



The Ice is Broken

A record seventeen teams entered this year's Ice Breaker Regatta held at Kerr's Reach on Sunday 6-December. Weather conditions had been perfect the day before at the Kaiapoi River Festival but they threatened to worsen during Sunday.

The emphasis for this event is that it is a fun day, and secondly it is a chance for teams (especially new paddlers) to see what an actual race is like.

We had some great consistent race starts from one of Canterbury's most experienced paddlers, Vai Papaili'i. There were some things that were not up to full regatta standard (like crew marshalling) but we all just wanted to get out and race.

A feature was the 'bleeding' of several apprentice sweeps – it was great to see so many step up to the plate and grab that tiller/sweep oar and go for it. This bodes well for the future.



Honours for the day went largely to Tu Meke, including their 'grommet' sweep, Toriana Hunt. And Beca Crewsaders showed they are a team to watch!

But we are sure every team and paddler took some valuable lessons from the day.

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Training in the New Year

We hope you have been enjoying a relaxing break over the Festive Season and are feeling re-charged.

Most teams were back on the water from about 11th or 12th January, so should be getting over the little aches and pains as we wake up those muscles that have been on holiday.

Please make sure your paddlers have a good stretch and warm up session for the first few nights – it is a good habit to get into, especially after a break.

Team Profiles please.

Remember how you promised to send us a few paragraphs about your team? Well you should have...

We need to give our race-day commentators some background material, so they can tell the gathered crowds about the teams they see on the water. And rumour has it that NZDBA will publish a booklet for the Nationals, so they will need some photos and stories.

Manhunt

Local adult teams are reporting that their crew numbers are looking OK at the moment, but some are short of male paddlers. In the past, teams have often had trouble with female numbers in the boat.

So if anyone knows of some blokes who need an adrenaline rush, email us now...

Shirley Boys at World Champs

The Shirley Boys' High School Dragon Boat team ("New Zealand Junior Open team") were the sole kiwi crew to compete at Racice, a small village 60km north of Prague in the Czech Republic. Racing took place on a purpose built rowing course which had one month earlier hosted the World Under 23 Rowing Championships so there was no doubt as to the quality of the race course.

Some 3055 competitors in 134 crews from 25 countries raced in Open, Premier, Under 23, Masters Over 40, Masters Over 50 and Junior Divisions over a five day programme. We raced over four different distances and performed with great credit, especially when considering that all our opposition were selected from *throughout* their respective countries, whereas our crew was selected just from Shirley Boys' High School.

Racing opened with the 2,000 m race which sees the crews started every 12 seconds and competing 2 laps of the course. Strict rules govern passing, and we did remarkably well to make up 23 seconds on the Australia 2 crew in the first 400m. We were just short of achieving an overlap as we entered the turn but had to wait until the next straight before we could overtake - this drop in pace definitely cost us at least one place. The Czech crew caught us after the first lap on their way to victory, but no other crew passed us. An eventual ranking of 6th saw the boys reasonably angry as they had wanted better, but their time was 42 seconds quicker than they had ever raced the distance before. An extremely creditable result.



Our journey back to our Prague accommodation saw us travelling through an incredible electrical storm which proved to be the only rain on our

trip. The following day - the 1,000 m - was a gut-buster, with a potential three races in 3 hours. We had boys unable to paddle due to sudden illness. If we won our heat we would go straight to the Grand Final and in a titanic battle we were beaten by less than a second by Canada. Into the Semi Final and having to either win or be the fastest 2nd place, we finished third behind Singapore and the Czech Republic. The boys struggled manfully in the Minor Final, enjoying a good start and leading for a long time, but were finally run down by the USA and beaten by 0.04 seconds! A ranking of 8th meant we had equalled our 2005 Sydney result. In an amazing Grand Final and in a display that showed how close the racing was, all six crews finished within 0.72 seconds of each other.

Next was the 200m sprint and for the first time ever, we won a heat (in 52.056) and went straight to the Grand Final. In spite of the fact that we had different boys ill this day, we were in a positive mood. Singapore blitzed the field winning by 2.5 seconds but the next four boats finished within 1.2 seconds. Again the boys were initially disappointed with their 5th placing, but when considering who they finished behind and the fact they beat Poland who had won the 1000m title, they were eventually very happy to again improve on the Sydney result and be less than 1 second from a medal.

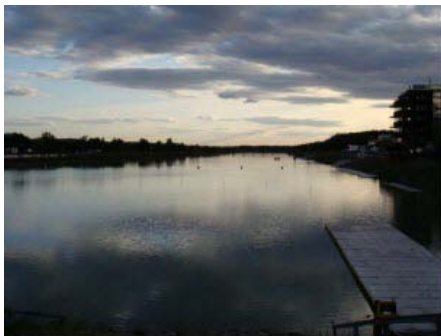


Our final day of racing was the 500m, which is the distance we race at home and still illness was affecting our selections. In our heat we again put the pressure on from the start but could not match the finish of the Germans, eventually finishing third behind Poland. In our Semi it was a similar battle, this time with Canada and we held our breath after finishing 0.8 seconds away in 2nd. Unfortunately we just missed making the Grand Final on times. Rather than let that have a negative impact, it fired up

the boys and they blitzed the field to win the Minor Final and enjoy a ranking of 7th.

In summary, an excellent effort from a group of Shirley Men, competing at an elite world level. They gained improved placings in three out of the four events when compared to Sydney and while it was always going to be a difficult task to medal, the boys were never far from that point, and it makes for some interesting thoughts going forward. Do we aim for Worlds again in Tampa Florida 2011, or do we compete as Shirley Boys' at the World Club Crew Champ?

Times at this World Champs were definitely slower than Sydney, which can be attributed to a slightly different Rowing



Course and depth of water, and a change to the "Swift" design of boat. Our times in Sydney would have won us Gold in the 1,000 m and 500 m, and Silver in the 200 m at Racice. However, Mr Stocks and I believe the 2009 crew is a faster unit than the 2007 crew and proved that in Rotorua so slower times from all countries have to be a consequence of Boat and conditions. In a series of close races, every distance was won by a different country with our crew being ranked in 5th place overall when comparing crews who raced over all four distances.

This was a wonderful experience for our team, travelling to the Czech Republic and living in a completely different culture.

Highlights outside of racing would have to be the sightseeing around Prague, our trip to Vienna, and Singapore. A special thanks to our Coach Russell Stocks for his latest 18 months of training, and to his partner Judy for all her help on tour. Also to the parents who accompanied us, John Allen, Ian Barnes, Iain Osborne, Christian Frunt, Kay and Ross Major. The trip would not have been possible without yours and the other parents fundraising efforts, and your work and enthusiasm on tour was invaluable.

John Fox,
Team Manager

Results – 2,000 m

1	Czech Republic.....	8.53.24
2	Canada	9.12.78
3	Singapore.....	9.15.51
4	Germany	9.16.96
5	Russia.....	9.44.79
6	New Zealand	9.54.51
7	Australia 1	
8	Australia 2.....	

Results – 1,000 m

1	Poland	4.20.09
2	Germany	4.20.15
3	Canada	4.20.45
4	Russia.....	4.20.46
5	Singapore.....	4.20.76
6	Czech Republic.....	4.20.81

In the 1000m Heat, we recorded 4.24.01, in the Semi 4.26.14 and in the Minor Final 4.27.63, beating Ukraine, Australia 1 and Australia 2

Results – 200 m

1	Singapore.....	46.613
2	Russia.....	49.021
3	Germany.....	49.279
4	Canada	49.875
5	New Zealand	50.183
6	Poland	51.049

Results – 500 m

1	Canada	2.05.44
2	Germany	2.07.87
3	Russia.....	2.07.87
4	Singapore.....	2.08.31
5	Poland	2.08.52
6	Czech Republic.....	2.09.83

Crews in the Minor Final of the 200m were USA, Ukraine, Australia and Great Britain

New Zealand won the Minor Final of the 500m in 2.10.41, beating USA, Australia and Ukraine. Our fastest time was 2.08.45 in the Semi Final.

The 2009 New Zealand Junior Open Dragon Boat Crew was:

Benjamyn Allen, Jayden Ball, Samuel Barnes, Daniel Burke, Adam Cairns, Aidan Coleman, Glenn Dickie, Mark Drabble, Hayden Duncan, Brytt Frunt, Jaden Frunt (Captain), Zachary Goy, Filip Jansons, Brayden Johnson, Vincent Major, Oliver Malpass, Michael Martlew, Scott Martlew, Jozef McGurk, Liam McGurk, Alex Mohi, Ethan Osborne, Richard Stowers, Johan Winkelman, Russell Stocks (Sweep and Coach), John Fox (Manager), Judy Blake (Assistant Manager)

Kaiapoi River Carnival

Aoraki had a big weekend in early December, beginning with the Kaiapoi River Festival. It was an opportunity to get our teams to help rearrange the new Champion Dragon boats that had been on the trailer and inside the shed all winter. Thanks again for the 'lift', teams.

On Saturday 5th, Rick towed the five boats to the Kaiapoi River ramp, turning a few heads on the way. Evacut Express are now training out of the Kaiapoi compound on Monday nights, and Aoraki hopes to expand the sport in the future by



starting teams from the local high schools. There is also potential for the R13 Trust (the community group who helped build the compound) to try out the Dragon Boat as well as the beautiful

new Waka Ama they have in the compound.

Once three boats were unloaded and fitted out, one was paddled toward the town, which involved sneaking past some relatively sedate rafts – apparently they were in a "race" but they seemed pretty laboured to us in our relatively lithe craft!

The boat was left on display on the bank, among the large crowd who came out to enjoy the sunny day.



Back at the ramp the faithful paddlers split into an Evacut Crew plus the newly formed "Dragamuffins", made up of ABOLers, TuMekians, Paddlateers and Hewinsons. The two crews ran several races in front of the crowds who were partying along the banks, and in the pubs. Evacut used the home ground advantage well, winning 2 races - Dragamuffins had to resort to stealth to take out the third.

A feature of Dragamuffins was how paddlers from diverse teams can come together so quickly to form an effective racing crew. For example, Peter Mitchell from the Tu Meke powerhouse was thrust into the Stroke role alongside ABOL's senior stateswoman, Toni Reid who kept up

stroke for stroke with Maverick. It was difficult to tell who was giving who the lesson...



The festival is our chance to show Dragon Boating to a town that supports their home team – it is a great event for Kaiapoi with lots of activities and action on the river.

Get well soon, Toni...

Kaiapoi Festival was immediately followed by the Ice Breaker on Sunday, where ABOL's oldest paddler Toni Reid, 79 and still going very strong, was named team captain. She was buzzing after the team did so well, especially in the 2 km race, which they had been dreading doing.

But on Tuesday evening she fell ill with stomach cramps, and was admitted after a CT scan found a cancerous bowel tumour. Toni had surgery on Thursday morning to have a part of the bowel removed. But as you have read above, Toni is a paddler of enormous stamina – as is anyone who can keep up with Pete Mitchell's paddling.

Toni is doing really well, despite the pain (she has a large abdominal cut). Her overall fitness through dragon boating is standing her in good stead in her recovery and she is a bit of a star patient because of her attitude, mental faculties and general all round lovely demeanour. Nurses had to limit the number of visitors – her 26 odd team mates, plus her gardening group, Probus and choir friends has meant a continual stream of visitors. Meanwhile, she had dragon boat photos from the Icebreaker all around the walls.

Toni will now have chemo to deal with. Even though Toni has no immediate family, she has a ton of good friends. We can add to that the paddlers of Canterbury and beyond...

Footnote: ABOL have had a tough few weeks dealing with Toni's illness and yet another paddler being diagnosed with a re-occurrence of cancer in her other breast. They then had to deal with the very sad and sudden passing on another of their members. Anne Graham was new to the boat after the very successful recruitment drive at the start of the season. Anne was only 47 years old when she passed

away on the 17th January from a massive heart attack. The girls feel like they are reeling from one shock to another but this hasn't stopped them getting out there on the water and paddling their hearts out. They are extremely grateful for all the support they receive from the Aoraki family of paddlers and strive very hard to make you all proud of them.

Fei Long

We asked Dragon Boat legend Scruff Hewinson to tell us about his association with Fei Long:

"First I had better tell you who I am. For those that don't know me I have been involved in doing the boat maintenance, training supervision and casual sweep and coach. I have been involved in Dragon Boating since the early 90s. I have paddled in corporate and open classes."



At the beginning of the season, Scott (Iceman) Johnson asked me to help out with some of his teams. They include Tu Meke, Fei Long and Christchurch Girls High School 1 and 2. Scott is coach and sweep for these teams so he sometimes gets 'double booked'. So I get to help out with all of them at times when needed...

Fei Long is a very serious team who go out and train hard. But they also like a bit of fun with their training so it is not too tedious. For example they will paddle in pairs chasing a tennis ball thrown forward. They train hard, but the main thing is that they have fun and fit.

At the South Island Champs last March they had a very good showing all day, but had to get another Sweep for a race or two, as Iceman was with Tu Meke, and I was Race Starter for the day. As it happened, Fei Long asked me to sweep for them in the final, because Tu Meke were in the final too. This was the only race I wasn't Starter for...

After the South Islands, Fei Long put on some more trainings including 7 am starts, and Saturday morning. The team asked me to go with them to Nationals in Rotorua, but I had to turn it down as I was off to Aussie the week after and I was broke! The team then came to me the next week and asked again, because

they ended up with a spare seat on the plane, so I accepted. We flew to Auckland on the same flight as Tu Meke and Airways. Teams then picked up their rental vans and headed to Rotorua. Now, one thing I learnt about Fei Long is that they love "Maccas" – they will eat it anywhere, any time.

Once in Rotorua the team went shopping for supplies then headed to Lone Star for dinner. I ordered a pint, but was immediately told off – "no drinkies the night before racing!" [but they made up for that later in the weekend!]

We woke up early next morning for team breakfast, then off to the Blue Lake. We were the first team to arrive, so got a good park, and a good look at the lake.

Fei Long had a very good day. We were lucky to win the first race, considering I mistook the buoys, and called "Stable!" before he finish line. In fact Fei Long won all their races, with their times putting them in the B Final.

Fellow team, Tu Meke were very gracious and loaned their set of Carbon Fibre CD2 paddles for the final, which saw Fei Long post their best race of the day.

I had agreed with the team that if I was caught smoking, they could throw me in after the last race. And so it came to pass! I gave Grace my glasses for safe keeping... not knowing *she* would be thrown in the lake straight after me! Luckily they were found in the crystal clear water of the Blue Lake the next day – whew...

I thank Fei Long for allowing me to be part of their team, and especially for Nationals - they are a team to be watched, that's for sure.

Scruff Hewinson

Ridge Riders Rise again

Grace Grocott, ex Marian paddler, has gathered a crew of 30-odd paddlers to form the "Ridge Riders Under 23" team, made up of ex paddlers from Marian, Shirley, Avonside, Villa and St Bedes. 'Veteran' Sweep Russell Stocks has agreed to train and sweep the new team, but an injury means ex-Shirley 'junior veteran' Glenn Dickie has stepped up to the role of apprentice Sweep to the grand master, to helm RR-U23 while "Mr Stocks" recovers.

Raffle results from Ice Breaker

Apologies to friends and supporters of ABOL, who bought tickets at the Ice Breaker for the fabulous hamper – we meant to announce the winner at prize giving on Sunday but “the crowd was getting restless”... Gayle is pleased to tell us that the three prizes all went to paddlers at the Regatta. The big one went to a Give it a go team member who is in her first year of paddling – her family doesn't have a lot, so she was really blown away. A deserving winner on the day...

More on the New Paddles

The NZDBA newsletter reminded us that they have imported a batch of Champion Paddles.



Christchurch teams have already bought sets, but NZDBA will hold onto some Champions, so that we can have paddles available at Nationals for any team that hasn't been able to buy a set.

Teams should be looking to upgrade their heavy old blades. Email aoraki.dragons@gmail.com for a quote for Merlin Fibre glass or Carbon Fibre paddles.

European teams eye up the South...

Local Waka Ama paddler Lindy Alders was a paddler in an Italian team in China 07 where she also met the Dutch team. The Dutch team leader is seriously interested in coming to New Zealand and Australia in 2010-11, and Lindy will act as their mediator and tour planner.

Kelvin Watt, president of AusDBF, was also in China and has shown great interest in putting something together for the Dutch and possibly the Italian team when they come to Australia.

There is a lot of planning to do yet, but we look forward to welcoming any northerners to our water-ways!

Penang practise turns into tragedy

Sunday 17 January 2010 was like any Sunday morning in Penang, and the Chung Ling Secondary School dragon boat team practised for the Penang International Dragon Boat Festival (PIDF) to be held in June this year.

The team (a teacher, two instructors and 15 students) got into the boat at around 8 am and at 10am the team was doing their final lap of practice. But during a u-turn before returning to shore, tragedy struck. The dragon boat rolled and overturned when hit by the wake of a passing vessel. It was unclear if they hit a tug boat nearby during the accident. It is believed that strong currents pulled the students under the water.

Twelve other students escaped the tragedy and some of them managed to swim ashore while some were rescued by two passing fishing boats. The bodies of the teacher, Chin Ai Fang, in his 20's, and student Jason Ch'ng, 17, were found near the accident site. The remaining four students, aged 16 to 17 (who were not wearing life jackets) were found two days later.

The area on the eastern foreshore of Penang where the boat capsized is popularly used by school dragon boat teams to train in preparation for the PIDF.



Kuah Zi Xun, 17, one of the survivors that swam ashore, said "It all happened so fast. We all panicked when the boat starts to roll over and some among us just disappeared into the water during the commotion. The strong current pulled down the students with some of them who were wearing life jackets were also pulled down. I hope all my friends are safe," he said.

Investigation into tragedy continue...

Dates to Remember: 🏆 Sunday 21-Feb **Aoraki Early Bird** (venue still to be confirmed).

🏆 Sat 27/Sun 28-Feb **Wellington Festival**. 🏆 Saturday 6-March **South Island Champs** Lake Hood.

🏆 Sat 13/Sun 14-March **Akid Champs** 🏆 Sat 27/Sun 28-Feb **NZDBA National Champs** Lake Hood.