



Half time Break is over – back into the water...

Most Adult teams have returned to training after the Christmas break, and we are having some great weather for it (on the whole). In particular we are finding it very sheltered on Lake Rua for training, as distinct from the impressive waves that Waimak were confronted with on Lake Pegasus one Wednesday.

New Boats – New venue!

For those teams that are back at our training venues they could be excused for thinking our boats had shrunk over the break.

Thankfully they are wrong.

And thanks a heap to *Pub Charity* for supporting Dragon Boating again.



They have granted us the money to buy six beautiful [`Swift' Ten Man Dragon Boats](#). These are already proving very useful for teams that are back at training, but do not have a full crew of 20 paddlers in the boat. [Come to think of it, most teams struggle to get a full 20 paddlers to their training session at the best of times!]



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There will be at least one of these boats at each [training](#) venue in case your team has only a small turnout, or an overflow.

Most regatta will still be in the full sized Champion Dragon Boats but we will race Ten Mans on special occasions!

And the first of those is THIS Saturday when we will put them through their paces at [Akaroa](#).



Sweeps and teams will hopefully have had a session or two to get used to the 'fleetness of foot' of this amazing new class of boat. They are "very fun!"

Akaroa Super 12

This Saturday sees TWO firsts for us in Christchurch. We get to try racing on sea water for the first time in many years.

And we have the chance to christen SIX new Dragon Boats. A new era in Dragon Boating...

Teams should be set up at [Akaroa's](#) Jubilee Park by about 11 am on Saturday morning.

Attached to this email is a [map](#), giving your paddlers an idea of how to get to the racing site in Akaroa (or you can zoom on the one to the right). Tent sites are **not** pre-allocated, so 'first in first served'. *Except* that you should respect any team that is, say, using one sweep between two teams – they find it important to be close to both teams.

Please make sure you allow enough time to get over from Christchurch (car pool if possible).

After a formal blessing of the new Fleet of Swifts, and the venue waters, Racing starts (at midday) with Le Mans races. Three teams start per race, with the stern backed onto the beach. From a *Start/Finish line* up the beach, a designated paddler runs onto the boat. The boat then paddles out to its buoy, making a left hand turn then back to the same spot on the beach. Another paddler (or caller) then runs up the beach to the Finish Line.

Fastest three boats proceed to the "A Final" and the 4th, 5th and 6th go to the "B Final". The rest, well, rest...

At about 1:30 the Sprints start, with 250 metre races in three lanes. Depending on how timing goes we will have two or three heats, and then graded Finals. Prize Giving will be immediately after racing, on the beach or by the tents.

We expect the last race to be around 6pm (Race Draw will be emailed separately/soon) so you could head into Akaroa for a bite, join us at the pub near the Reserve, or make it back to Christchurch for a late dinner and couch time.

It's going to be pretty warm on Saturday once morning cloud burns off, so 'be prepared'. Take drinks, sunblock, hat, more drinks (no alcohol of course) and another slop of sunblock.

We will have a coffee cart on site plus Ice Cream van for part of the day. There are local shops and cafés if you really need, but take some energy food to get you up for the Finals.



Sweep training and accreditation

Aoraki ran Sweep School sessions earlier in the season, and this weekend in Akaroa might be a good time for novice sweeps to practice what they have learnt.

Two of our experienced Sweeps, Rick Smith and Russell Stocks had a productive meeting in Auckland with the NZDBA STAG (Sweep Training and Accreditation Group). They have developed a tiered accreditation system, ranging from Novice sweep, Restricted and Provisional accreditation, and then Full Sweep accreditation up to the Advanced sweep (Guru).

These Levels will take some time to sort out (including the 'recognition of prior learning'). Likewise for the Sweep training material, but they should make it easier to ensure we recognise and develop those 'salt of the earth' types that step up for the role.

New developments in the Schools

While we have lots of strength in our current schools, Aoraki have decided we need to grow the number of schools involved, to make it more accessible.

With our own regatta etc to organise, we have struggled to put the focus into this area. But thankfully, at the AGM some of our passionate paddlers offered to form a sub-committee and come up with a plan for growth. So while they see opportunities to grow the adult team numbers, their initial focus was to introduce more school age people to the sport (which of course can feed on to adult crews).

This committee (of Marie Childs, Terry Coyle, Ian Macbeth and Karyn Brailsford) have put together a package that they have put out to all High Schools in the area – the Canterbury Secondary Schools Dragon Boat Challenge (CSSDBC).

This gives the new school 5 one-hour “on water” training sessions with a qualified sweep/coach (starting 13 February), then every following Wednesday afternoon for four weeks.

Then a full afternoon/evening of inter-school racing on Wednesday 20-March-13 with 250 m “Splash and Dash” the 500 m “Enduro” and a Chant Competition. So far we have at least 3 teams committed, with more thinking about it next week (now that the teachers are back from holidays).

Hopefully some of these teams will decide to continue for the rest of the season, or at least return next year as a full time team.

Racing the Aussies – their backyard or ours?

We have heard that the organisers of the Wellington Dragon Boat Festival (Wendy and Angela) are actively recruiting Australian paddlers and teams to come across for their races on the Wellington Waterfront. And they are encouraging them to come down to Christchurch immediately after that, to experience some of our paddling (and the other tourist attractions of course).

Hence Aoraki is putting on some “Twilight Racing” on Tuesday 19th March on Lake Pegasus. Plans are fairly fluid at this stage, but we will keep you informed.

Canterbury Paddling

One of the strongest teams in recent years has been CPC – Canterbury Paddling Club. With a strong Waka Ama component they have transferred many skills to Dragon Boating.

They drifted away from Dragon Boats these last few years, but stalwart Pom Connell (ex Screws Loose) has been working on a merger with Nga Maata Waka club to form a new super club. Unfortunately they won't be ready to compete at the Akaroa Super 12 but we may see them at one of our other regatta. More later...

Training – where mah boats at?

We now have Champion Boats (20s) and Swifts (Ten Man) ready for training at Lake Pegasus, Lake Rua and in the Owles Terrace shed. Well, they will be back after Akaroa. PLEASE remember to **lock them up** after Training! And as usual please keep us informed of your training plans (time and location).

Schedule for the season

Significant events this summer include:

Super 12 – Akaroa on Saturday!

Aoraki Open at Lake Pegasus, Sunday 24th February 2013.

South Island Champs at Lake Hood, Saturday 9th March 2013.

Twilight Races at Lake Pegasus, 19th March.

National Champs at Rotorua 6th April.

Then Sydney/Penrith?

What paddling gear do you need?

Last newsletter, we asked if your team needs ‘paddling products’. NZDBA are importing boats and paddles from *Swift* and can get them to supply other products that teams might need. So tell us what you want? Knee pads or straps? Padded paddling shorts? Paddle bags? How about electronics for analysing paddling? If you let us know, we will find out if Swift can find us something worth buying.

Aoraki have bought a set of Swift wooden 202A Spec paddles which we can make available for rent or sale to teams. If your team needs paddles, Email us for details:
aoraki.dragons@gmail.com