

sports

CROCC Rocks

Hawaiian outrigger canoeing alive and well in Portland with the Columbia River Outrigger Canoeing Club

BY RYAN J. PRADO

As of press time, summer is still here. That means there's no better time than now to enjoy the Northwest's rivers, creeks, lakes and the like to cool off in before our pre-fall showers reign supreme. If you're searching for a different way to make a splash in water sports, might we suggest the revered Hawaiian pastime of outrigger canoeing?

Lucky for you, Portland just so happens to be home to the Columbia River Outrigger Canoe Club (CROCC), a recreational and competitive crew of spirited devotees to the team sport of outrigger canoeing. The group was founded in 1992, the first dedicated outrigger canoe club in Portland and the Northwest. Through its mission of encouraging, sustaining and perpetuating outrigger canoe paddling, racing and the related Hawaiian traditions, CROCC strives, per its website, "to embrace and nurture the community through inclusiveness and all skill levels in order to teach and improve paddling technique and to maximize enjoyment of the sport."

It just so happens, as CROCC head coach



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Northwest Outrigger Canoe Association—places emphasis on its novice and recreational paddlers. In fact, that's how board chair Clint Spelt began his journey into the wet world of outrigger canoeing.

"I joined CROCC with very little water experience at all," Spelt admits. "A little more than two years later, my partner and I went from 'let's just try it and see if we can make time for it' to racing competitively, coaching and sitting on the board of directors. When you paddle, everything else in the world seems to go away."

CROCC is participating in each of the Sunday Parkways events throughout the summer, and bringing a canoe for curious folks to check out. On July 24, CROCC will be at the Northwest Sunday Parkways event just south of the Hawthorne Bridge, and will have a canoe available to take people out for a short paddle throughout the day. ☐

For more information about upcoming races for CROCC, visit croccpaddle.com.

Josie Sparks explains, that about 85–90 percent of the paddlers are members of the LGBTQ community.

"What's so incredibly wonderful is that everyone in the outrigger community is accepting, and therefore we're able to paddle without judgment," Sparks says. "It's all about being an *ohana* [family] that's full of athletes that makes sure we all *kokua* [help] one another."

While outrigger canoeing with CROCC engages in competitive races with challenging conditions on the Columbia River, the group—which operates under the Pacific

Countdown To The Cup

Portland Cup Softball Tourney returns in August

BY RYAN J. PRADO

While hundreds of softball stars are scheduled to take the field during the second GLISA North America Outgames in Vancouver, B.C., Portland's Rose City Softball Association is oiling up the leather for its own big-time invitational. The Portland Cup—set for August 13–14 at the Delta Park Sports Complex (10737 N. Union Court)—will host teams from Seattle, Vancouver, B.C., San Francisco and Phoenix. The tournament marks the perfect chance to either tune up before late August's Gay World Series in Chicago or, for teams not going to the series, to have a last sporting hurrah before summer winds down.

Jake Packer, RCSA open division commissioner, explains that this year's Portland Cup tourney follows in the historical footsteps of most gay sports leagues' focus on recreational fun, with multiple divisions for teams based on the cumulative abilities of its players. As Packer reports, very competitive teams with a high degree of skill level don't face teams with newer players and/or a lower level of abilities. There's also a Wom-

en's B and C Division, featuring the Seattle Changes, and the Portland Dirty Grrlz.

"This relative equality in each division puts the competition aspects on more even footing, making the experience all the more enjoyable for all teams," Packer says.

The Portland Cup doesn't hold back with the post-game social functions, either. RCSA traditionally partners with local gay or gay-friendly businesses to ensure a unique experience for ball players after they hang the spikes up for the night. This year, Scandals, CC Slaughters and Starky's are hosting evening events August 13–15, respectively.

"These are usually very well attended, as a lot of these players see each other on what we could call the Gay Softball Circuit year after year in various cities," Packer says. "It's always a big opportunity to socialize and catch up since the last time they crossed paths at a tournament."

Delta Park has food, beverages and beer available in the central complex, fueling attendees until Sunday afternoon's finals for the various divisions.



MARTY DAVIS

Interested in participating? There's time left to register through August 5. Team registration fees are \$375—the experience is priceless. ☐

The Portland Cup takes place August 13–14, with finals on August 15 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information, visit portlandcup.org. Additionally, the Lesbian Community Project's annual LCP Women's Softball Tournament of Choice is slated for August 5–7 in Brush Prairie, Wash. Team registration is full, but for information on attending, visit letsplaylcp.com.

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