we received from USACK in 2007 back to USACK. To date our efforts have totaled \$7,000 in funds and pledges.

8) Racing Participation is down: But not for Wildwater☺. We are working hard to raise the awareness of our sport and to support it. Our "can-do" approach is making a difference. Need a boat... we will help you get one. Need a coach or a mentor... see our list of coaches/mentors on www.USAWildwater.com! And thanks to folks like Geoff Calhoun and Denny Adams we have new paddling/racing clubs springing up in Washington DC and Colorado. Catch the fever!

Obviously we owe our success to our sponsors, organizers, coaches and volunteers. Don't miss your chance to contribute to one of the coolest sports on the planet!