



KAYAK KAPERS

August 2006

2006 AGM and Annual Dinner

The Lane Cove River Kayakers AGM and Annual Dinner on July 28 provided an opportunity for paddlers to plan the year ahead and also gather socially with their husbands, wives and partners at the Lane Cove Club. It was a relaxed but non-stop evening, with a lot of movement between tables and set against an interesting backdrop of a slide show from Tom Simmat's latest Yukon River exploits (see page 7).

It was also a good time for the club to parade its attractive new lycra paddling uniform – sky blue with the logo boldly

emblazoned on the front. It comes in two styles: a long-sleeved version (\$70) and a singlet (\$55). Both are being passed on at cost price to members, with the cost reflecting the small number ordered. Also on display were the new club caps (in white or blue, \$17) and a fleecy long-sleeved jacket in blue with red trim (\$50).

Tim Hookins was re-elected President and the committee remains essentially the same (see page 8).

(continued on page 2)



(continued from front page)

In reviewing a number of issues facing the club, Hookins noted that we probably need to move from Wirong Flat to the pontoon. We have the opportunity there of sheltered facilities and parking but access to the water from the narrow jetty is not ideal and will be worsened if membership increases. NSW Canoeing has called for clubs to expand membership and thus increase revenue in the wake of Australian Canoeing's financial difficulties.

Another matter facing the new committee is concern about safety and compliance aspects of Wednesday night paddles. "It is important that all paddlers are required to join the club

after one paddle and that a suitable form is signed before they are accepted in any time trial," said Hookins.

The club has 114 members, and there are another 40 non-members who turn up frequently at Wednesday night time trials. Procedures involving participation in time trials are being tightened.

Hookins announced that Olympic paddler Chantal Meek has "responded positively" to an invitation to provide coaching for club members during the next few months. This is exciting news as Chantal is highly regarded as one of Australia's top paddlers and as well as Olympics has represented us at world championships. She is also an occa-

sional and welcome participant in our Wednesday night outings. The coaching is likely to be on a group basis and details will be announced as soon as they are known.

On the financial side, the club made a profit of just over \$700 in the year and has over \$11,000 in the bank. Possible purchases include a K4 and a tinny to be used as a rescue boat.

Members were urged to phone the EPA hotline 131555 or email Rob Grozier rgrozier@hotmail.com if they see any industrial pollution in Lane Cove River and to report any hooning anywhere in Sydney waters to NSW Maritime (Waterways) 9563-8511.



BEHIND THE SCENES

with Tim Hookins, President

Well, it's happened at last, and the wait has been well worth it. The new Lane Cove River Kayakers paddling uniforms have arrived and they look great. The colors and design are outstanding and the seams are on the outside so there should be no problems with rubbing. Don Rowston and Derek Simmonds are to be congratulated on an excellent job. I'd like to see all Lane Cove competitors in the marathon series wearing them so we create a much stronger identity.

Items of interest from the last committee meeting include:

- I have written a letter of apology, as LCRK President, to the Marathon Committee about the misunderstandings in the course marking at the race we hosted on May 28. Our committee discussed various methods for marking the course clearly next year, and felt that club buoy markers are not suitable because they are hard to keep in place on Lane Cove River due to tides. We believe it is important to have boats carrying people who are well briefed and familiar with the course stationed at the critical marker points.
- The financial report from the Lane Cove marathon showed that we returned a net profit of \$336.69. And that was after giving \$1247.50 (roughly half of registration fees) to NSW Canoeing and turning on a free barbecue for everyone. So we got that part of it right! Inciden-

tally, the 147 competing paddlers and their friends plus sundry officials knocked over \$320 worth of sausages and \$150.60 worth of soft drinks.

- Derek Simmonds advised the reconstruction of our website, www.lcrk.org.au, is at an advanced stage. It will incorporate newsletters, weekly results, safety procedures, updated river etiquette, the time trial course, an aerial photo of the river, membership requirements, links to other sites and a photo gallery.
- We are checking with Willoughby Council about progress in the construction of launching steps for the pontoon. The Council has offered to make metal steps at no cost to the club.
- A safety kit and instructions are brought down to the paddle every Wednesday night. A copy of procedures will be given to each timekeeper and fixed to the registration desk. It is important that all paddlers are aware of them.
- Derek Simmonds raised the question of social paddles. He has been approached by a number of people who are interested in recreational paddling. The committee is receptive to the idea but unsure about insurance aspects. We will investigate further.
- Matt Swann put forward the need for a rubber ducky. This will also be investigated.

Come and tackle Tiri's white water

by Richard Barnes

When flatwater becomes tame and whitewater beckons, Tiri Slalom is a great introduction to paddling on moving water. Tiri is on the Manning River, smack bang in farming land inland from Taree.

Dangling red and green poles over a stretch of river transform a normally innocuous rapid into a true marathoner's challenge. Green means pass downstream through the gate, red means spin around and head upstream. Fastest down the course wins, once 2-second penalties for touching a gate or 50-second penalties for missing one completely are added.

In this sport, a racing "K1" is about half the length of a marathoner's version, with plenty of rocker to assist carving turns, and next to no freeboard so the boat might actually slip under the gate.

Marathon and slalom also share Louise Dearnley tackles the Tiri rapids



C1 and C2 categories; slalom prefers short and excruciatingly uncomfortable varieties.

Richard Barnes has participated at Tiri for many of its 30-year history. Martin and Louise Dearnley took up the challenge this year. Extreme drought levels exposed more rocks than ever previously seen and reduced the Manning to a trickle. Even so, the water's power should not be underestimated, and some still managed a chilly capsizing.

A Tiri highlight is always the riverside camping, especially the camp fires. This year's in June kept the midwinter chills at bay. It's hard to beat a camp oven meal, surrounded by a hemisphere of stars, after a day's paddling.



Wintry Narrabeen

We were greeted with an icy blast from the southwest when we arrived at Narrabeen for [race 5 of the Winter Marathon Series](#) on June 25. There must have been plenty of snow for the skiers at Thredbo because the wind was straight off the Southern Alps.

Everyone huddled around with their hands thrust deep into the pockets of their parkas or started rummaging through their gear for thermals. One or



Rob Vallis...waiting for baby news

two people forecast that the wind would ease – which it did eventually – but not too many of us believed them.

Out on the water competitors found they had not only the wind but also a bit of a chop to deal with. It was not ideal for K1s, which may have had something to

do with 4 of the 10 starters in division 1 failing to finish.

Lane Cove had no-one in divisions 1 or 2, but Dean Wayne carried our flag well in division 3, coming in 7th in 1.50.36.

In division 4, Bruce Goodall powered along at the front of the field and finished 2nd behind the winning double, only 5 seconds adrift. It was a terrific performance. Bruce's time of 1.49.02 was our fastest of the day.

David Edelman, Rob Vallis and Tim Hookins crossed the finishing line in a large bunch, taking out 6th, 8th and 9th spots in 1.52.48, 1.52.56 and 1.52.57 respectively. Rob was no doubt hurrying to be back in time for their arrival of his third child, but Emma was waiting happily for him at lake's edge with the news: "Not yet!" (Baby update: see page 6.)

Oliver Hookins was the next LCRK paddler, 15th in 1.56.01, followed by Martin Dearnley 16th in 1.56.42. Marg Cook and Merridy Huxley were two spots further back in 1.57.06, followed by John McNamara having his first marathon outing of the season in 1.59.25.

In the popular and over-populated division 5, Bert Lloyd and Trevor Williamson were our best with 10th in 2.03.37. Len Hedges was 13th in 2.05.41.



Bert Lloyd, James Mumme and Matt Swann

With their new Vulcan double still only a promise from the maker, James Mumme and Matt Swann had to split up and do it solo. From their finishing times – 19th in 2.09.17 and 20th in 2.09.32 respectively – it looks like they kept their close partnership alive and well.

Others from Lane Cove were Louise Dearnley/Georgia Peacock 24th in 2.13.11, Justin Paine 28th in 2.26.48 and Greg Appleyard 30th in 2.29.05.

Sam Sharbine succumbed to a recurrence of a rib injury suffered in a mountain bike crash and pulled out after two of the three laps.

In the 15km division 6 race, John Greathead and Tony Walker found the competition is getting tougher as the season progresses but still brought their double in not too far from the leaders to take out 5th place in 1.18.10.

By the time the last of the paddlers had come in the wind had eased and the temperature had risen from single figures to a pleasant 17° or so. Manly Warringah turned on a well organised race and we enjoyed it.

Note: Detailed results of this and other marathon races are available at www.nswcanoe.org.au under Discipline/Marathon.



John Greathead and Tony Walker ... getting tougher



Winners are grinners. Richard Barnes (left) claimed the Roger Deane Trophy for the fastest paddler with a time of 60.04 in the quarterly event at the pontoon on June 21. Louise Dearnley (2nd from left) and Georgia Peacock (right) cut several minutes off their previous K2 times to combine with Martin Dearnley and win the Mark Sier Handicap Trophy for the fastest two-boat team on handicap with a time of 164.25.



Propeller blades – which shape suits you?

by Roger Aspinall

Over the past several years the propeller or wing blade paddle has become increasingly popular across a broader range of paddlers; from competitive flat water to open ocean surf ski paddlers to expedition sea kayakers and even recreational harbour paddlers.

Essentially, the one outstanding feature of these paddles over a conventional flat blade is that they make you go faster. You should expect at least 10% to 15% increase in speed for the same effort; even more if you hone your technique. They allow you to obtain maximum performance from your boat.

There is an ever increasing range of brands and models to choose from these days, and while some differences in shape and size are obvious, other differences are more subtle. The physical differences in appearance do, in fact, change the way the blade performs in the water.

Some of the performance differences are obvious, and others are much more subtle. For example, a larger surface area will give much more resistance, ie “pull” more water, and this difference is immediately obvious when comparing paddles of varying surface area.

More subtle changes such as size of the lip; parallel or tear-drop sides; varying offset or pitch; even overall length; will also produce different effects in the water. Some related to performance, others more abstract such as the way the blade enters and exits the water.

Paddler’s technique can also alter these attributes so the effects felt by one paddler may not necessarily be felt by another.

Before we investigate the variances in blade shape and design, let’s just have a quick look at construction. For most users, an important factor is weight. Carbon, kevlar and combinations of these provide lighter weight, increased strength and rigidity. Lightweight blades provide reduced “swingweight”, and a well balanced combination of materials and design can get the overall weight down to as little as 700g or less.

Shaft construction is important depending on the main use of the paddle. A rigid carbon shaft and blade give very positive transfer of power to the water. A carbon/kevlar shaft provides flex for shock absorption ... particularly useful in rough water, eg open ocean or whitewater. A carbon/kevlar blade provides extra strength and durability to prevent chipping and cracking, which is also useful in

whitewater, eg down river racing or wildwater racing.

OK, on to blade design. Perhaps the most obvious differences, apart from surface area, are variations in offset and pitch, and parallel or teardrop shape.

Let’s look at the performance differences between parallel edged and teardrop shaped blades, since this is probably the most common variation you will encounter. Off-set and pitch variations can occur with either blade shape to produce different performance results.

Parallel Common brands include: Lettman, Stealth, Mako, Bracsa III, Bennett, Prijon.

The parallel edge blades perform evenly and solidly through the entire length of the stroke. They are ideal for moderate to rough water conditions. With reduced off-set and pitch they give a very solid catch and lots of power, especially in aerated water, but require more effort for acceleration. They can also have a sloppy entry and exit, but this can suit ocean paddling or wildwater racing where short, punchy strokes and high cadence are more common. More off-set produces a cleaner but slightly less stable catch but with an even distribution of power through the whole stroke

Teardrop Common brands include: Epic, Bracsa I, IV, VI & VII, Slipstream Helix, Solution Lithium, Trivium.



Seventeen years ago Arni and I paddled the Hawkesbury Classic together, the first kayak race for both us. Since then I have done five Hawkesburys in a single, but this year Arni and I are going to do the race together again.

Arni got me into paddling. She came home one day with a Hawkesbury Classic leaflet *The Moonlight Paddle* and said “We are going to do this.” She phoned a man in Chatswood who makes Estuaries and arranged for us to see one on the Saturday, and on the Monday she phoned him again and ordered a red one. It’s the same boat we still paddle on Wednesday nights. I call it the “Manly ferry”.

This year, Arni is tired of land crewing and wants to experience the race again. She is ambitious to do well and we are not going out for a cruise down the river. Our motivation is to have a good race and certainly to break our original time of 13.11.31. And our big target is to break the 50+ Mixed Rec 2 record of 12.26.28.

The Hawkesbury is a fantastic race with so many elements – navigation, endurance, adventure, a great atmosphere and everyone going for their own individual goals. We are going in it because we like it and it’s fun.

We are still searching for a suitable double and we have been trying out a Nomad. I also have others in mind, and there’s still a possibility we will use the

PLANNING A MOONLIGHT PADDLE

by Urs Mader

Estuary we started out in all those years ago. We want a reasonably stable boat as we like to train in the harbour and Pittwater/Broken Bay.

Last year, when I won the men’s 50+ Long Rec in a carbon fibre Mirage 580 and got a trophy for the fastest man over 50, I cranked everything up to see how fast I could push the Mirage down the Hawkesbury. It was like breaking the hour for the City to Surf or 3 hours for a marathon, and I wanted to go below 10 hours. I did 10.30.53, which I believe is the fastest Mirage time that has been posted, and I think it’s a tall order to beat 10 hours in a Mirage.

We will use the same no-stops strategy as in that race: we sit in the boat, no

matter how long it takes, until the race finishes, just like we did 17 years ago.

We are training hard and to make sure we are properly prepared we set targets so we can train towards them.

I keep a detailed record of all my training – heart rate, speed, distance, time etc.

I treat my training like a project plan. I look at every detail. I fiddle around with the boat and get that right, then the clothing and when I’m happy with that I look at the paddle and food. I even

train my eating habits so I don’t have any nasty surprises during the race.

If you do this and get it right, when it comes to the big day, if everything works out as you planned, you should achieve your objective.



Toughen up your abs

In paddling, your abdominal muscles are the engine room, the centre of power and stability. It's important to keep them strong and flexible. There are a number of exercises which you can easily do at home to strengthen these muscles. Here are three for you to try. This group of abs exercises requires a Swiss ball or fit ball. These are readily available at Rebel Sport or any other fitness shop and are not very expensive.

Exercise No. 1



Arms straight, body straight and toes on the ball.

Exercise No. 2



Forearms on the ball, back straight, knees and toes on the ground.



Bend the knees while keeping control of the ball.



Roll the ball away, extending the body. Once fully extended, roll the ball back to its starting position.



Continue bending the knees until they are on the chest as far as they will go, then straighten the legs back to the starting position.



Heels on the ball and shoulders on the ground. Keep your body straight and hold this position.

Do several repetitions of Exercises 1 and 2 until tired, then repeat. Do Exercise 3 two or three times with holds of 15-60 seconds.

Happy training.

The place to get fit is Climb Fit indoor rockclimbing and gymnasium, 12 Frederick Street, St Leonards, where Matt is manager.

Teardrop shaped blades produce very clean entry and exit as well as excellent acceleration through the early part of the power phase. Fantastic for sprint starts and bursts of acceleration for overtaking or dropping those annoying wash-riders. Increased off-set produces an earlier catch, therefore giving a longer stroke. The longer the stroke, the more power is delivered to the water, and the further your boat will glide with each stroke.

Pitch is something which doesn't seem to vary that much between manufacturers and models. Mako produce an extreme teardrop shape with a radical twist (lots of pitch), but it is not a common model.

My experience is that this type of blade is excellent for wider boats, eg TK1, where the path of the blade through the water tends to follow a wider wash.

The increased pitch provides forward propulsion (lift) as the blade travels diagonally away from the hull (following the wash). It is also very good for ultra-marathons where the efficiency of the stroke can be maintained even when your technique lapses as you get tired and your top hand tends to drop.

So, which shape?

Ultimately, it boils down to what you are comfortable with and what works for you. The best thing to do is to try lots of different paddles if possible before making your purchase. Paddles range from \$400 to \$700 these days, so you want to make sure you're happy with what you get

It may be that if you paddle in varying conditions, eg, open ocean and flat water, then you may well need a couple of paddles in your quiver to suit those vastly different conditions. Talk to experts, seek advice and arrange test paddles before making your choice.

Arni had done the initial research on training and race-day food and drink which I've fine-tuned over the years. For this Hawkesbury we will use the same 4-drinks liquid food strategy which I have found successful in the past. One drink will be carbohydrates, another electrolytes, a third water and the last one what I call "my treat". The "treat" is a secret and I save it up for the final hour.

My last secret weapon is GPS, although I found the mapping of the Hawkesbury to be quite inaccurate. So I went down the river - in a motorboat - to lay a GPS track for the race because I knew exactly where on the river I wanted to be.

It can be pitch black, particularly around Wisemans, before the moon comes up, which makes it difficult to get close to the shore. And with the incoming tide you don't want to be out in the middle of the river because you can lose up to 0.3-0.4km/h. With the GPS I can get near the bank safely.

When the race starts I switch it on and just follow the snake (my name for the track). I try to keep to my target speed and even have little encouragement notes popping up periodically on the screen.

On race day I feel I have got my preparation right and all I have to do is psych myself up: "Go Urs!"

Along the Birdsville Track with Roger Deane

That intrepid traveller Roger Deane has left behind the vineyards of South Australia and, after successfully fighting off the bush flies of Central Australia and being elated at buying 60 cans of VB for \$60 in Birdsville, was last heard of heading for Cape York.

He and Leonie have covered more country than Burke and Wills since we last heard from them and gave a graphic description of their travels in a lengthy email to Tim Hookins. Here are some extracts:

"After the Flinder's (Ranges) we headed further north to a town called Copley that only had one pub but it served great meals and the beer was reasonably priced and cold... Temperatures are starting to rise now. 40 degree days are the norm. North again.

"Marree ... is the starting point, or the finishing point, of several desert tracks... Three white families and a huge Aboriginal population. We got chatting to the owner of the park we chose to stay in and it came into the conversation that it was our wedding anniversary. The next thing you know the fellow is bringing out the champagne a couple of bottles at a time...

"It was from Marree that we set off up one of those desert tracks. Let me say now that 'The Birdsville' is not a road one would normally travel with a caravan in tow and I approached it with some trepidation. Temperatures were now 45

plus. The car's air-conditioning struggled but our two fridges kept the beer and wine cold which was a welcome relief at the end of the day. We took two days to complete the Birdsville Track, stopping halfway at a roadhouse come pub come camping ground called Mungerannie. John & Genevieve own the place and were celebrating their tenth anniversary there. Mail only comes in every few weeks at Mungerannie



and it came in while we were there. John was excited and delighted with some brochures that arrived advertising 'The Pubs of the Outback'. Of course, his pub was in it. It was Leonie's and my job the next day to deliver some of those brochures to Birdsville. The mail must get through! Anyway, it turned out that Genevieve is our vet's sister. How's that for weird.. .

"After delivering the mail (in Birdsville) we found the only pub in town. It turns out that the cops of the outback were having a

pow wow about the 'idiots' that attempt to cross the Simpson during the summer months. They want to find a way to close the desert when conditions are unfavourable. This pow wow was happening in the pub. Cops everywhere! Managed to buy 60 cans of VB for \$60. Cheapest beer in the country...

"We had successfully negotiated the Birdsville Track, towing a caravan, without one puncture or

mishap. We were now 'Intrepid Travellers'.

"From Birdsville we headed for Mount Isa, taking 3 days to get there. More 45 degree plus days. More desert. More emus, kangaroos and camels... Found the biggest canoe club in Queensland with its clubhouse on the banks of the lake that is the Isa's water supply. Made me quite jealous.

"Our plan was to head east to the Queensland coast, Townsville to be precise, but cyclones had closed roads all over the

place. We could only go west or south and west was looking pretty gloomy too. We went south, bound for Longreach, via Cloncurry & Winton. Cloncurry didn't have much going for it. Four pubs, a good supermarket and the claim that it was the first destination of the first Qantas flight. Winton had sandflies and dinosaurs.

"We went to Rockhampton and landed right in the middle of Beef Week. Rocky is the cattle capital of Australia and Beef Week is bigger than Ben Hur... I got the best haircut I've ever had and it only cost 16 bucks. We spent a very full week at Rocky and could have stayed longer but for the smell of cow shit...

"Yeppoon. A seaside town with some welcome sea food... We took a day trip to Great Keppel Island. With the resort and main beach facing the west it was protected from the winds and absolutely delightful. On getting back to Yeppoon we rang our travel service and booked a 3 night stay on Great Keppel. It was fantastic. Our suite had two queen-sized beds. Everything was sheer luxury. We figured a little pampering was fair enough after being on the road for the 3 and a half months...

"We are making our way to the top slowly. It is still very wet up there."

If you want to send Roger a message you can do so through rogerdeane@hotmail.com.

Hawkesbury Classic trial

Tim Hookins and Rob Vallis, in a Super-sonic, streeeted the field in the first of the Hawkesbury Classic familiarisation trials. With the upstream leg into a brisk tide, they did Brooklyn-Spencer-Brooklyn in 1.58.59.

Others in the outing included Roger Aspinall 2.09.18, Julie Stanton 2.09.31, Craig Elliott 2.16.47, Matt Swann 2.29.12, Michael Venter/Steven Howcroft 2.42.55 and Justin Paine 3.06.51. James Mumme's time was not officially recorded.

Christie Brown (3.13.09), trying out her new Sonic, felt off color in the re-

turn leg and lost time with a couple of pitstops. Mark Sier (3.12.46), who was paddling with her, loyally stayed with his former double partner.

Welcome to Rory

Congratulations to Rob and Emma Vallis on the arrival of new son Rory on June 30. Everyone is doing well and Spencer, 4½, and Bethany, nearly 2, are delighted with their new playmate.

Goodbye and good luck, Sam

Sam Sharbine is leaving at the end of August to take up a position as CEO of an Emirate company in Dubai. Good luck in your new venture, Sam.

For sale: Lloyd's gokart

Lloyd Armstrong is confident of making a full recovery after the bad gokart crash in April which smashed his pelvis, but it could be a few weeks yet before he is back on Wednesday nights. Having spent 7 weeks in Nepean Hospital, including 4 weeks in traction, he is at last weaning himself off his crutches but is wary of hobbling down the Wirong Flat ramp. There could be some cautious paddles, starting from a beach, later in August. He's having hydrotherapy three times a week and physio twice a week. And no more gokarting: his gokart is for sale.

Back to the Yukon

by Tom Simmat

A long plane flight to Vancouver, Canada and a 2500km drive found me waiting in freezing rain, in the middle of the main street of Whitehorse for my second start in the 750km Yukon River Quest.

Two minutes to go, took off my extra coat and overpants and handed them to my trusty wife and land crew Christine. My son Daen was waiting with the Horizon Tourer on the gravel bank of the Yukon, about a kilometre away.

I was feeling a little apprehensive surrounded by very fit looking paddlers from USA, Austria, a big contingent from the armed services in the UK and of course ultra marathon specialists from Canada.

Bang and off go the 100-plus participants, down the street across some tram lines a hard run to the waiting kayaks: double and single kayaks, double canoes and Voyager canoes (ten paddlers) made up the waiting craft.

Daen helped me in, skirt on and I was off to a good start. My race plan was to go out as hard as I could for an hour and then see what double kayaks were around to pick up a wash ride. Just as important was to see where Steve Mooney was. He was in the winning double last year and won the single kayak two years ago. A local and knows the river. This year he was in a single Epic 19.

I hung on to a double for a while but seemed to be doing better, then surprisingly a fast Voyager came through. The Voyager had a huge wash but being a large canoe, it was all over the river. The double and I tried with difficulty to sit beside, but I found it was just as difficult to sit behind. I noticed Steve was on an even faster Voyager and they sneaked around the other side of an island and got about a 100m break on me. I dropped the Voyager and powered after Steve.

An hour into the race and we passed the Takhini River, I was pleased as I was holding Steve and perhaps gaining, then he flipped. He was battling to get going again and I went over and helped him get his skirt back on. I had lost the wash ride of both the double and the Voyager. Steve was obviously shaken and I powered away from him.

35 kilometres into the race the Yukon flows into Lake Labarge. The lake is about 50km long and 5 or 6km wide. Just on entering the lake Steve did another short cut and appeared next to me. A 15 to 20 knot wind was

blowing on the lake over my left shoulder. As we progressed down the lake the wind and wave height grew and I surfed away from Steve. Then he yelled for help. I turned around and went back. His skirt had come off and he was filling with water. I stabilised him while he pumped and refitted his skirt. I took off again, telling him to yell if he needed help again. I never saw him again and found out later that he had pulled out.

I surfed through the check point on the east side of the lake, getting runs of well over a hundred meters at a time. I passed the lead double canoe, the legendary double of Steve Lanick and Gregg Nelson. Then a double kayak and could see the lead single, the lead double and the Voyager ahead. This stretch of the race in open rough water is about as long as the Molokai in Hawaii or twice the Twenty Beaches. To keep on the running sets and surfing I was doing great sweep strokes. After about three hours this effort was telling on my left shoulder.

At the end of the lake I was lying in 5th place over all, just minutes behind the overall leader. It was 8pm and still raining. Flat water and the pain went out of my shoulder, but I lost sight of the leaders in the dimming light and winding river and found myself on my own. At midnight the sun dips below



My near disaster at Five Finger Rapids

the horizon; it did not get dark but the air temperature dropped to about zero. The water remained at a warmer 6°C. I pulled a lined Gortex jacket over my PFD and put on a pair of woollen gloves (I normally paddle without gloves).

The rain stopped and the sun came over the hills at about 3 am and I was able to take the gloves off. 7am and



now more than 18 hours into the race, my lower back was beginning to give me real trouble. Pumping my legs and continuous rotation had collapsed some of the foam padding on my seat. The first compulsory stop at Carmacks (7 hours) was only perhaps a couple of hours away. I decided to struggle on, just survive, get there, rest and regroup. I was soon passed by two double kayaks, British Army team and the leading solo female Heather Nelson.

I made Carmacks in 8th place over all. Showered, slept, fed, fixed the seat, got back in the kayak and told myself to get on with it, go go go.

Two hours away was Five Finger Rapids. I took them a bit too wide to the right and nearly lost it on a 5 foot standing wave. The next few kilometres saw a series of lesser grade rapids but cleared without trouble. No more rain, through historic Fort Selkirk a bit after midnight, a freezing early morning and into Kirkman Creek about 9am in glorious sunshine, now hot 25 degrees. This is the second compulsory rest point (3 hours) but the land crew can't get to you. You are on your own.

Out of a very vernacular log cabin came a bowl of soup, chatted to the leaders who were still in, hung out my wet gear, put up my fly for shade and tried to get some sleep.

Hot, half asleep trying to get going and I was a disappointed to be eight minutes late leaving. The leading solo men's kayak was 2 hours ahead – an impossible task – and the solo behind me was two hours behind. But anything can happen.

Only about 12 hours paddling to finish, the same distance as the Hawkesbury Classic, easy. Two hours later the White River joins the Yukon and turns it a dirty white, but the flow increased. I set a target for midnight if I could average 16km per hour on the GPS. I was getting 18 and sometimes 20, the river was now much faster.

Each of my map pages was about an hour's paddling. Four pages to go, then three, then a huge head wind hit. Tried looking for shelter under the side of the river but despite the wind and the waves it made it was quicker down the middle.

I felt great, a bit too great, should I have put a bit more in earlier on? I powered into the finish in 8th overall and 2nd in the solo mens, in a paddling time of 47 hours 21 minutes 19 seconds.

GEAR: Kayak Horizon Tourer, GPS (for speed and distance) river maps (laminated), 2 watches, compass, sleeping bag, fly, spare paddle, first aid kit, 2 sets spare thermals (not used), rescue flares, waterproof matches, light skirt, throwing rescue line.

WHAT I WORE: O'Neill Skins, top and bottom, I cannot speak too highly of these. They are a light weight stretch fabric that massages your active muscles as you paddle and draws the



Photos Igor Plenicar and Daen Simmat

sweat off your skin. Over this I had paddling pants, good quality pure wool thermal and a light Gortex jacket plus PDF. Early morning night woollen

gloves and a heavier lined Gortex jacket over the PDF. This was all I needed. Many competitors were scratched with hyperthermia yet wearing more gear. The skins work.

ENERGY FOOD: Two 3-litre bladders, one quarter apple juice to start then river water, Staminade powder and Puratabs, bananas, muesli bars and a loose dried fruit nut mix.

INJURIES: Badly bruised lower back. I picked up some gravel in my paddling shoes at Carmacks which cut into both my feet, made walking difficult, but I had no blisters. I put vaseline on my hands. Steve Lanick had badly swollen wrists which he taped with electrical tape, but that made his fingernails bleed. Heather Nelson gaffer-taped her right hand to the paddle because she could no longer hold it. Steve Mooney pulled out with hyperthermia.

What do you reckon would be a good prize for a series of paddling races? How about a car? How about a 4WD? Registered and fully insured. Last month Tony Carr picked up a brand new Land Rover Discovery III for taking out the major prize in the popular Men's Health Ocean Racing series. He scored the most points in the 8km Open Kayak category after competing in, and finishing, 9 of the 10 races, missing only the Perth race. The races were spread around Australia last spring and summer, starting in Hamilton Island and finishing in Manly. "The funny thing is that I had the worst series in the four years I have been doing it," Tony said. "At the start of one race the rudder assembly fell off and in Melbourne I got lost in atrocious weather. I didn't have a single win but I got a lot of seconds and thirds. I paddled an 18kg Don Andrews-designed Challenger which handles superbly in the ocean and is fast." There were 10 categories in the series and the names of each winner went into the hat for a draw to decide who would get the Land Rover. Last year Tony also won his category but missed out in the draw from a hat for a Saab. There's often a sting in the tail of a good story and in this case it is that he gets to keep the vehicle for only a year. Then he has to give it back.



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PADDLERS' DIARY

20 th August	WMS 6 Wyong	4353-1556
26 th August	HCC Familiarisation Wisemans-Spencer	www.canoeclassic.asn.au
9 th September	Myall River Classic	www.nswcanoe.org.au
23 rd September	WMS 7 Hacking River	9531-5460
7 th October	HCC Familiarisation Sackville-Wisemans	www.canoeclassic.asn.au
14 th October	HCC Familiarisation (Night) Sackville-Windsor	www.canoeclassic.asn.au
28/29 th October	Hawkesbury Canoe Classic	www.canoeclassic.asn.au
5 th November	200m Paddle Festival	9971-8389
11 th November	WMS 8 Wagga	www.waggabidgee.com.a
27/31 st December	Murray Marathon	www.redcross.org.au

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