

# Kayakers bring quest to 'go huge' to campus

The first Epicocity Project video, 'Bigger than Rodeo,' will be shown Wednesday night in Pacific Hall

By Kyle Dickman  
Freelance Reporter

It wasn't just a mess of bright red hair or the more than six-foot frame that set University student Trip Jennings apart from the rest of the crowd at the Clackamas River on Saturday.

Jennings is responsible for spearheading the Epicocity Project, a video production corporation composed of youthful kayakers — nearly all of whom are University students — intent on producing a white-water kayaking video that is, according to <http://www.epicocity.com>, dedicated to "going huge and having fun."

After a year and a half in the making, the company's first video, "Bigger than Rodeo," was shown to about 150 people Saturday at Bob's Hole Rodeo, part of the Oregon Cup kayaking competition.

"For me, the Epicocity Project is about more than just kayaking," Jennings said. "It is a way to encourage people to get away from their 9-through-5 lifestyles and pursue a passion."

Jennings said he and the six members of the Epicocity crew are driven by a passion and a love for kayaking.

"The pursuit of our passion allows us to dismiss promises of financial 'success' in the world of nine through five," he said. "It helped me decide that I was going to find a way to 'make it' on my own terms."

Jennings and the rest of the crew members came to the production table with more than just kayaking experience. Jennings has produced promotional videos for Perception Kayaks and Dagger, a kayak manufacturer. Additionally, all six athletes produced their own promotional videos. Their skills are reflected in the final cut and acknowledged by the array of sponsorships awarded to the company's first video.

Jennings said he was initially concerned about sponsorship at the start of production.

"When we first started, I was a little worried that the sponsors wouldn't want to take a risk on such a young company," he said. "This worry came from a lull in kayak and accessory



Courtesy Jordan Nystrom

Epicocity Project co-owner Trip Jennings premiered the company's first video, "Bigger than Rodeo," on Saturday near the Clackamas River.

sales during the 2003 season. I didn't expect the companies to have much of a budget to play with, but after they saw the teaser we started to win some companies over."

"Bigger than Rodeo" is officially sponsored by NRS, Dagger and Bomber Gear. The company has already sold 600 of the recently released videos — almost enough to pay for their travel expenses.

Jennings and Epicocity Project co-owner Ned Trice had been considering making a kayaking video since they were 16 years old, but not until 2002 did the company come into being.

"All the elements just started to come together," Jennings said.

The idea solidified over a year ago when the crew took a kayaking trip to the 65-foot Upper North Falls in Silver Falls State Park outside Silverton, Ore.

"It was when we realized for the first time that what we were doing was actually out of the ordinary, even in the kayaking world," University student and Epicocity Project athlete LJ Groth said.

This realization set the pace for the remainder of the 2002-03 year. The kayakers traveled the United States, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica and

Panama in search of white water suitable for their video.

"As cheesy as it sounds, making this video was an excuse to travel and kayak," said Carl Moser, Epicocity athlete and shareholder. "It just happened to turn out really well."

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Trip Jennings  
co-owner, Epicocity Project

Moser, Jennings and fellow athletes Chris Todd and Amy Jimmerson spent last summer traveling Canada and the United States while Groth, Alex Hotze and Jennings traveled Latin America in search of white water.

"The video only shows the kayaking," Groth said. "The truth is, that is only half the story. I've never had so many challenging, scary and rewarding experiences as I had while

traveling for this video."

Throughout the video's showing, the crowd responded with collective amazement and a few wincing.

"To see a group of people my age turn their dream into a reality was inspirational," sophomore Brent Anderson said.

"Bigger than Rodeo" holds rights to the footage of the world record for the highest waterfall run in a kayak — 105-foot Alexandra Falls on the Hay River in Canada. It also includes footage of "playboating," or performing maneuvers on a stationary river feature, that Groth, a self-proclaimed "creekboater," said separates "Bigger than Rodeo" from other recent videos.

The video is set to music from groups including Swollen Members, Atmosphere, Strike Anywhere and The Explosion.

"Honestly, the video scared me, I just don't think that people should be kayaking down 105-foot waterfalls," University student Aaron Rettig said. "But I really liked the music."

"Bigger than Rodeo" will be shown at 7 p.m. Wednesday at 123 Pacific.

Kyle Dickman is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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