



45th Southeastern U. S. Whitewater Championships And the 2013 NOC Canoe Club Challenge

August 17- 18, 2013

My Perspective By: John Pinyerd

Overview: There is nothing quite like the art form of canoe racing (and kayaks ain't to shabby too), and especially when you add in whitewater. Combine that with the history of Southeastern's, the fun of the Canoe Club Challenge, in the setting of the NOC, and you have a winning combination. It really is addictive, and that's clearly evident with folks like myself, Allen Hedden, Roger Nott and others that have raced in the event for 3 or more decades.

Congratulations are in order again to the NOC, and everyone who raced and volunteered to put together another great event. Participation dwindled a bit this year and I suspect that it was due to a combination of all of the rain we have been having, combined with the "been there done that factor". I am sure that NOC will come up with another way to boost the excitement level for next year.

And of course, congratulations are also in order to the Nantahala Racing Club who drew the winning ticket for a boat from Dagger!

Canoe Club Challenge Slalom: What's neat about the CCC is that you can paddle any kind of boat. We even had a few SUP's this year. So I seized the opportunity and paddled one of Allen's OC-1s and paddled his OC-2 with him. I felt really good about how well we could handle the big boat, and I felt even better about it when one of the NRC regular slalom racers complemented us on how well we did (and went on to say that we made it look easy).

There were a couple challenges with the Slalom event this year and the NOC is already looking at changes for next year to make things run better. It's not possible to run a full blown slalom race and keep up with gates, penalties, timing, etc. with just 3 people. As a result, there were mistakes in the slalom race that defy logic and human ability. But as I told my peers in the event, "no worries", this race is for fun. We will need to more closely coordinate volunteers and make sure that we have enough folks to step in and help out.

The second challenge of the CCC slalom was how to classify the boats. For the first couple CCC's, the founding father of the event, the Great Wayner Dickert strictly forebode anything other than plastic. Now the concept has migrated to anything goes... which is a great philosophy that I wholeheartedly endorse. However, if you are going to post results, we need to employ the concept that we have been embracing in wildwater for several years and break out boats to their lowest common classification. The speed differences between plastic and full blown races boat can be bigger than they are between C-1 and K-1.

Overall, the slalom race was a blast in spite of the scoring and classification anomalies that can easily be fixed for next year.

Southeastern US Whitewater Championships Downriver/Wildwater Race:

The classic top to bottom downriver/wildwater race, with its mass start, was a blast again this year. Moving the race to Sunday morning was probably a good thing for the pure racing buffs and may have helped with participation (which was larger than slalom). In the spirit of the Southeastern's, there were folks that were just enjoying a timed paddle and a number of us that were "going for it".

The battle for the fastest kayak was between Kurt Smithgall and Chris Hipgrave. Chris was able to pull ahead and use the handful of rafts that were on the river that morning as blockers for him. Kurt's alternative lines did not pan out, and Chris who has become quite the distance paddler, pulled ahead and stayed ahead for the duration of the race. Chris has earned the designation of "Fastest Kayak" seven times, and is closing in on David Jones (who has this 8 times and owned the river in the 70's).

Terry Smith took the bronze and was followed by Corey Hall, Rick Thompson and "Grandmaster" Bern Collins (who would beat everyone if we applied an age handicap). Bern was also the winner of the decade long "beer cup" challenge, and I will pay up at Nationals should Bern retain the trophy for this year.

During my run, I could feel the 6 slalom runs from the day before and wondered if I could close the gap on Bern who took an early lead. It was not to be, and it seemed that I was relegated to battle it out with the two "Speeders" that I traded places with several times. Ultimately I passed both of them, and was very impressed with Tyler Smith's performance and his ability to sprint to the finish line. Overall, I have been blessed with 17 Charlie Patton Awards, and this was my 18th time to win one of the fastest canoe awards.

USA Wildwater Team Members Tom and Bryson Popp won the Ramone Eaton Award for the fastest O-C2. They were followed closely by adventure and distance racers Allen McAdams and Paul Cox who went under the 60 minute mark.

The Julie Wilson Award for the fastest K-1W was won by Christine Warren who is breaking into wildwater racing. The fastest C-1W was won by Junior Team Member Selena Popp.

It was great to see everyone who participated. This has always been, and always will be one of my favorite races. I'm blessed to have been able to participate again this year and hope to make it in the years to come.

My annotated version of the downriver race results can be found at www.usawildwater.com/news/2013/2013_Southeasterns_Results-Annotated.pdf