

Dragons Abreast Sydney

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Seen hamming it up with the just-received trophy from Penrith: Lynne Alcock, Deb Hirst, Elaine Beggs, Barbara Lane, Sue McClelland, Kerry Enemark, Di Millgate and Muriel Buckeridge.

For Gael Ellis it was her first regatta – always a very special experience! As soon as she got home she dashed this off to me while she was still on a high from all the excitement:

It's 5.00am Saturday morning. What is that noise. My Alarm. Oh hell, it's regatta day. As I scramble out of my bed (which incidentally, I LOVE), head for the shower, then downstairs for a large bowl of porridge. I again ask myself – What am I doing, have I lost my mind, I'm too old for this, I should be thinking of retiring or knitting booties – not going Dragon Boat racing.

Auspicious, or what?

Imagine our surprise, upon arriving at the Tacoma regatta, when the Sloths presented us with a beautiful silver trophy for having won the DA Challenge at the November regatta at Penrith. Of course, some of our girls immediately rushed out onto the little jetty to have their photos taken flaunting the trophy, didn't they? You may remember the finals were cancelled due to high winds so we didn't get to paddle our last DA race there at Penrith. Without final results, the race was apparently subsequently awarded on the fastest time in the heats to...DASydney! What an auspicious start to the day's racing at Tacoma!

It was a great regatta, largely due to the very fine efforts of the twins who stepped in as joint team captains for the day and sorted out the crewing, juggling the 80/20 rule and making sure our novice sweeps got their required races up while still getting a paddle. It's not an easy job, especially when people you are expecting don't show and others you don't expect do! Thank heavens they knew all the rules!

Robin Shoebridge had this to say about the day:

Hi to all those paddlers out there.... What a great day for paddling at Tacoma. Great weather (a bit hot) and a good location (even if we were a bit squashed up on the banks of the river). However, the water was nice and

calm. Good racing was had by all – and those who had their first paddle at a regatta.... well, I bet you're all busting to go to the next one! (Just think eye candy). AND to go home with a Masters Womens' Trophy and a DA Trophy for the DAS girls – that's just icing on the cake. Deb Story mightn't have been at the paddle, but she did manage to get a prize in the raffle, thanks to Deb Hirst. The food that was handed around to share wasn't too shabby either – banana cake, snakes, spiders, nice cold, fresh rockmelon and fruit salad. The mini-bus was a really, really good idea, too. Thanks Margot. Roll on Chinese New Year! .



Winners are grinners – Vicki Farmer, Gael Ellis, Pam Bell and Cristina Frigo



Kerry Enemark, Brenda Owen, Di Millgate and Rosie O'Donnell after the DA Challenge

Anyway on the road we go, oops!!! miss the turn off for Wyong, go a few more kilometers, up one off ramp, down the other on ramp and head back in the right direction.

We arrive at the site – Wyong River, Tacoma. Great Venue, all the girls arrive and we settle down for a day's serious regattaring.

Our first DAS race didn't feel too good when we come off the water, but never mind, we have another one in a couple of hours. Next race Mel's Belle's, we roared, we cheered, they came home great.



The twins, who kindly took over as joint Team Captains for the day, poring over crew lists to be submitted, with Brenda Owen and Pam Bell looking on.



Brenda Owen working on Lyn Tyson's cricked neck

Our next race, better pace, we all came off the water feeling pretty good. Didn't win, but we still felt we paddled well. Mel's Belle's up again, we roared, we cheered, we held our breath for the time. Missed by a squidgeon!!!

Last race 4.15pm DA final. 3 DA and 2 Masters teams line up, off we go, paddling our little hearts out, all feeling good, gave it that bit extra and "Took it home".

1st Mel's Belle's (Masters team) 2ND DAS, my god, we beat one of the masters team and won the DA Final. The yelling, the screaming, the cheering – and that was all just from our boat. We now have a beautiful trophy to show for our effort. More importantly we have the most incredible sense of achievement. For most of us it is our first win, our first trophy. For some it is even their first regatta. What an initiation!!!!

Look out Mel's Belles, we're coming to get you!!!!

To all the ladies at the regatta – thank you for an awesome day, the buzz, the chatter, the food (great cooks some of our girls) and most all, the support from all, to all. The incredible

hard work that goes into organizing the regatta is mind boggling – thank you ladies.

To the ladies who did not go – if you think you are not ready, think again. If you can hold a paddle, you are ready, and the support given to all levels of paddlers is unbelievable.

The saddest part of the dayI've become a regatta tragic. Bring it on, when is the next one, the excitement, the thrill is unbelievable. We flew home, the wheels hardly touching the road – what a high. Thanks everyone! Gael.

Minibus driver, Evan, threw himself into helping at the regatta, good-naturedly collecting and redistributing Paddlers IDs from our racing crews. Then, after such hard work, as you can see in the photo, he prepared himself for the drive home. There was no risk of him sleeping on the job in the bus though as Pam Bell, perched in the front seat alongside Evan, regaled him with a steady string of tales of her hysterical exploits – he couldn't believe his ears and kept exploding into gales of laughter. Am surprised he managed to keep the bus on the road! Pam promised to repeat the restaurant story at the BOOBS craft group on Thursday for those who hadn't heard it before.



The huge smile says it all for Di Millgate



Our bus driver, Evan, preparing for the return trip to Sydney.



Mel's Belles coming back in from heat after Lyn Tyson unexpectedly found herself drumming (and loving it)

Sweep news – now we have four!

It wasn't just our paddlers who were winners on the day at Tacoma. Our desperate need for qualified sweeps (Jo Petterson, Carol Fentoullis, Fairlie Stanish) eased slightly after I managed to notch up my final test race at the Tacoma regatta, so now we have four fully qualified DASydney sweeps! As well, our provisionally qualified sweeps going for full certification, Brenda Owen and Claire Hendy, completed their first two sweeping test races with great aplomb and Fran O'Brien successfully completed her first at Tacoma and two more at the Twilight Regatta a week later. (The rules require provisionally certified sweeps to sweep two races in at least two different regattas before attaining full certification. You can always tell sweeps who are testing out by the orange jackets they have to wear in the race). Hopefully, by the time the State Titles are over, we'll have seven fully qualified sweeps in DASydney.



Claire Hendy sweeping her first race - for an FFB crew at Tacoma.

Our Second Twilight Regatta

Barely a week later we were racing again, this time in Blackwattle Bay. "Come on! Don't let my Mother beat us!" That was the anguished cry from Melanie Cantwell near the finish line as she stroked for the Pacific Dragons (PDs) at the January Twilight Regatta. The mother in question, of course, was our own Margaret Cantwell. And, yes, PDs did beat us in the Women's Category, but only by 13.2 seconds!

It was a 2km race around the bay, which is quite a stretch in any dragon boater's language, so in that context 13 seconds isn't much. You have to admit it was a pretty respectable result, considering the comparative average ages of the two teams!

We entered the Mixed category as well, with Neil Millgate (again representing the requisite men for such a race) and 19 girls. Pretty awesome to think that we came 10th (out of 11) when the other crews were stacked with testosterone-bearing paddlers.

The crew we beat was Sandy Point (and their men). Now that Martin and Deb Hirst are back from vacation we hope next twilight mixed race to have two men – just imagine how well we'll do then! It's really great for such loyal male supporters to be able to race with us at last – previously there simply wasn't a chance for them to have that fun (which is one reason why Geoff Eldridge deserted to PDs).

Enjoying Paddling More

We need your help! How on earth can we satisfy all our different paddlers' aspirations? Some girls want to paddle really hard at practice and race against the sporting teams – they come almost every time; some girls would like to paddle hard in order to get stronger to make the sporting team – they come pretty often; some girls just enjoy being on the water with friends and would rather not push themselves – they come quite erratically. It's fairly straightforward to sort out who goes in what boat, you might think. But it isn't so!

Let's say around 35 girls show up for practice. Of those, there is the usual hard core of, say, 16 paddle tragics who are almost always there; there's say 8 or 9 who would really like to get good enough to crack the sports team and another 8 or 9 who would rather take it easy and just enjoy themselves. How to organize the paddle?

We can easily bang the tragics into a hard boat and then top that boat up with some of the ones who aren't in the sports team but would really like to be. But if we do that then some are really upset they aren't in the hard boat and we are left with a second boat with some who want to go hard and some who just want to enjoy. If we give that boat an easy paddle, then half the boat will be really put off because they wanted to push themselves and get better. If instead we push that boat, the ones who want an easy paddle will get dispirited and stop coming. It seems unfair to the people who are always there if we don't push them the way they want, and for those who just want a gentle paddle, it's off-putting to make them work so hard that it's no fun for them. We've struggled and struggled with this problem. So what to do?

More Paddling, More Often!

The only way we can think to make it enjoyable for everybody is if more paddlers show up more often – then we could have an easy paddle boat, a harder paddle boat and a really hard paddle boat. But to do that we need at least 45 people to show up each time to have enough to divide up roughly into three boats and three different paddle programs.

Team Captain, Carol Fentoullis has already sent out a request that in future when you register to paddle you also nominate whether you want a hard, middling or easy paddle – but that will only work if enough people show up to take out three boats instead of two. So if you want to enjoy paddling more – please come more often – it will help you to have more fun and it will help others too.

Now there's a REAL medal!!

Desperately quick witted and an absolute MUST HAVE guest at any fun gathering, guess who's been being a real dark horse!! Most of you just know her as a keen, but mild-mannered, DASydney supporter paddler. Some of you might even know her as Councillor Helen Westwood, Mayor of Bankstown City Council. But did you know this!! There it was in black and white in the newspaper on Australia Day, among the other national treasures who were recognized for their services to the nation:

Member (AM) in the General Division

Ms Helen Mary WESTWOOD, Sefton NSW. For service to local government through promoting sustainable environmental management, and to the community through the Lebanese Women's Association and provision of services to people with disabilities.

Congratulations Helen, from all of us



Helen Westwood AM

CNY Raffle

If anyone was needing a bit of encouragement to sell more raffle tickets – then look no further. Below is a photo of the first prize - a set of amethyst and diamond earrings set in white gold and designed by Sue Gibson's husband Phil.

Remember – all raffle tickets must be handed to Margo-Lynne Lee by Saturday 11th February, when the raffle will be drawn.



Beating the Heat when Paddling

Now it's summer it's important to remember that heat exhaustion/illness can occur in strenuous sports in hot weather if the proper precautions are not taken. Paddlers should "listen to their bodies". If they start to experience any of the following conditions or signs or symptoms they should stop immediately. Symptoms of heat illness may include:

- Light headedness, dizziness
- Nausea
- Headache
- Obvious fatigue
- Cessation of sweating
- Obvious loss of skill and coordination/ /clumsiness or unsteadiness
- Confusion
- Aggressive or irrational behaviour
- Altered consciousness
- Collapse
- Ashen grey pale skin

Yeah! Yeah! I know – I get some of those things on a normal day! Seriously though, we all need to be on the lookout for ourselves and our teammates if we are doing a long, hard paddle on a hot day. If someone is affected this way they must stop immediately and cool down.

To minimize the risk "they" recommend:

- Acquiring adequate fitness



- Adjusting training intensity to conditions
- Wearing clothes that facilitate easy evaporation of sweat from the skin (like our club rashies)
- Modifying the warm-up
- Drinking plenty of water prior to and during exercising
- Taking into account any relevant medical conditions

Dehydration is rarely the sole cause of sports heat illness, but maintaining good hydration assists temperature control and is critical for good performance. Even small degrees of dehydration will cause a decrease in performance. Remember – thirst is not a good indicator of dehydration – it is a late signal of severe fluid loss. So do not wait to feel thirsty before you drink!

State Squad Hopefuls

Congratulations to all those DASydney paddlers who braved State Squad training for the first time recently. It was certainly hard but what a lot of determination and grit they showed, never faltering for a moment despite rubber arms and legs. Judging from the happy faces when it finished they felt what we all feel after our first exposure to a State training session – the somewhat masochistic thrill of having survived and still being able to walk upright (almost). We may not all make the final cut – but hey, up there for giving it a go! The only risk is we might get fitter!

Well done everyone! See, DASydney paddlers can do ANYthing!!

Crafty Ladies

Seems we've got the scrapbooking bug in DASydney – must be because of all those boxes of unsorted photographs we feel guilty about. Last month Robin Shoebridge had a bunch of us around for another of her popular scrapbooking workshops. The two Pams came to my house and we car pooled to Robin's at Engadine. For Margot Case it was just around the corner, and Geri Hill managed to get there from the Eastern Suburbs via Canberra (almost) so was a bit late!

Soon we were all up to our ears in scissors and glue. Is this actually some sort of mental regression to kindergarten activities as we grow senile? Probably, but it's fun! Anyhow, we're doing it again in March.

On the way back to town to fill in time before the Thursday evening paddle practice, the two Pams and I stopped by a scrapbooking shop, just for a look you understand. Oh dear, was that expensive!

Well Pam Bell had people coming for dinner that night, so she nicked off and caught the train home instead of coming with us to paddle practice at Pyrmont. Next thing we know, Pam's on the phone hardly able to talk for laughing – seems she got on the train and called husband Chris to pick her up at North Sydney station, only to be told "But I can't dear, you took the car to Pymble!" Apparently Chris furthered his application for sainthood by hopping on the train to Pymble and collecting the car from outside my house and, oh yes, he got back in time for the dinner party.

New Paddle Registrar

We all owe a huge debt to Sally Lynch who's been managing the paddle register for the last year (at least). It is like most things involved in running the club – doesn't seem like much when viewed from the receiving end – but believe me there are many, many hours devoted to doing it. Sal was there on day one of DASydney back in early 2003 and she's been a hugely keen paddler since, representing NSW in Perth and Australia in China in the Women's Masters category in 2004. Despite valiant attempts and a vast investment in physio treatment a crook neck forced her out of representative paddling, and she has finally come to terms with the fact that her neck will not permit her to paddle competitively any more.

Since she only paddles gingerly now she's passed the Paddle Registrar baton to Deb Hirst.

Please help Deb by making sure you always notify her before Tuesday 10pm each week if you want to paddle – you don't have to wait for her reminder email!! If you aren't online phones are a dandy substitute so there's no excuse!

Who'll be Paddling Where at CNY?

Longer term paddlers will already know that some girls will be paddling in composite boats at Chinese New Year.

There are never exactly 20, 40 or 60 paddlers registered for regattas, so to ensure everyone still gets a go, we make up composite crews. That is, some of our paddlers from DASydney will be teamed up with some from other clubs to make a full crew of 20. All of us paddle in composite boats on occasions and they are good fun. They are also a great opportunity to meet girls from all over the country. At this stage it looks like we'll have exactly (that's amazing, hardly ever happens) two 100% survivor crews paddling on the Sunday at CNY and our supporters will probably be paddling in composite supporter crews. By the time this newsletter is published crew lists should be finalized.



Deb Hirst



Retiring Paddle Registrar, Sally Lynch

Roll out the Welcome Mat

She has a sore arm so is taking it slowly, but please welcome Debbie Fisher to the fold. Deb came to our November Open Day and guess paddling caught her fancy – Welcome to DASydney, Debbie!

Milestones

It's only a little month for birthdays but they are no less important – there's Sophie Marinucci on Friday 3rd; Amanda Muir on 6th; Brenda Owen on 20th; and Vicki McLean on 24th. (none of them on paddling days, how sad is that?) Have a happy birthday all of you anyhow, even if you can't paddle on the day to celebrate.

Keep plugging those raffle ticket, everyone!! And have a ball at Chinese New Year

Paddles Up!
Cynth

DAS CALENDAR 2006.2007

Date(s)	Event	Location	Details
February 2006 W/E 11th /12th	Chinese New Year Dragon Boat Festival	Darling Harbour	You MUST put this in your diary now!!!
Sat 11th	Chinese New Year Banquet	Regal Restaurant, Chinatown	This will be huuuuge! Book now! Contact DASydney Social Events Coordinator Margo-Lynne Lee for booking details on shortsandie@hotmail.com.
Wed 15th	Hornsby Zonta	Hornsby	Guest speaker: Cynthia Kuiper
Sat 25th	DASydney Open Day for Newbies	Banks St Pyrmont	Reservations required: cynthiagkuiper@yahoo.com
March 2006 Sat 25th	2006 NSW State Dragon Boat Titles	Penrith, SIRC	Lodge entries now
April 2006 Fri 14th – Sun 16th	2006 AusDBF National Dragon Boat Titles (at Easter)	Nagambie Lakes, Victoria	Not just for paddling tragics – for novices too! For accommodation, contact: Nagambie Lakes Visitor Centre ph: 03 5794 2647 www.nagambielakestourism.com.au
August 2006 11th – 13th	World Club Crew Championships	Toronto, Canada	Training Squad selection after the Nationals
September 2006 29th Sept - 1st Oct	International Pink Dragon Boat Council's Breast Cancer World Dragon Boat Championships	Singapore	More info: www.bcf.org.sg
Late September	2006 Asian DB Championships	Macau	If the State team wins at the Nationals
September 2007 20th – 23rd	World Dragon Boat Championships	Penrith SIRC	We'll need lots of competitors and lots of volunteers
28th - 31st	Internationally Abreast Dragon Boat Festival	Kawana Lakes, Sunshine Coast, QLD	Small place – not too soon to book accommodation now