

Wildwater is one of Life's blessings From the Dart Transit Company Newspaper



Like most any boy growing up in Alabama, I loved outdoor sports and lived and breathed football. As I grew up (much too slowly I thought), I realized that no matter how strongly I desired it, I could not will myself to be 6'6" tall and 280 pounds. Over the years, I realized the good Lord has given us all a set of unique talents and it turns out that my athletic talents as an adult are best geared to canoeing, a sport that I messed around with as a kid.



I love competition, and the moment of truth that is achieved through athletics. For me, few things compare to the thrill of victory, the agony of defeat and the life lessons I've experienced during the two decades I have raced in paddle-sport. I guess you might say that through thick and thin, I stuck with the sport that I love. My favorite style of canoe/kayak racing is wildwater or downriver. In wildwater/downriver, racers start one minute apart and race straight downstream (from start to finish) in class II-IV whitewater.

The 88 Worlds on the Savage River in Maryland were my first big wildwater races at the international level. I raced in tandem canoe (C-2) with Martin Bay and we were able to win a Bronze in the C-2 Team Race. Teamwork is key in a factor in C-2 as you must balance yourselves in a tippy and fragile racing canoe in order to battle whitewater, fatigue and your competition for the fastest time.

Over the years, I went on to race a mixture of C-2 and C-1 (solo canoe) at the national and international levels. I thrive on competition and the whole aspect of training and competition spills over into the rest of my life in a very positive way. While I do benchmark off of the World Champions, I do not make myself miserable trying to beat them. Instead, I have learned to measure my success against how well I do versus my old times.

Most of the international races are held in Europe except for last year when all of the Wildwater World Cup races were held in the USA, in Kernville, CA. So I came out of racing retirement for the opportunity to earn a berth to represent the USA Team. At age 46, I was just thrilled and honored to have the God given health to be able to compete. I ended up being the second fastest US C-1 at Team Trails and took 14th overall at the World Cup Races in California in spite of a shoulder injury. Since then I have met my goals of rehabilitating my shoulder and have honed my skills back to what they were when I was 30 something.

This year I was able to compete at the US National Championships for Wildwater on August 6-7 at the Salmon River in beautiful Pulaski, NY. The Salmon is a shallow rocky river with many shoals and technical rapids that are diverse in nature. It was a thrill just to have the opportunity to compete against the best paddlers in North America. In the small sport of wildwater, there is always a chance to medal if you are well trained (especially this year when the winner of our Team Trials, Tom Weir, was unable to attend). It turns out that my efforts produced solid runs both days, and I ended up with the Gold in C-1 and Silver in C-2.



I have been truly blessed (albeit in a non revenue producing sport). 😊

John Pinyerd