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**C** **LIMATIC CONSTRAINTS:** Canoeing in its various forms by its very nature brings us closer to our natural environment. This brings with it a responsibility that we all share, to consider the impact we have upon the waterways, our indigenous playgrounds. We have all shared our concerns for our rivers and lakes and this is reflected in the number of phone calls to the Irish Canoe Union office about pollution (e.g., silage effluent) or hazards (sawmill blades in one case!). Now we must do more, not for our rivers but for our future, and examine the carbon footprint we leave behind us when we participate in canoeing activity. While canoeing may become more common (by necessity) as climate change impacts upon us, we as a community who gains more than most from an uncontaminated environment, must act as guardians for its future. Reflect upon the transport we use to get to our hydro-playgrounds, the carbon emissions and the possibility for alternatives. Often twinned with environmental issues are safety concerns and the recent discussions on the utility of wearing a buoyancy aid both to comply with maritime safety directives and to ensure all paddlers. Paddling with a buoyancy aid is akin to wearing a safety belt-it's there in the event of an accident. The safety record of our members has been excellent and this reflects an ethos that our instructors, coaches, athletes and support personnel have in common. Water is the natural resource that connects us all and we should have respect for it both in terms of its long term sustainability and for our safety.

*Eamon Devoy, President, Irish Canoe Union.*



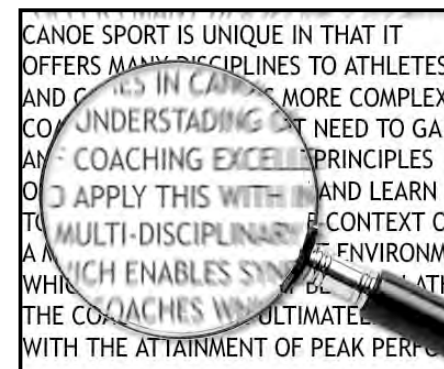
**C** **LUB PROFILE-SILVERBRIDGE KAYAK CLUB:** One of the longest established clubs in the Irish Canoe Union, this club is over 30 years old. In fact, one of the founder members, John Carolan, is a former Union president. The serenity of their clubhouse in Horse lane, Drogheda, belies the spirit of adventure that drives these paddlers to haunts as far away as Slovenia. In partnership with Drogheda Borough Council, SBKC are progressing on their plans for a new 2000 sq ft clubhouse and hope to move in within the next year. Although traditionally a canoeing community (Olympian Pat Holmes hails from here) the club has evolved, in common with current trends, to an adventure based outfit which caters for all abilities. Whereas there is a big emphasis on Safety and Training the Craic is also most important. While SBKC organised marathon races across several decades their competitive involvement mainly involves Kieran Halton & Andy Wilson who are well known on the National and World Surf circuit with several World titles to their names. Now days, the club has a healthy emphasis on social and leisure aspects of paddling. Their members are well catered for with pool sessions in the Winter, and trips to the European alpine mecca's in the Summer. Last year their paddlers hit the Soca in Slovenia in April, Val Sesia region of Italy in May and were based in Briançon in France in June followed by Wales in July and Scotland in October. At home, they tend to paddle wherever there's water and the Boyne at Stackallen is as well known as the best pub in the country-Although on a big day you'd have a better chance of walking out of your local. Their Sunday trips include junior paddlers-arguably attracted to the club by their website and innovative textline! In fact, they use helmet cams to create videos of their big water excursions and show them on DVD nights-Cutting edge paddling and technology. This year eleven paddlers have already signed up for the annual pilgrimage to Briancon in June. SBKC have a very fast production line taking people from beginner to alpine paddler in less than a year. SBKC have two instructors, Kieran Halton and Paul Maguire with Adrian Wimsey working his way through the ICU instructor program at the moment. Club members traditioanlly hail from the urban centres of Drogheda and Navan and some from further afield. With local coracle paddler Clive O'Gibney reminding them of the the hand of history on their shoulders in the Boyne Valley. Paul Maguire, says that it's very encouraging to see the club develop and evolve over the years, he said new members are always welcome and to remember as we say... Go Large... or Go Home See [www.sbk.ie](http://www.sbk.ie)

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**FAMILIAR FACES-MARK CUMMINS IS THE WOMEN'S TEAM CANOE POLO COACH** A trip to the Carlingford Adventure Centre ignited a spark for paddling that flourished with his local Scout troop (Hartstown 172<sup>nd</sup>). "Sparky" as he is known, has a multi-sport background including National representation in athletics and handball. He has also competed in most team sports including hockey and American Football-although you're not likely to mistake him for a linebacker! A Summer course at WWKC cemented Marks canoeing career and once he saw polo played in the pool it struck a chord straight away. Playing with DCU, a club that had been nurtured by John Ringwood (now at NUI Maynooth), soon Mark graduated to playing on the National team. This continued for the 2-3 years when he took playing seriously. Then, he graduated to coaching-As he says "once you were paddling longer than somebody else you were coaching-it's a natural order." His motivation is derived just from seeing someone improve-that "Eureka" moment when they gain insight into a skill and just get it! While he describes canoe-polo as a unique sporting challenge it has commonalities with other team sports-tactically, both handball and basketball, physically, rugby and ice hockey, mentally, chess and slalom. His opinion on the current scene is that 3-4 years ago teams weren't training except for squads but now from grassroots up (Divisions 1-5) all are training-because of different divisions there's a level for everyone. And what does he say of the current Women's squad "Their commitment is the key-they gel together and the atmosphere is like a magnet-once attracted they're stuck together." Mark was the coach previously at the Europeans in 2003 (finished 5<sup>th</sup>) and the Worlds in 2004 (10<sup>th</sup> in Japan). According to Mark, the sport is now closer than ever to the level of other Nations. "The U21's are only coming through so we are a few years behind but nevertheless we're still competing effectively on the World stage. When the younger players come through benefits will be obvious-We can and will compete at the top!" And for down time away from polo? "All my time teaching, programming, research or paddling or thinking about any of the above-canoeing is my down-time. He plays for Bazaar a sub-team of Muppets-"We wanted something that would travel, it's fun and cheerful-and as coach I pull the strings-well-sometimes."



**UNDER THE MICROSCOPE-DOES IT PAY TO SURF?** Wash-hanging or wash-riding as it's termed on the continent is canoe-sports equivalent of slipstreaming. The key difference from the cycling equivalent is that instead of tucking in behind to sit in a wind-shadow, wash-hanging involves using the wake of the other paddler to facilitate the glide on your boat. This technique is integral to marathon racing and consequently groups of paddlers often work together in an echelon shape formation. Wash-hanging can also apply to other disciplines. For example, the team race format in wild-water racing and slalom and even the Big Boat Bonanza-at least in the team event! However, the fundamental question is how much is it worth to a paddler? Research with Canadian and Spanish paddlers in the 1990's investigated the impact of wash-hanging in different positions by measuring physiological variables (e.g., heart rate, stroke rate, blood lactate and ratings of exertion). To explain, the possible positions are left, right and a couple of metres behind the lead boat (it's termed an A-wash). The consistent finding was that, across all variables, it was significantly more efficient to be wash-hanging than leading. For instance, heart rate dropped from a mean of 172 b.p.m. to 151 b.p.m. in the two conditions. In fact, one of the more recent studies concluded that "wash riding" involves a saving in energy cost of between 18% and 32%, depending on the position. While the studies were conducted on flat-water conditions over a short-duration, it's now possible to create your own field test using a GPS and heart rate monitor. Check your heart rate while leading the paddling group and while latching onto a wash, all the while maintaining a consistent speed. The only catch is that, from a coaching standpoint, it's important that paddlers who race individually should close to their racing season focus on maintaining the glide on the boat without other boats interfering with their technique. All in all, surfing another paddlers wash can pay dividends. See <http://www.garmin.com/products/forerunner305/>



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**P**OLO-SQUADS AT WORK: The Women's canoe-polo squad have had two sessions in Belfast, and has included the bleep test which has both running and slalom course equivalents, while the Men's squad kick off their team training on the 3-4<sup>th</sup> of March at Kilcock. Vincent Pierce is coaching the Mens' Senior and U21 squads and Mark Cummins is coaching the Womens' Senior squad. Squads are training for the European Championships in France, next September. Details of training for development and other squads are available on the National committee website. National competition continues to be producing high level matches across three provinces. The Munster league has one weekend but continues to be an unrivalled success with its flagship 50m pool facilities. While the quality of canoe-polo is outstanding in Limerick, the Dublin league has several hundred registered competitors, and so provides the largest one in the country. The Spring League has just commenced and will run until the end of May, when the outdoor tournaments will commence. The Ulster league has seen many new paddlers try the challenge of canoe-polo with paddlers from as far as Donegal competing. Preparations are under way for the Belfast Cup in March, which will see paddlers from the four provinces converging on the Northern capital. How timely it was that this month *The Belfast Telegraph* featured Womens' team member Dympna Carville in a feature on local heroes with a full page spread promoting canoe-polo. [www.canoeipo.ie](http://www.canoeipo.ie)



**C**OACHING CURRENTS: Burnout, career terminating injury and retirement are all issues that surface in contemporary sport. Are they inevitable by-products of high performance systems, decades of commitment and striving for excellence? Thankfully, in an activity like canoe-sport which is more lifestyle choice than sporting pastime, these outcomes are avoidable. When they do occur it is usually because of a systemic failure rather than an individuals attributes, but this doesn't lessen the shame, guilt and depression that often occurs with the onset of burnout or retirement. It could be argued that these issues are just the tip of the iceberg, reflecting problems beneath the surface of a sporting structure. For footballers, it's the commitment to club, county, college and the potential overtraining. For paddlers, it's often the lifestyle balance and the lack of a pathway for other roles within the sport (e.g. coach or manager). The solution is simple –a long-term view of athletes performances and putting their development ahead of short-term results. Pathways for athletes into our coaching and training structures are an imperative and training for those that wish to take up other challenges-referees in canoe-polo, judges in slalom, event organisers and race officials need to be developed. Firstly, we need our members to engage not in debate of what has occurred in the past but in the development of sustainable routes for our athletes from the podium to the river-bank. See <http://www.nctc.ul.ie/files/The%20LIPSA%20Model.pdf>



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**M**ARATHON: GARY MAWER (DIRECTOR OF MARATHON RACING) FORMER SILVER MEDALLIST IN THE WORLD MARATHON CHAMPIONSHIPS PITCHES FOR HIS DISCIPLINE. **WHY SHOULD SOMEONE TRY IT?** It's a chance to paddle in a fun event-short course (3-4 miles) versus long course (up to 18 miles)

bringing together touring and the more physical demanding k-boat paddling with obvious fitness benefits for all concerned. **WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO IT?** Any type of boat and a set of paddles-we cater for all classes of boats. **WHAT QUALITIES DOES IT TAKE?** Suitable for all, from novice to expert-a 5k spin on the Shannon at Carrick to the flagship event, our Liffey Descent. **IS THERE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR MEN AND WOMEN?** We've had a number of top class women compete at the highest level and we encourage participation in mixed boats (e.g., K2 and C2). **WHAT KIND OF RIVERS DO YOU GO ON?** Placid water on the Corrib, to the Nore, Liffey and Boyne. **WHAT ARE THE RISKS?** Safe environment-everyone wears buoyancy aids-moving water races have rescue. **HOW MANY PARTICIPATE IN MARATHON?** Up to 300 paddlers turn out for the most popular events, with the flagship Liffey Descent having over 1,000 participants. **HOW DO YOU GET STARTED?** Check the calendar, email committee and turn up at race-see

[www.irishmarathoncanoeing.com](http://www.irishmarathoncanoeing.com)



**S**LALOM-MAKING WAVES DOWN UNDER: The Penrith white-water course in Sydney, a winter training venue for the Irish Canoe-slalom team, brought success for Eoin Rheinisch this month. Eoin dominated the qualifying rounds, was pipped for a top 10 final place in the next round, but took silver in the B final. The early season success saw Eoin reap \$500 Aus. prize-money and provided him and National coach Han Bijnen with a confidence bonus. This warm-up event saw 54 paddlers, including Olympic silver medallist Campbell Walsh (G.B.), the ultimate winner, take to the turbulent waters of the Sydney Olympic slalom course. Ciaran Heurteau, who was Irelands best performer in the World University Games last year, took a respectable 12<sup>th</sup> place in the B-final. The team now head to Brazil, where other Olympic hopefuls (Neil Caffrey & Helen Barnes) will join them for a training camp on the Olympic qualification course. <http://www.2007slalomworldseries.canoe.org.au/>



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**W**ILDWATER RACING-SEASON TAKES OFF: A shortage of water has been the common complaint in recent years but 2007 has been kind to the wild-water racers-well almost. Too much water on the Shannon led to the Castleconnell race being moved to Curragower rapids. This still made for a fun and challenging race and provided a spectacle that led to interest from the local Gardai. Eunan Malone, of WWKC, briefly swapped his uniform for some paddling kit and showed that his fitness is eternal even if he has yet to wash the cobwebs out of his kayak. A large contingent from the U.K., including several of the Women’s squad competed here adding to the competitiveness of the event. Aghade rapids on the Slaney provided good racing conditions with Dun Laoghaire Sea Scouts in conjunction with Tullow Kayak Club, organised a very well attended event. Over 30 boats were on the water and close racing was the order of the day across the categories. Avonmore didn’t quite live up to its name (Abhann Mor-Big River) but a downpour on the Saturday night brought the level up to a reasonable race level for race day. A squad training session was held on the Saturday which saw two groups working together on a 13k stretch. All boat classes were present and consistent race winners this season have included Kevin Pierce, Caoimhe Ni Chuinn and Keith McGuirk. Many new faces have taken to the races this season and wave-hoppers are providing paddlers with an opportunity to take on rapids even without knowing the fastest lines. See links for the committee homepage on [www.canoe.ie](http://www.canoe.ie)



### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Date	Event	Club	Venue	Contact	Phone Nos.
24 <sup>th</sup> Feb.	Junior Marathon Series	CPCCC	Canal	Eamon Fleming	086-8146920
25 <sup>th</sup> Feb.	Foxford Wild-water Sprints	WWKC	R. Moy	Andrew Redmond	087-8391910
3 <sup>rd</sup> Mar.	10 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Marathon Race	Castlefin - Donegal	R. Finn	Paul Reed	086 362 2472
3-4 <sup>th</sup> Mar.	National Freestyle Championships Round 1	Committee	Clifden	Committee	
10 <sup>th</sup> Mar.	Junior Marathon Series	Salmon Leap	R. Liffey	Kevin Murphy	087 2535402
11 <sup>th</sup> Mar.	Clashganny Wild-water Sprints	Committee	R. Barrow	Martin McCarthy	
10-11 <sup>th</sup> Mar.	National Freestyle Championships Round 2	Committee	Curragower	Committee	
17 <sup>th</sup> Mar.	Munster League Canoe-Polo	Committee	Arena	Adrian Barber	
18 Mar	Marathon Ranking Race	Trim	R. Boyne	Alex Doyle	087 2405123
24-25 <sup>th</sup> Mar.	Belfast Cup-Canoe Polo	CANI	Grove Pool	TBA	
24 Mar	Junior Series	Thomastown	R. Nore	Stephen Kelly	
25 <sup>th</sup> Mar.	Wildwater Classic-Stackallen-Slane	Silverbridge K.C.	R. Boyne	Brendan Devlin	087-9435186