



Local 'Dragons' rose to the occasion

Wallowa crew gets fifth place

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

The "Dragons in the Wallawas" dragon boat team played its first "away game" June 10-11, racing in the Portland Dragon Boat Races during Rose Festival.

Approximately 63 teams competed on the Willamette River at the Tom McCall Waterfront Park in downtown Portland. The Portland Race uses the big 1,760 pound Kaohsiung-style boats for the international event, which is why the Wallowa team purchased a Kaohsiung-style boat "Wally" for practices earlier this spring.

The Wallowa County Team came into the race with 16 of the normal 20 paddlers and relied on friendship with other teams to recruit volunteer paddlers, an experienced river tiller and a flag-catcher for the race.

The traditional Kaohsiung boat races include a person who climbs out and lays belly-down on the head of the dragon, reaching forward beyond his nose to snatch a floating finish-line flag from a pole. If the flag-catcher misses the flag, the race time (or win) does not count.

The Wallowa County team ended up paddling with four borrowed paddlers, referred to as "orphans." Sally Flanigan of the Portland Golden Dragons, and Tessa Fennimore, Ruthie Fox and Patti Green, all of Salem, who paddle on the Unsinkable Cancer Survivor's Team.

All were excellent additions to the team as was 100-percent-accurate flag catcher Dawn Lewis of the Golden Dragons and expert tiller Kenny Brantz of Portland.

The all-woman Wallowa team jumped out to a first in Division Two in the first heat on Saturday with a time of 3:05.60, but began to slip backward by seconds from there, racing a 3:06.85 race just a few hours later.

The squad was in fourth coming into the quarterfinals on Sunday and posted a 3:14.15, enough to earn one more try.

In the final race, a few hundredths of a second were trimmed for a 3:14.09.



Photos by Clinton Lions for the Chieftain
The Wallowa County "Dragons in the Wallawas" dragon boat team heads out for their one and only practice run on the Willamette before the Portland Dragon Boat Races on June 10. The Hawthorne Bridge over the Willamette River is behind them and they race from the Marquam Bridge back to the Hawthorne.

It was an impressive rally, but the top three women's teams in Division 2 turned in times three to nine seconds faster. Veteran Portland team Dragon Rose won with a 3:05.67.

The Wallowa team finished fifth overall in a class of 12.

Nevertheless, the Wallowa County team was pleased with its first out on a big river.

Caller Amy Gulzow of Joseph carried tremendous weight given the fact that the team was without a regular coach this spring.

Colleen and Rick McLaughlin, both coaches of the Golden Dragons, were able to come to Wallowa County for a coaching workshop earlier this spring and Colleen McLaughlin jumped back on the boat in Portland on the Friday before the race for a quick refresher course.

Both McLaughlins then followed the progress of the team throughout the Portland event and gave Gulzow their feedback.



Caller/coach Amy Gulzow signals victory as the Dragons in the Wallawas celebrate their first fastest heat during the Portland Dragon Boat Races, June 10-11. Behind Gulzow are Kathy Greene Ward (left) and Julia Zeise.

Gulzow adapted quickly to the feedback and the changing conditions on the river, pouring her trademark enthusiasm into calling the

paces. Her ability to keep her team energized even as they began to flag in the final two races and lift them to

shave time was noteworthy.

Tiller Brantz was impressed with the team on his first and only practice run with them, declaring them "very strong," an opinion he kept throughout the race.

McLaughlin declared herself astonished at the strength of the team and how well members had maintained condition and technique over the Wallowa winter when the frozen lake prevented practices.

"You have nothing to be ashamed of," McLaughlin told the group after the fifth-place finish. "You are contenders, and I expect to see you back next year."

Division One women's team winner, Liquid Assets, finished with a time of 2:51.33. The leading team of the Division

One mixed team of men and women, CCBA Dragon Boat Team, turned in a winning 2:44.93, while the Division 2 leading mixed team, Tsunami USA, turned in a 2:52:89.

Wet a line: Singing the praises of stoneflies

Each spring around Memorial Day, I have clients come to me and ask what the giant bugs covering their tents and cots are and more importantly, "do they bite?"

The big bugs are golden stones, a hatch anticipated by both fish and fisherman. Like a child anticipating Christmas morning, anglers dream about the day big stoneflies come in late spring, spending countless evenings tying fly patterns mimicking the insect and concocting new variations of old fly patterns that will surely fool every trout the fly passes over.

While some rivers have an abundance of the stonefly commonly called a salmonfly, northeast Oregon is blessed with a healthy population of Golden Stoneflies.

We have two species in abundance: *H. pacifica* and *C. californica*. Both spend two to three years in the river as nymphs. *H. pacifica* is the larger and more abundant of the two. With its "salmon" colored head, orange to yellow underbelly and



gone
FISHING
Grant Richie

large size up to two inches, anglers often mistake it for a salmonfly.

C. californica is smaller with the largest closer to 1 1/2 inches long. Their heads are darker, not nearly as round, and the underbelly is yellow turning to dark gray or black.

To confuse things further, we also have small half-inch to three-quarter inch long yellow stoneflies. These smaller yellow stoneflies are often labeled yellow sallies in the fishing world, and although they hatch in large numbers a week or two before the golden stones, the hatches overlap giving resident rainbows an abundance of stoneflies to eat.

Golden stones crawl to the bank just after dusk and hatch on rocks,

trees and even your raft. Moss-covered rock walls on the Grande Ronde are covered with hundreds and perhaps thousands of shucks after the hatch.

An examination of nearby brush reveals stoneflies stacked up mating. Warm afternoon air triggers the females to take flight, and the huge bugs begin dive-bombing the water, trying to just touch the water in order to deposit their eggs. Inevitably, many golden stones end up in the water becoming trout food.

Guiding both whitewater and fishing trips weekly on the Wallowa and Grande Ronde, I have been lucky enough to witness these hatches each spring between Minam and Troy. The hatch normally begins around Memorial Day in the Troy area and progresses its way upriver hitting Minam mid-June on an average year.

The big stoneflies live up to a week, and the hatch can be heavy for up to two weeks. Random individuals pop up throughout the rest of the summer, and if you were completely

obsessed with following the stonefly hatch, you could continue up in elevation on the Minam River, Wallowa River, Bear Creek and the Lostine River following the hatches up into the wilderness area as summer progresses.

The population does begin to dwindle as you get higher in the river systems.

During the early days of the hatch anglers find success with big dry flies late in the afternoon and into the evening when females are returning to the river to deposit eggs. If you fish enough, you will experience some of the best dry fly action of the year when big rainbows willingly come to the surface all day long.

Although you can use fly patterns as large as size 4, it is more productive to fish medium-sized patterns in the 6-10 range with size 8s my favorite.

Some of my favorite commercially tied patterns are Stimulators, Chubby Chernobyls, Parachute Madame X, Hedgehog and the Flut-

tering Salmon Fly. Most important factors for fly selection is orangish to yellow color, high buoyancy, easy visibility for you as an angler and the addition of rubber legs on any fly pattern increases its fish catching ability.

To dramatically increase your catch, tie a second fly imitating the nymph 16-inch below your dry fly. This is commonly referred to as a "Hopper Dropper" setup, but in this case you will be imitating both the adult and nymph stage of the stoneflies life cycle.

Grant Richie and his wife have been operating the Minam Store and Motel, offering raft rentals, shuttle service, and guiding float and fishing trips since 2011. His grandparents lived and worked in Hells Canyon on the Oregon side for the first half of the 20th century. He has been fishing, hiking and floating the rivers and canyons of northeast Oregon for the past 20 years since attending college at Walla Walla Community College and Whitman College in Walla Walla.



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