

Team Captain's Report

The role of Boat Captain was created four weeks from the end of the season in time for the Wellington and Auckland regattas to provide on the water support for the Coaching team. I have always enjoyed being a member of the EW Dragon boat crew and having paddled eight of the previous ten seasons was honored to be selected for the task this season.

The season started much as any other with the team coming together as a disparate bunch of uncoordinated hopefuls, some keen, some curious but not yet a tight coordinated unit. Keith our Coach and his team met this challenge head on and started us off with technical paddling and boatmanship sessions for all on our familiar training water, Hamilton's Lake Rotoroa. The lake's water quality (or lack of it) provided an incentive to all to listen and learn and to stay in the boat.

My overriding impression of this season was that of personal commitments to the team, the culture of giving time and effort was best seen in the behaviours of crew members both at trainings, where we nearly always had a full boat, at regattas where the team didn't need to be 'found' at race time, at the many fundraising events and in the results on race days. This seasons personal and on the water team discipline was exemplary and the best ever making my job and that of Rosco our sweep that much easier.

We contested the Wellington and Auckland regattas, and faced the disappointment of having the end of season Karapiro regatta (home water) cancelled, but what a season it was. Corporate grade racing has for a number of years been very competitive with finals being decided on slim margins with all phases of the racing critical to success. The team's very strong sense of purpose and personal commitment was demonstrated at both regattas as we paddled way above many of our own personal expectations and it became clear from the preliminary heats that we were going to be competitive, notching up wins and close finishes to paddle our way into the Corporate Grand Final each time. Great starts team! Thanks to those crew who sat out the finals in Wellington and Auckland this year – you got us to the Grand Final each time.

A fourth place in the Grand Finals at both regattas, while not a 'podium finish' is a record to be proud of and something to work on for next season. When coupled with the winning of the extra curricular – Money Race at Auckland with prize money of \$400, the 2005 – 2006 season race record of 15 starts, 10 wins, three seconds and two fourths looks impressive.

Without taking anything away from the entire crew, I would like to mention some individual crew for their contributions. In addition to those acknowledged by team vote:

Most Improved paddler was Cirina Di Pierro;

Most Dedicated paddler and also our Club President was Allan Halse;

Best Crewperson was Paul Smith; and

Sportsperson of the Year was Tama Pereto;

my appreciation goes to Rosco for once again sweeping us safely this season in a variety of conditions, to our two new strokes – a big ask for new paddlers, to Derek for the warm ups and for doing my job when I was rested during one of the Auckland heats and for Nicola who really came into her own this season as our caller.

The EW Dragon Boat team is in a building phase and is in good shape for the upcoming season – with a strong core of returning paddlers to form the basis of next season's crew with the usual contests and aspirations for the club's third trip to an Australian regatta.

I personally wish the 2006 – 2007 crew all the best with their personal preparation, boat training, and on and off the water teamwork. Go out there and enjoy each race – the results will follow as you do best when you are relaxed. You are amazing individuals but even better when working together, a great team with a big heart that hasn't been afraid to meet challenges and put the effort in and to give of yourself to your fellow crew members.

No Captains report would be complete without a vote of thanks to our Coach, Keith Parker, Assistant Coach, Andy Haigh and Manager, Allan Halse, key people that have kept the team together throughout the season. Warm thanks also to partners and family and to our sponsors and other supporters who helped make this the successful season it was.

