

Faster Than Today!...

A message from the Wildwater Committee chairman

“the achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual”

Vincent Thomas “Vince” Lombardi

When John Pinyerd asked me to become a member of the Wildwater Committee board of directors two years ago, I was a little apprehensive. I had watched from the sidelines over the prior 3 or 4 years and seen the tangible accomplishments that the board and other volunteers had achieved. The 2003 World Cup in Kernville CA, the building of the USA Wildwater web site, the steadily increasing fund raising efforts and the growing budget were just a few. I knew that if I was going to be a part of the board I was going to have to pull my weight and get things done too. So, I threw caution to the wind and became John’s Vice Chairman. Fortunately for me, John is a great mentor and he helped me get up to speed with how our board functions. But what John wanted from me, was entrepreneurship, he wanted me to take over certain existing projects and develop new ideas for building our sport on my own. And it’s that spirit of individual responsibility and accomplishment that has helped our organization complete some really fantastic events over the last two years. The 2007 Jr. World Championships, regional training camps, financial sponsorship for major races and importing equipment are just a few. Though those are different types of accomplishments, they all have one thing in common; the people who did them didn’t wait around to be told what to do, they acted like entrepreneurs. They went out and did the thing and got the job done! In fact, most of the key players were not board members, they were people who got stuff done! And so my hats off to all the volunteers who’ve brought us to the point we are.

“News of my death has been greatly exaggerated!”

Mark Twain

Wildwater racing is a sport that faces unique challenges and difficulties. It started as an Alpine competition and to this day flourishes most strongly in the countries of Europe where it originated. In the United States we have experienced times when our U.S. team was a full contingent of 20 athletes who attended the World Championships. We’ve also seen years where finding anyone who would represent our country was a challenge. And yet so far in this decade we’ve hosted what was arguably the most well-run World Cup in memory, the 2003 World Cup in Kernville, and an extremely successful and well received 2007 Jr. World Championships in North Carolina. We are in a period of resurgence for Wildwater racing in North America. And that is really good news for the sport because we in the United States and Canada are the growth driver for Wildwater over the next two decades. Our European counterparts face the same funding challenges and the same type of time commitments that we do. Often we think they have it made because of where they live. I discussed logistics with the German team manager in Italy this past year; his team’s travel difficulties are almost as tough as ours. And financially, the teams from every country in Europe need more money than they have. Despite the ebb and flow of participation the sport is alive and well and will continue to name its champions, the question at hand is, will any of those champions be from America?

“The starting point of all achievement is desire. Keep this constantly in mind. Weak desire brings weak results. Just as a small amount of fire makes a small amount of heat.”

Napoleon Hill

Wildwater racing will continue to grow and be bigger tomorrow than it is today. People like to train and to compete, the style of competition coupled with its inherent connection to the outdoors and the excitement of whitewater make it a very compelling sport. What needs to be done to achieve the potential growth

starts here at home, in the United States. And the work that needs to be done, needs to be done by us. We cannot look to the International Canoe Federation or some other governing body, to do for us what we must do ourselves. Specifically what we will be building is a pyramid of paddle sport for Wildwater. That means we must continue our development programs, fund raising, sponsorship and other activities that are proven to be successful. But we must also bring to the fore new projects to introduce new racers to the sport and to create regional training centers. We must find new creative ways to build our base of paddlers at the local, regional and ultimately the national level. The 2008 Wildwater Committee is committed to doing whatever it takes to build a broad based pyramid to support racing in the United States. We will be rolling out plans over the next few weeks that address specific issues and there will be an opportunity for anyone interested to make suggestions and to volunteer.

And so, if I have a mission statement for the new board it's this;

“Build the next great pyramid of paddling.”

And with that statement comes one more comment about purpose. The success of our efforts cannot be measured solely by how many people we introduce to the sport or by how much we increase participation. Those are important indicators but they are not our ultimate goal. Our ultimate goal is to help our athletes win medals for the United States of America at the World Championships and the World Cup. I know every member on the board shares the view that our ultimate goal will not be achieved until we can put the United States back on top in Wildwater racing. It's a place we've been before, it's a place we're going again. The pyramid of paddlers and racers and organizers and sponsors is the structure that supports the top, and the top is where the gold is.

“Faster than today!”

In closing, I'd like to address our athletes and say I congratulate you and want you to know how encouraged I am by the level of enthusiasm, commitment and

potential I see in the country today. The board is committed to helping you, the athlete, achieve at your highest level. There are training programs available on USA Wildwater and regional coaching available. But if you need your own mission statement, and you want something to inspire you when you're not sure what to do, remember what your goal is, it's to be FASTER THAN TODAY! Think about it, work on it, measure your performance, do things every day, so that you'll always be, *faster than today*.

Sincerely

Doug Ritchie

Chairman

United States Wildwater Committee