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National Titles 2009

Off to the races

Cynthia Kuiper gives a round-up of the State and Club racing in Caloundra.

In Caloundra Coach Carol celebrated an auspicious start to the State vs State racing by having dinner the night before with Alfie Langer (well, he chatted at our table for a bit while the paparazzi recorded the moment). She assured him NSW would beat those darned Queenslanders – and we did!

It was fantastic that 30 DASzlers made the NSW State Squad – a wonderful opportunity and experience for our keener paddlers, leading to some very exciting racing!

The unfamiliar sweep oar mountings in Queensland proved tricky for some sweeps and in heat one of the NSW Grand Masters Women's A 500m race our poor sweep fell twice, losing control of the boat. We thought we'd been disqualified. After a tense wait we were finally granted us a life-saving recharge. Entering the final with the slowest time we burst from behind to a breath-taking 2:03:45 win in the grand final. Our GM Women's B team



Coach Carol Fentoullis trying to convince Alfie Langer to join the NSW team.

also made the 500m final after another sweeping glitch in their second heat. At the last minute the officials okayed their right to paddle in the final, but sadly a mixup by the marshals saw the race begin without them.

Over the next three days of club vs club racing we put in some great performances although,



Some of the DASzlers men who took part in the club championships.

being one of the few clubs to obey the new cross-category rule, we unfortunately had fewer races than usual. Our girls pulled a bronze medal (behind Sea Dragons and BDR) in the 500m GM Women's category, which was a thrill and considering our Mixed Masters crew was nearly all Grand Masters, it was great they came fourth in the 500m recharge.

Seeded an impressive fourth the next day, our 2000m GM Women's crew made a very promising start but the sweep oar mountings defeated me on the last turn. Skewing off left, we toured all over of



Cynthia Kuiper grappled with an unfamiliar sweep oar in the 2000m race.

Welcome to the May 2009 edition of Paddles Up.

This month it's all about the National Titles held in Caloundra.

Special thanks to our reporters: Martin Hirst, Wilma Kippers, Cynthia Kuiper, and Ruth Turnell, and our photographers: Claire Hendy, Chris Kwong, Brenda and David Owen, Robin Shoebridge, Fairlie Stanish and Ruth Turnell.

Go to the link below and see the full album, with over 100 photos.

<http://picasaweb.google.com/dragonsabreastsydney>

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the waterway before finally finishing last. My only consolation was four other sweeps also went off course in that race.

The final day was 200m racing and although DASzlers didn't score any bling our GM Women came 6th in a very tight final, only 2.09 secs behind the winners, in a brilliant 58:52seconds. What a fantastic effort!

Heartfelt thanks goes to our GM menfolk, who good-naturedly paddled out of their age group to give our younger members (Masters are all under 50) some racing excitement too.



The GM Womens Team – all smiles.



Muriel Buckeridge, Wilma Kippers, Cynthia Kuiper and Vicki Farmer at the Nationals.



A sea of pale blue. The NSW State Team at the Nationals.

The lure of the pink shirt

Ruth Turnell charts her journey from paddling sceptic to pink paddling tragic.

Flash back 18 months and I'm on the phone to my 2IC:

"Sorry but you're going to have to run the ship for a while. Well, uhh, breast cancer actually. Mmm, a real bugger – but I'm telling you now, I am NOT going to wear a pink t-shirt and paddle a F**#! dragon boat!!!"

December 2008: I'm sitting on some bizarre medieval torture machine pulling frantically on a piece of wood attached to said machine by some sort of pulley system. In the background I hear the faint sounds of people groaning, weeping and dry retching. In my ear someone is screaming "TAKE IT HOME!"

March 2009: After a couple of months of paddling, weight lifting and aerobic exercise I survive another

near death experience – the water trial. This is not the ideal way to spend a Sunday morning. By the time I've paddled the boat 200 metres on my own I feel I am a hair's breadth away from an up-close and personnel meeting with "The White Ladies"!

Amazingly enough, however, I have made it into the NSW State Team.

April 2009: I find myself on a plane heading off to Caloundra to compete in the National Dragon Boat Championships, State v/s State and Club v/s club.

What a fantastic five days! How proud are we strutting around in our NSW shirts, intimidating the other states by our sheer strength of numbers I'm sure! The excitement is intense when NSW wins category after category (not my boat unfortunately!).

How strong is the club competition? Hundreds of paddlers of all shapes and sizes; lots of laughter, camaraderie and fellowship, to say nothing of the odd glass of wine in the evenings.



Deb Hirst and fellow team NSW team member Ruth Turnell at the Nationals.

But the most exciting thing of all?

Winning a bronze medal wearing that damn pink shirt and paddling that F**#! dragon boat.

Thanks DASzlers. You've made me realise it's actually kind of cool to wear a pink t-shirt and paddle a dragon boat – I'd recommend it to anyone recovering from breast cancer!



Ruth paddling out to race at the Nationals in the dreaded pink shirt.



Brenda Owen keeping us on course.

Keeping to the plan

Wilma Kippers has done a lot of racing, but this one was special.

One of the most exciting races I've ever been in was the Grand Masters Women's 500 metre race on Friday, 24 April. The DASzlers team trailed 4th in the first heat and the repechage, well behind the first three places.

For the final we got together and worked out our race plan and ramped up the motivation. Our aim was to improve on our previous two races and go for broke – an ambulance run!

Brenda, our sweep, did a brilliant job of keeping us in a straight line and calling the phases of the race – “reach it out”, “leg drive”, “ten of your best”, “TAKE - IT - HOME”.

And the team responded. We kept to our race plan, we didn't rush it, we put in the extra effort. We came THIRD!!!! What elation, what joy. We put in everything we had, and then some. And it was so satisfying knowing we had raced exactly as we had planned the race. This was one of, if not the, best races I've been in.

Go DASzlers!



Charlene, Brenda and Carol collect the bling.

Watch that chair!

Martin Hirst reports on the darker side of the Nationals.

The days were full of comradeship and good hard paddling. But behind the thin veneer of camaraderie the nights were filled with deceit and betrayal. People who were paddle buddies during the day became shameless and ruthless chair thieves at night.

For the first couple of nights in Caloundra we gathered in small groups at various local eateries for a light lo-cal meal washed down with water. But on Saturday and Sunday nights the pink paddlers came together like a flock of flamingos in a large open area at the Breakfree resort. (despite the difficulty of finding food on Anzac Day). This venue was far more sophisticated than the unlit car port of the Perth campaign last year.

Pretty soon the dark side emerged when it became clear that there were less chairs than people. That is where the cut-throat game of musical chairs commenced. Leave your chair to cook your food and your chair was gone; leave your chair to go to the toilet and your chair was gone; need to top up your drink ...

There were many laughs, great friends and a smorgasbord of food ... not to mention that large puddle of red wine that would not go away!



The Anzac Day barbecue at Breakfree (is that a spare chair on the right?)





Brenda Owen and Sergio Pineiro could show Margot and Rudolf a thing or two.



DASzlers enjoying another one of their favourite pastimes.

DRAGONS ABREAST SYDNEY CALENDAR 2009

Month	Date(s)	Event	Location	Details
May 2009	Saturday 16th	Dragons Abreast Australia Regional Meeting	TBA	TBA
June 2009	Saturday 20th	Trivia Night	TBA	TBA
October 2009 	Sunday 25th	DAA Corporate and Community Regatta	Darling Harbour, Sydney	Time to start organising those corporate and hospital team. Contact Cynthia Kuiper at cynthiagkuiper@yahoo.com
2010				
June 2010 	11th-13th	The International Breast Cancer Participatory Festival	Peterborough, Ontario, Canada	Start planning and saving now! Visit the website at www.survivorsabreast.com



May Birthdays

Liz Trenam	7th
Margo Lynne Lee	11th
Rosie O'Donnell	17th
Martin Hirst	18th
Chris Kwong	18th
Michael O'Donnell	29th