



Hamilton Super 12's

Saturday 24th November and the season officially begins! You can tell who was there – they have a look in their eye that wasn't here the week before. They've got the taste, they've felt the rush and now there's no going back... they can't go back, it just wouldn't be the same. All they can do is wait for that next fix, the next regatta, the next race, the next victory!

It was a beautiful day, no blue skies, but perfectly calm and satisfyingly warm. Environment Waikato had two teams of 12 paddlers, giving everyone a real opportunity to get involved. There was a large contingent of EW staff, non EW staff, spouses and family members who all got involved, and a surprise visitor from the Hawkes Bay - Erin Petuha!

With four heats each throughout the day, the styles and rhythm of each boat became more refined, more efficient and more effective! There wasn't much demonstration of our new paddling technique though, so as the day progressed those bends in the elbows became more and more evident. In the end both boats were placed into the top level grand final. This meant we had to race against each other. Unfortunately we did not have enough for two full boats so we decided a sibling rivalry race between EW1 and EW2 would be more of a thrill than stacking the team with non-Environment Waikato paddlers, or only racing one boat. So, we ended up racing with 10 paddlers in each boat.



It's interesting what a bit of rivalry can do for people to show their true competitiveness. With Cirina as team captain in charge of EW1 and Tama in charge of EW2, Tama hit the tequila bottle and Cirina scurried away to stack the teams as she saw fit. Then, sufficient arguing on shore with rock-paper-scissors to secure Ross Wightman as sweep for EW1, left EW2 needing to be quick to secure their caller as Kendall, Richard Allen's very lovely and light daughter (at least someone in EW2 was quick, cos Tama sure wasn't).

Teams and seating positions set, and a deal made that the losing boat was buying drinks. The race was exciting and fast, especially since the other competitors in the final were both open teams – Hamilton City Watersports and KPC. Both boats raced hard and the Environment Waikato teams were surprisingly not too far off the fully loaded open teams, brilliant effort all round.

The official end result – our boats were third and fourth overall, but first and second in the corporate division out of a field of 18.

So what did the newbies think of it all? Here's some of their comments:
"Technique is tricky to keep right when you are really going for it"
"I got a good workout from it over the course of the day, and enjoyed myself and hanging out with all of you :)"
"I remember Cirina's voice bellowing across the thrashing of paddles screaming '1,2,3 etc.'"

"As the race builds up and you're thinking your at your limit and then things got cranked up that extra notch coming in for that home stretch, this is when the words of 'dig it in' and reeeacch!! are screamed out by Ross. I believe at that point I was reaching so far forward that I was coming off my seat! The bruise on the front of my leg is testament to that"

"Despite the new found bruises in places I never thought to have been bruised (gunnel rash, not anything dodgy), and the body exhaustion, the day was good fun."

"I don't recall Jimmy doing the J Stroke...."

"The tequila was bad"

Everyone made an awesome contribution on the day and all the paddlers (and especially our newbie's) did Environment Waikato proud – if Super 12 is any indication, we are in for one hell of a season! Bring it on!

Special thanks to:

- Mark Hamer, who despite training hard, volunteered to miss out on the racing and run the safety boat instead. The event could not have happened without you.
- Jenny Davis for keeping Mark company on the safety boat.
- Tery Hardwicke for taking time out of his busy work to come down and take photos for us.
- Ross Wightman, our trusted (and fought over) sweep, you always keep us on course and win us races!
- Kendall Allen and Libby Davis for filling in as callers. We're working on borrowing you for other future regattas – please start annoying your parents about it now.
- Erin Petuha for driving the miles and surprising us all with the impromptu visit.
- Friends and family who came along to support us.



Finals teams:

EW1 – Cirina Di Pierro, Brian Richmond, Richard Allen, Steve Schwartz, Katrina Daysh, Allan Halse, Maelene Wong Brake, Virginia Comer, Catherine Bang and Erin Petuha.

EW2 – Jane Davidson, Sarah Mackay, Karyn Hopkins, Ric Grocott, Murray Mulholland, Tama Pereto-Bristowe, Amy, Helen Leslie, Jason Shortt and Malcolm Ware.

-Sarah MacKay

The Hamilton Super 12s were...

...A good relaxing day out -MW

...Light weight fun -RW

...Choice! Getting 3rd & 4th behind the 2 top open teams - can't beat it! -SM

...A tame start to the year - neat opportunity to give it a go. -JD

...Tery's day out -DH

...A hard start to the season -MH

...Wasn't there.... busy kissing my wife. -DP

...Fun (newbie boat won) -VC

...A rude awakening to the season! It was great getting in touch with my Mexican roots, however. -EW

...A warm up -KH

...A real eye opener for newbies and a great inspiration for the seasoned paddlers -CDP

...A great start to the season - AH