

# What the devil is White Water Canoeing?

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## How can I get interested?

by Ted West

This is a sort of cry from the wilderness. The wilderness bit is appropriate as the subject of this piece is Whitewater Canoeing.

My wife Renata and I have just returned from a week end at the Bull River near Minden, Ontario, where we observed the Canadian portion of the 1993 World Cup of Whitewater Slalom Canoe and Kayak competition. Over 120 paddlers from sixteen countries participated in this sport. I saw "observed." This really means that we screamed, yelled, jumped up and down and generally disported ourselves in a manner not seemly with a couple of middle-aged County folk.

Such behavior I to be forgiven, however, and even ap-

plauded as Renata's son, Dan and my step-son of 14 years, became the Canadian Champion of C-1 Whitewater Slalom, and placed 12th in the entire world! And this is an Olympic event.

We are sometimes amused, (to put it mildly) to see television coverage of the equestrian team, (who do work hard and do have similarly horrendous expenses) staying at first class hotels, sponsored to the nth degree. There are also T.V. reports and commercials from chocolate bar companies who see that the athletes they sponsor are well cared for.

Now that these young athletes are in these fragile craft, what do they do? All they have to do is negotiate a course of some 600 meters of the roughest water you or I will ever see. (Outside of Niagara Falls.) They call it "whitewater" as the river they ride is fraught with rocks, eddies, whirlpools, hydraulics and the like. But, and this is a large but, they do a "slalom" course down this raging river. Something like slalom skiing, they must negotiate some 25 "gates." These are poles, set just over a meter apart, that hang from wires strung over the river. Some are "downstream" gates which means that the paddler just goes forward through them. (After the aforementioned rock eddies, whirlpools, etc.) The other half of the

gates are "upstream", meaning the paddler passes that gate, then turns around, (through the rocks, eddies, whirlpools etc.) and paddles through the gate, turns (through the selfsame rocks, eddies, hydraulics, etc.) and proceeds to the next gate. The World Champion C-1 paddler, from the Czech Republic, accomplished this feat in just over 140 seconds! Danny, technically perfect, (meaning he didn't hit any of the gates, for which points are lost) did it in just over 160 seconds.

Proud? You bet we are. Not only is Danny Norman the current Canadian C-1 Champion and 12th in the World, he holds the Ontario C-1, and (with Don Eldon of Ottawa) the Ontario Provincial C-2 title.

Now then, you say, where does this leave us? Why, back at the very first line. A cry from the wilderness.

As you might have guessed, all this travel, meals, equipment, etc., costs. Who pays? ....not the govern-

ment of Canada, (whom these young people represent) or even the Government of Ontario, although there has been some small Wintario funding.

The other side of the coin is our Canadian Whitewater Team. These your people, at their own expense, travel the world to represent us. They live in tents at the race sites. They eat whatever they can bring with them, or, when we are able to attend a race, we feed them.

None of them complain. I'll repeat that. NONE OF THEM COMPLAIN! Don't you think they deserve better?

### Explanation:

**C-1**, a canoe like boat in which the paddler kneels in well or hole near centre, with waterproof "skirt" to keep the water out. The paddle has a single blade.

**C-2**, the same as C-1, but with two paddlers

**K-1** and **K-1W** are kayaks in which the paddlers sits legs extended in front of him/her and paddles with a double bladed paddle. The W stands for woman. (Canada's K-1W champion is Sheryl Boyle of Ottawa, who placed 11th in the World Cup at Minden. She "silvered" at World Cup Championship race in Nottingham England, last year.

The year before last, before the Olympics, Renata and I appealed to twenty-five companies in the Quinte area, for sponsorship. We asked for no minimum contribution, but for any help they could give. One...yes ONE local company responded, Cal Thomas of Giant Tiger in Picton.

We have a son, a Canadian Champion of an Olympic sport, who needs your help. His costs amounts to no less than ten thousand dollars a year. The sport is growing, our resources are diminishing. For more information, see us at the Milford Fair September 18th. We will have an entry in the parade and will be available to tell you about TEAM CANADA and how you, or your company can help to make this exciting sport something of which this community and this country can be PROUD

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