



A success beyond our wildest dreams.....

The North American whitewater scene received a boost with a first – *a multi-disciplined Race Series*...here in Ontario – at the beginning of July !

When 2x Olympic Silver-medalist Dana Chladek approached me last fall at the World Series finals in Wisp, Maryland she asked if Ontario could put two races back to back so she could go on a "road-trip" with her new team. Her memories of racing at the Gull and at MKC were so positive; she wanted to introduce her new group of DC slalom kids to this excellent experience. That idea grew into the ***Summer Race Series***... 11 separate events at five venues for all three whitewater disciplines: *Slalom, Freestyle and Downriver*.

News spread fast and over 100 competitors from across the continent went online at Zone4.ca to register for the Full Series price of \$130 that included a "sweet" Level Six Series emblazed Rash Top and the ability to enter all events – sometimes in two categories. Points were received for top ten finishes with Steve Pomeroy keeping track over all eleven events...to establish the **Top 15 Men** and **Top 10 Women** that would receive TEVA footwear awards at Series end.

The interest overwhelmed us when we got under way on July 4th at the MWWP - 140 athletes converged on the Gull River near Minden – camping in the pouring rain - they loved it none-the-less as the site is incredible for all levels of whitewater paddling. Paddlers from Texas, Colorado, Pennsylvania, New York, Washington, NC, British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec and of course Ontario were on site. This first weekend of races saw four events: *a Lower Gull Open Canoe Slalom*, a wicked ***Boatercross*** through the dam and over the falls, the ***Andrew Westlake Slalom*** on the demanding top section and a Billy Harris run "***Earls Hole***" ***Freestyle***.

The best part was seeing Cadet and Junior classes out-number the normally dominant categories by more than double as well as the depth in the Women's C-1 classes.



The next stop was Barry's Bay to compete on the Madawaska River where MKC hosted athletes for two mid-week competitions: *Downriver Sprint* from the top of Staircase to the bottom of Chalet rapids – for 90 athletes. And a *Slalom* that again saw an increase in numbers - 150 competitors raced through the poles on Chalet as well as against the clock – not only for a fast time, but to squeeze this record no of boats in before the water release ended from Bark Lake Dam – many thanks to Ontario Power Generation as we did it !

A day of rest on Thursday...saw the biggest fleet of slalom boats descend on the Ottawa River ever – some stopping at the bottom of McCoy's "Horsehoe Hole" and "Corner Wave" to practice up for the following days *OKS Keener Freestyle*. With others continueing downstream to enjoy one of Canada's best river runs ! The sun which hadn't been very generous so far – came out strong on Friday making the full day of Freestyle competition one to remember !

190 boats on the start list – never in my **memory** have we seen this many slalom entries. Perhaps the Hudson River Derby in NY in it's hey-day had similar no's...but not in recent years have so many slalom paddlers come together to compete by negotiating the cleverly designed race course that was strung over the narrow piece of water that is the outflow of the Fleet Street pumping station before it re-enters the Ottawa River downstream of the Inter-provincial bridge. This water is generating 'free' power that pumps drinking water from the filtrated Ottawa River up the cliffs and into downtown Ottawa. This gem of a site was discovered by the Ottawa River Runners in the late '80's. Rocks were moved, paths cleared and gates strung across the narrow piece of current...and athletes from across the country moved to Ottawa to train for whitewater slalom. Sheryl Boyle, Tyler Lawler and Larry Norman went on to compete in multiple Olympic Games – all training here. Present new 'brood' of slalom athletes is being coached by three-times Olympian James Cartwright – cycling or taking the bus after school, they exchange their bikes and knapsacks for PFD's, boats and paddles stored in the green Bins on site.

Saturdays' "God's must be crazy" weather...opened up to clear blue sky's, calm winds and sunny reflections for Sundays **Slalom** race at the *Pumphouse* ! Paddlers competed in more than one category from dawn 'til dusk. A tricky Cartwright/Roessingh course had it's share of '50's as paddlers chose different lines through the single poles. Claudia's announcing on PA under the TEVA tent provided insight to the many paddlers, while the strong volunteer parent crew judged, timed and ran the scores up to Steve Pomeroy in the results tent on the platform. Dirk and Liz double-checked the many scores flooding in every 20 paddlers...and results were quickly posted on the side of the green bins. Chief judge Jim Tayler had few inquiries...showing an experienced crew makes a difference. It is the hope of the race officials and paddlers to advance this 'hands-on' system with modern technology for next year...but for now – IT WORKS !

The final stop for the Race Series was **Valleyfield, Quebec**. A unique piece of whitewater gushes out of two culverts fed by the St Lawrence River. This course is part of the downtown re-development project that capitalized on the structures, dams and buildings left behind from its cotton mill legacy. Both play boating and slalom paddling features make this an amazing spot. Sharp eddy lines, yet friendly class III rapids make it an absolute joy to paddle here. Retirement residents occupy the river right shore and watch the paddlers from their swinging garden chairs or resident balconies... River left comprises the back side of a Zellars store. The shipping lanes gave great cover to the early morning rain. And rain hard it did at first, then cleared for most of the afternoon races. This seems to

have become a trend for the 2009 Race Series....we did call it the WhiteWATER Race Series. Blue sky popped just in time for the awards...

TEVA, the Series sponsors provided their top-of-the-line water shoe to the following Series Winners:

Women (TOP 10)

1 Van Wijk, Katrina, Ontario	133
2 Fritz, Jennifer Texas	111
3 Dederer, Marissa Alberta	92
4 Audet, Sindy Quebec	88
5 McGee, Anne Ontario	87
6 Froehlich, Thea Ontario	85
7 Thompson, Hailey Wisconsin	83
8 Denhollander, Jazmyne BC	81
9 McGee, Alexandra Ontario	75

Men (TOP 15)

1 Potvin-Bernal, Julian Quebec	121
2 Fritz, Matt Texas	117
3 Smedley, Liam Ontario	103
4 Lokken, Zach Colorado	99
5 Smolen, Michael North Carolina	94
6 Petitclerc, Max-Emile Quebec	91
7 Poindexter, Mark Texas	88
8 Heyman, Henry Colorado	76
9 Moore, Cole Maryland	74
10 Tayler, Michael Ontario	73
11 Brown, Cully Colorado	71
12 Leboeuf, Maxime Quebec	66
13 Heyman, Jack Colorado	64
14 Grady, Keegan Ontario	60
15 Griffith, Griff Colorado	58

Thanks to all that joined us by competing and volunteering your support to reach our aim....that of ***"getting more Bums in Boats!"***

The Race Series Committee decided to do it again...but hold the Series every second year. See you in July 2011 !

Claudia Van Wijk

Series Race Organizer