

USA Wildwater

2008 Highlights and Challenges

A Report to the USACK Board and the Paddling Community

By John Pinyerd - USA Wildwater Committee

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..... Charles Dickens

The Charles Dickens quote from a "Tale of Two Cities" really sums up the year for the Wildwater program. *It was the worst of times* in several ways. Four dollar a gallon for gas affected attendance at Team Trials and National Championships. The cost of a Euro was around \$1.60 when we were having our Worlds and Junior Pre-World Championships in Europe. As a result, virtually everything was more expensive. And the slide of the stock market this fall affected many of us.

2008 was the best of times for many reasons. Our athletes, the Wildwater Committee (WWC), volunteers and race organizers really stepped up and made 2008 a great year for our sport.

Sponsorship: Sensing the need, our sponsors really rose to the occasion in 2008. **It was our best fundraising year ever, with gross sponsorship in excess of \$20,000.** As a result we were able to continue our four year tradition of being able to fund housing for both our Junior and Senior Teams, provide for a modest stipend, and have a "Performance Fund." **USA Wildwater would not exist without the generosity of individual private donors and we thank them for their ongoing support of our beloved sport.**

Race Venues: Our race organizers continued to do a terrific job hosting our races. The race courses at both our Team Trials and Nationals venues were just pure joy to paddle. The Nationals venue on the "Dry Way" section of the Deerfield was truly one of the best Wildwater runs on the planet and Zoar Outdoor did a phenomenal job hosting the race. It's no wonder that the ICF WWC gave the Zoar/USA Nationals venue an international race designation.

Athlete Performance: The USA Wildwater Team had a lot to "crow about" during 2008.

The USA Wildwater Team performance at the Junior Pre-World's was very encouraging. Peter Lutter led the way with a fifth place finish in the classic. All four of our Juniors had top 20 finishes! We look forward to seeing what our Juniors will do at the '09 Junior Worlds.

Junior Pre-Worlds Results:		Classic	Sprint
<u>Name</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Finish</u>	<u>Finish</u>
Tierney O'Sullivan	K-1W	9	8
Peter Lutter	K-1	5	8
Mason Lacy	K-1	12	12
Spencer Lacy	K-1	22	14

Our Senior Team also performed very well. In the World Cups both Chris Hipgrave (K-1) and Tom Wier (C-1) had finishes within the coveted "10%" barrier. Tom continues to rank out in the top twelve in the World.

The Wildwater World Championships in Ivrea Italy may have been the best Wildwater Worlds ever. In spite of the flooding, the town of Ivrea and the entire region came together to host an incredibly well run event. The USA Team had several noteworthy accomplishments.

In individual competition at the World Championships, Tom Wier, John Pinyerd, Jack Ditty, Mike Harris, Tierney O'Sullivan and Chris Hipgrave all achieved top 30 level finishes. The C-1 Team (of Wier, Pinyerd and Ditty) placed 5th in Team Run.

The performance of the USA Master's racers at the 2008 World Championships was nothing less than spectacular. **The five USA Masters went five out of five on winning medals.**

- In the C-1 event, John Pinyerd successfully defended his title as Master's World Champion and was joined on the medal stand by Michael Harris who took third.
- Team USA also had fantastic performances in K-1. Chris Hipgrave and Maurizio Tognacci (who doubles as our Junior Team coach) both won silver and David Jones won bronze.

A numeric summary of the USA Wildwater Team performance at the World Championships is below:

2008 World Championships - USA Individual Performance

<u>Name</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Masters</u>		<u>Classic</u>		<u>Sprint</u>	
		Place	% Back	Place	% Back	Place	% Back
Tom Wier	C-1			19	8.3%	16	21.8%
John Pinyerd*	C-1, C1 Mstr	1	0.0%	23	11.7%	DNF	
Jack Ditty	C-1			24	12.9%	17	22.8%
Mike Harris	C-1, C1 Mstr	3	6.3%	25	22.3%	DNF	
Tierney O'Sullivan	K-1 W			26	8.4%	DNS	
Chris Hipgrave	K-1, K1 Mstr (35+)	2	4.1%	48	12.4%	28	10.8%
JP Bevilaqua	K-1			60	17.6%	40	16.6%
Nate Hamm	K-1			61	18.1%	DNS	
Jeremy Rodgers	K-1			63	20.0%	DNS	
Maurizio Tognacci*	K-1 Mstr (50+)	2	7.7%				
David Jones*	K-1 Mstr (60+)	3	1.9%				
TEAM AVERAGE		2.2	4.0%	38.8	14.6%		18.0%

Performance Funding: Thanks to our sponsors, the USA Wildwater Team was able to raise enough money to support a modest Performance Fund for our fourth year in a row. To qualify for the funding, individuals must finish within certain percentages of the winners at the Worlds/World Cups. The performance fund concept really works and we had a record number of athletes that qualified for funding. Most importantly, half of our performance athletes in 2008 were Juniors! Tom Wier was the Performance Funding champion followed by Tierney O'Sullivan (who earned funding as both a Junior and a Senior), Chris Hipgrave (who had solid performances at the Worlds and the World Cups) and Peter Lutter.

Performance Fund Qualifiers:

	<u>Category</u>
Tierney O'Sullivan	K-1W – Junior & Senior
Peter Lutter	K-1 – Junior
Mason Lacy	K-1 – Junior
Spencer Lacy	K-1 – Junior
Tom Wier	C-1 & C-1 Team
John Pinyerd	C-1 & C-1 Team
Jack Ditty	C-1 & C-1 Team
Chris Hipgrave	K-1

My vision is to quadruple this fund going forward because it's a great way to reward the team members who are working the hardest by helping to offset more of their expenses.

A Glimpse at 2009 and Beyond:

Sponsorship: We are hopeful that our private donors will stick with us in 2009 and help us to be able to fund a Junior Worlds Team as well as to help our Senior Team go to the World Cups in Tasmania. A base level of funding for housing really makes all of the difference in the world on how well we function as a team (and encourages folks to go). In addition, performance funding is a real key to our future.

We are happy to have renewed our agreement with Old Dominion Freight Lines (ODFL) as our boat transporter for the USA. Being able to utilize ODFL allows our athletes to be able to fly to events that are too far to drive as well as to move our boats around the country.

We are working with Cliff Bar and Keen to provide sponsorship of events and extend pro-purchase deals. Patagonia has continued to support USACK with a pro-purchase deal and we are happy to be part of that.

Race Organizers/Venues/Race Sponsorship: We are absolutely thrilled about our venues for 2009. The FIBArk/USA Nationals mega event in June has been designated as by the ICF as an international venue. All 3 races (Sprint, Classic, and the FIBArk Classic) are designated international events.

The USA WWC will be working very closely with FIBArk and other race organizers like the NRC to promote their events. We are looking at assisting with prizes and or prize money (to increase attendance of our performance athletes) and an array of other options. This includes promoting racing in plastic boats (like Wavehoppers and Speeders) and working with manufactures/dealers to provide them for entry level racers.

ICF WWC: The International Wildwater Committee made an impressive presentation at last weeks ICF Congress in Rom and consequently had their progressive thinking Wildwater Development Program approved and funded by the ICF. The three part program includes the development and implementation of the "mono-class" in K-1. We think that this is a great step forward for the sport of Wildwater as it will standardize our K-1s into one boat design and allow for the development cheaper, widely available Wildwater racing boats Worldwide!