

Dragons Abreast Sydney

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Hi all,

It's tempting to pack this newsletter with Nagambie and the National Championships news but for all of us DA paddlers I think Vicki McLean has succinctly summarised one of the alluring aspects of paddling with DASydney that never ceases to amaze us – that we can all achieve so much more than we ever dreamed possible:

*You've heard of the ugly duckling
Who didn't fit in with his crew?
Well I was the one in MY family,
The non-sporting one of a few.*

*Well - all that has changed for the better
I now paddle hard for MY STATE,
So never give up or stop trying
Never think that for you it's too late*
Vicki McLean

Nagambie was truly amazing for us all and I am thrilled that so many of you decided to give it a go. I'll bet there's not one of you who'd swap the experience for quids! Yes, it was about paddling, but even more it was about fun, friendship and just being together.

Carol Fentoullis, our Head Coach, has covered the thank yous in her report, particularly importantly to Fairlie Stanish, our Team Captain, for the bullets she sweated sorting out the race rules, entries and crew lists. However, Carol was the star of the show on the weekend – she devised the training and urged us on, she got our minds right, she calmed our nerves but hardened our resolve. Thank you from all of us, Carol – you're a champ!

Special thanks are also due to Kerry Enemark, Deb Story and Wendy Mann who upset their family Easter plans and pulled out all the stops to rescue the Mel's Belles B paddlers from the sidelines – without their generous decision to drive down after work on Thursday to join us for the Saturday and Sunday racing and drive back Sunday evening again for work, Mel's Belles B would have been grounded for lack of numbers.

Also congratulations and commiserations to poor Vicki Farmer whose back twanged into agony on her first paddle stroke in Nagambie, landing her in hospital in Seymour (who even knew they had a hospital there?). Despite that she still showed up undaunted each day to cheer us on and share that wonderful sparkling smile with us all.



Robin Shoebridge keeping to a strict pre-race diet



Vicky Farmer medicating her wrenched back at the BBQ on the last night



Fairlie Stanish and Brenda Owen gathering strength for the next sally onto the water



Margo-Lynne Lee working on her fluid intake



Mel's Belles A all kitted out in PFDs prior to racing



Coach's Corner

The Dragon Boat National Championships in 2006 will be an event we will hold close to our hearts! Thank you to all our paddlers who made the effort to travel to Nagambie in Victoria for making DAS "a force to be reckoned with"!

Congratulations go to all. As coach I could not feel more proud to say I was a member of this club, part of this special family. I am aware of how hard you all worked to rise up to your own personal (high) expectations and to achieve the team's goals of doing our "best". We may have even pushed other teams to their potential. I want to say WELL DONE! YOU DID IT! We went for it and we realised just what we can do "together as one, one boat, one strong team". We dreamed about it and we eventually experienced it.

We are now ALL winners!

We will always remember:

- How nervous we felt at the first warm up before the first race.
- How good it was to paddle up and across the finish line.
- The anticipation, preparation and power in the boat.
- The excitement on hearing our P.B. times.
- When we yelled out "YES!" at getting the best time. 1st over the line!
- The laughs, the cheers, the tears, the HUGS, claps and more cheers.
- The places we stayed & the warm welcome and care the locals gave.
- The HERITAGE TRAIN CARRIAGES! (thanks Lionel).
- The friendships formed, the barriers broken and bonds for life secured.
- The amazing Paddle Guard of Honour, after the ceremony on the water.
- The pink teams, state teams, sports teams & junior teams.
- The boats! Our beautiful Sydney dragon boats! And the sound of their drums.

It was a real pleasure to have been able to work with you all. You make it all worthwhile. I loved the job of doing what I could; to help

Regatta Madness

At various times leading up to the Nationals at Nagambie I did wonder if I had bitten off more than I could chew. A camping trip with two small children, a stressed husband who had just started a new job and me participating in a sport at a National level with only 7 weeks training! What was I thinking? The rain on Friday night didn't help. The chilly wind on Saturday morning didn't help either.

Winning our first 500m DA heat on Saturday was the boost I needed. Coming last in Masters Womens was a bit of a let down, but I refused to let it get to me. The DA final was the highlight of the day. I was reserve but still warmed up with the rest of the crew. Luke helped with his "STAR" jumps and John was busy filming our every move. Standing on the bank with the other girls, we screamed & cheered the crew over the finish line in First place!. Much to my surprise Martin congratulated me on another Gold Medal!. "They don't give Gold Medals to the reserves! Do they?" But he assured me they did. My first National gold Medal and I wasn't even in the Boat!

After dinner at the pub at Kilmore and a drier night in the tent, we arrived on Sunday morning at the Centre for the 200m races. It was almost a repeat of the day before. Not very successful in the Masters, but first in the DA heat. Reserve for the Final, and yes another Gold Medal. Not a bad haul for a newbie.

While I appreciate the effort of all the Ladies, in all of the crews, and our wonderful coach, the highlight of the day for me was the Flowers on the Water ceremony. Having never been in anything like it before, I found it very moving. I cried for every woman who has ever gone through BC but mostly I cried for myself, John and my two lovely children and what might have been. Thanks to Barbara and her shoulder I did manage to pull myself together by the time I got to shore. The Guard of Honor that we ran through was LIBERATING. Call it a rebirth, Call it a bit of fun - it was the most positive thing about the whole weekend for me.

Dinner at the B & B at Trawool was beautiful, a fitting end to a beautiful weekend. For all the ladies who have never been to a Regatta you simply must try it. It's exhilarating. It's nerve wracking. But it's so much fun. It makes training worthwhile. You deserve the experience of it.

See you all at training. Jo Jeffcoat

our teams achieve their best. I loved your determination, positive attitude and honourable efforts. One of the best things about Nagambie is the time it gave for us to get to know each other well. I can't wait to work on the plans for next season and put some ideas in place that will make us even better.

I would personally like to give huge and sincere thanks to:

- Margaret Cantwell, always ready to do what she can to help. So capable and quick to assist. For being such a reliable team member and for the love she has for this sport.
- Martin Hirst, for his enthusiasm, always racing over to the boats to congratulate us and relay how good we looked and went.
- Vicki McLean for keeping us all rugged up and for her wicked sense of humour.
- Karen Wyers for her organisational skills and unique choice of accommodation. Her constant happy outlook, always lifting our spirits.
- Neil Millgate for the yummy choc. easter eggs and his cheers of support with that huge smile.
- Melanie Cantwell for her outstanding work and relentless efforts for all and for the good of Dragon Boating (making it all happen) and still have time to give us her quiet unfailing support.
- The special trio that made our Mel's Belles B boat possible. For your last minute



Amelia Jeffcoat, our newest potential paddler



Helen Westwood and Vicki Farmer loaded up with fleecies

decision to join us even though it meant driving back Sunday for work commitments. Thanks Deb Story, Wendy Mann and Kerry Enemark (Aka Thelma, Louise and Kerry, but that's another story!).

- Vicki Farmer for hanging around with your injury and for painfully having to watch from the sideline. Finding the ability to encourage us was special.
- Sally Lynch for doing her best drumming in and out of time but still with a smile and loving every minute.
- Brenda Owen for sweeping all 3 races, even without her voice.
- All our drummers: Angie, Karen, Bobbie and Margot.
- All our superb strokes, Jen, Jo Petterson, Fran O'Brien, Bonnie Cheleski, Brenda Owen, Elaine Beggs, Sue McClelland – a difficult skill you have mastered.
- All our sweeps Cynthia Kuiper, Fairlie Stanish, Brenda Owen for keeping the boat so straight in windy conditions and yelling us over the line.
- Eugenia Raftos for being the ever keen bean she is, giving us all a lift to reach another level.
- Angie Aston for leaving her Easter church service early to paddle with the team.
- Joanne Jeffcoat, our newest paddler, for making it with her young family. You are a super mum.
- Bonny Cheleski for printing off every detail of information then handing it over for me to use.
- Fairlie Stanish for doing the demanding and challenging job of team captain well. Asking the hard questions and making the hard decisions.
- Deb Cooper for your expertise in complete bodycare whether warming us up or giving important health advice.
- Mel's Belles B team for doing it so well with two paddlers down again, you're just amazing.
- All our members who made the State Masters teams, A/B & Mixed!
- All the reserves for playing their difficult part on the sidelines, but with us all the way.
- Cynthia Kuiper for never having a negative thought, seeing the positive side of all things and being a great leader – the club would not be the same without you!

To ALL paddlers for having the heart to give it a go, put in 100%, and enjoy every moment. Your encouragement and support was invaluable to me.

Go Sydney!!!
Your Coach, Carol.



Sally Lynch
back in the
saddle
drumming
again



Brenda Owen –
"Did you say
we have to be
there at
SEVEN THIRTY
tomorrow
morning!!"

From Margot's Perch

Oh hell, I am to drum a couple of races - didn't they know I had never done this at a regatta before? Well if those before me have done it and not fallen off the "perch", so can I. Was "briefed" by Coach Carol and Sweep Cynthia on my role. Did not sound too difficult in theory.

First thing I did was check out the so called "throne", thank goodness it was SECURE with all four bolts holding it down. Had been warned by Sally this is not always the case, some seats tend to wobble a bit. After all the girls seated themselves I hopped onto the seat and what a sight! I could see right down to the end. Great, now all I have to do is drum in time to the strokes, Jenny and Jo. Had a bit of a practise run on the way to the start line.

Got ready and made sure I was really hanging onto the drum with my inner thighs, one hand holding the seat and the other holding the drum "thingy". Hey wait on, the official starter wants me to put up my hand - which one? They are both occupied, but being a woman and good at multitasking I let go of the seat, my thighs held onto the drum TIGHTLY and up shot the hand. Now we are tooting and frowning to straighten up the boat and Cynthia is doing a magnificent job, all the heads in the boat are looking forward and ready to take off at the given signal.

Hooter went off and we were flying at the start, now know what it feels like to be almost lifted off the seat. Oh yes, better start drumming and calling encouragement to the girls, we were leading (hey this is so good, you can see where we are positioned in the race as the boat powers on). Started my calls of "lift, power, c'mon, you know you want this etc" then "leg drive, focus, more power" it went on and on and then I noticed a boat coming a little close so started to yell in earnest, boy you can get so carried away with this, so exhilarating. As I watched the girls in the boat each and every one of them was just so incredibly focussed on the job at hand, all in perfect time and paddling so furiously, wished I had a camera.

Oops, I forgot the most important thing. Cynthia had called "paddles out" when we went over the finish line while little old me was still telling the front girls to "power and go, go, go, they are coming close" so all of a sudden the boat SLOWED down, the poor girls in front wondered what the hell was happening till I realised and called - "paddles out" - we had won!

Boy, oh boy such a satisfying experience. So there you have it, if (when) I am asked to do this again you can be sure I will be paying a lot more attention to the sweep at the end of a race but I figured it was better to go a few more strokes than a few less and lose!!!

Margot Case



Go the Blues!!

We can be hugely proud that DASydney contributed 31 women to the State Masters Womens A and B crews and 2 guys to the State Masters Men's B crew in Nagambie. That is an incredible achievement for a Dragons Abreast club! What an amazing group of guys and gals! For a great many of our paddlers it was their first time dragon boating at State level. Were they mad? Little did they know what they were letting themselves in for! And little did they know how fantastic it would be when they survived the training and actually took to the water on the big day!

For me at least it's almost unbelievable – I can totally relate to Vicki McLean's ugly duckling poem in this newsletter and I have to keep pinching myself to know that it all actually happened.

The results were great: NSW Masters Women A & B took out bronze and sixth respectively and the NSW Masters Mens B came fifth. How good is that! Wouldn't it have been a different picture without DASydney's paddlers??

Now the challenge is on to see how many of us can do it again next year and maybe climb into the green and gold for the Worlds. Keep up that fitness, everyone – it's a fantastic base and you're gonna need it big time!

Our Boys in Blue

Sadly, Saturday and Sunday at Nagambie found Martin Hirst and Neil Millgate wearing the wrong chromosomes for paddling with our DA and Womens Masters crews. Instead, Good Friday was their time in the sun when "our Boys in Blue" paddled to a very creditable fifth place in the State Masters Men's B crew (only 3.35 seconds behind the winners).

In a previous life, I'm told, Martin butterflyed (butterflew?) for NSW, so he was hugely chuffed to be sporting the state colours again, this time for dragon boating, along with his wife Deb.

Neil had previously proved himself to be "the equal of ten good men" in mixed regattas with us, so it was fitting for him to finally get the chance to paddle with the State Masters Men's B crew.

Go guys! We'll make up that mixed DASydney crew yet!



The State Masters Womens teams

Things we took into consideration for DASydney Crew selection

Nagambie was the first time we've fielded enough paddlers to make two Mel's Belles crews and so it was the first time we've been forced to undergo selection for those crews. Carol, Fairlie and I want to explain to you all the things we took into consideration in selecting those crews.

We found it really challenging to be objective and although the three of us are new to the role and we have completed the coaching course, we do not claim to be experts. For example, it would have been better if we had published this information earlier. However we are thankful for the insights the coaching course and the process of selection have provided and we truly did our best to be as fair as possible.

Inevitably some people were disappointed because we have many fine paddlers, who have not only worked hard, but have improved considerably. While some choices were unarguable, there was quite a large group of paddlers (too large to all fit in the one boat) who deserved serious consideration. Sometimes there is very little to choose between paddlers for a particular seat position but a choice MUST still be made because there are a finite number of positions in a boat.

Where these difficult decisions were forced on us, these are the things (in no particular order of importance) that we took into consideration:

- technique
- timing
- experience
- raw and weight-adjusted ergs
- size/reach
- input from state coaches
- endurance/aerobic fitness
- video
- comparative performance of other candidates suited to the same position in the boat

What is really gratifying is the great depth which has developed in DASydney paddling skills. This was amply demonstrated at the recent State Titles where we easily took out both first and second places in the DA Challenge. This same depth allowed us to field two creditable teams in the National Masters Womens Titles and a shifting crew with our 26 survivors for the National DA Challenge. We knew that these teams would do us proud in Nagambie, and they did! Most importantly, we all had fun! The strength of the opposition at the Nationals was humbling yet exhilarating and we all did brilliantly! Another year, another regatta, the selection will be different – sometimes it just depends which paddlers make themselves available for the competition.

Paddles Up!
Carol, Fairlie and Cynth

Mothers' Day Classic Walk

Bring your family and friends for a lovely walk with DASydney round the Domain and Mrs Macquarie's Chair. Let's fly the flag for Dragons Abreast at this Breast Cancer Research fundraiser! Carolyn New and Wilma Kippers have agreed to help me on the info stand and the rest will be doing the walk and carrying our banner. This is one of our best opportunities each year to share the good news about Dragons Abreast with other BC survivors, so please register yourself and note that your team is Dragons Abreast Sydney then let me know you'll be joining us on Sunday May 14th. You can register online at <http://www.mothersdayclassic.org>



DASydney at the Mother's Day Classic last year

Entertainment Book Savings are Real

You need to see Brenda Owen, our indefatigable Mistress of Merchandising, to get your copies of the Entertainment Book for the coming year ASAP. Even if you are a sales dud (DAA will be disappointed, as they get the proceeds), you still owe it to yourself to take advantage of this opportunity. Last year I managed to sell a few books by doing a letter box drop while I was walking the mutt and, despite some misgivings, I also took one of the books for myself.

I thought, being single, that it would be hard for me to get value from the book – so out of interest I kept a record of the savings I made over the year. Thanks to the \$60 outlay for the book I managed to save \$194.75 using the discounts in the book – coming out \$134.75 ahead. It was pretty easy – just by coordinating some of my expenses to discounts in the book – things like dry cleaning, meals, and even taking a visiting relative on the Rocks Walking Tour. Kerry Enemark told me she saved several hundred via the book just on hotel rates in Queensland. You can help yourself and still do your bit to help

with fundraising for our wonderful national organization by getting on board with this promotion now!

Postcard From the Ether

She said she'd do it and here's the proof! Happily Helen Hynes must be feeling heaps better – she sent this photo of herself dragon boating in Phoenix, Arizona. Will we see a branch of Dragons Abreast springing up there in the desert?



Can't quite tell which one is Helen Hynes, but here she is racing in Phoenix, Arizona!

Crafty Ladies Can't Stop Scrapbooking!

Not sure whether it's the fun of spending the day together or a primal urge to relive kindergarten days, but the usual suspects had heaps of fun at Pam Bell's place making tiny little books of thoughts to give to unsuspecting friends. What would we do without our kindy teacher, Robin Shoebridge, to lend her scrapbooking expertise while Pam Bell entertained us with yet more funny stories of her exploits?



Scissors and paste surround Pam Bell, Geri Hill, Cynthia Kuiper and Margo-Lynne Lee as they construct little multi-coloured books.

Media Tarts Again!

So much training this month that we didn't get to do too much spreading the word – although Angie Aston spoke to Westmead Hospital's Breast Mates group about the Cancer Council and Dragons Abreast and I finally cracked my first Rotary Meeting – being guest speaker at Wahroonga Rotary's breakfast meeting.

Reaching a much wider audience, Vicki McLean tipped me off that the ABC Health Report was going to focus on exercise and breast cancer. I managed to get onto the producer of the show and although the show was already "in the can" Dr Norman Swan kindly added a bit on the end about Dragons Abreast and gave our contact details. They also put our contact details up on their website along with the transcript of the interview, which was very interesting (particularly about Stage 2 and 3 cancers). You can read the transcript on <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/healthreport/stories/2006/1610198.htm#>



Abreast in Australia – Kawana

Listen up to this!! DON'T MISS OUT!! You need to act fast as the special low entry price of \$250 for us Aussies finishes at the end of June. It's hard to explain how important it is for you all to get to this event in Kawana. It will be like no other festival you've ever attended and, if Vancouver is any indication, it will be the experience of a lifetime (without the overseas air fares!). Brenda Owen is the first to admit that she was initially put off by the thought of being "pinked out" in Vancouver but found, to her amazement, that she got right into the atmosphere of it all and had an absolute ball!

You simply can't compare it to Nagambie or to any other dragon boating events you've been to because this is not just a regatta – it is a whole festival and survivor paddlers are coming from around the world to join in the fun! Supporters should come too! In the rest of the world they don't have supporters in their clubs, so it is important that our supporters turn up in force alongside us – that way we can demonstrate how critical they are to our existence and we can have special happenings for them as well.

Call me about it with any questions, but don't be left out!! The registration form is on the DAA website (<http://www.dragons-abreast.com.au/2007/index.htm>), but be quick, because if you register before the end of June it will only cost you \$250.

Paddles Up!
Cynth...

DAS WINTER CALENDAR 2006.2007

Date(s)	Event	Location	Details
May 2006			
Thu 4th	Rotary Club of Lindfield	Killara	Guest speaker: Cynthia Kuiper
Sat 6th	DASydney Newbies Day	Pymont	Pre-registrations essential: Contact Cynthia Kuiper: cynthiagkuiper@yahoo.com
Sat 13th	DBNSW End-of-Season Debrief	DBNSW, Homebush	10-12am, register with Melanie Cantwell
Sun 14th	Mothers' Day Classic Walk	Domain	DASydney will be participating and carrying the DAA banner. Join us.
Jun 2006			
Tue 13	Wakehurst Trefoil Guild	Davidson	Guest speaker: Cynthia Kuiper
Sun 25th	DASydney Family Bike ride	Homebush	Book with organiser Carolyn New on carolynn@iinet.net.au
August 2006			
11th – 13th	World Club Crew Championships	Toronto, Canada	To paddle, pay your deposit to Team Captain Fairlie Stanish before 13th May
September 2006			
29 Sep-1st Oct	International Pink Dragon Boat Council's Breast Cancer World Dragon Boat Championships	Singapore	More info: www.bcf.org.sg
September 2007			
20th – 23rd	World Dragon Boat Championships	Penrith SIRC	We'll need lots of competitors and lots of volunteers
28th - 31st	Abreast in Australia Dragon Boat Festival	Kawana Lakes, Sunshine Coast, QLD	Hurry and book before the price goes up at end of June.