

Highlander outdoors



Members of the Haliburton Highlands Paddlers dig in during one of their races at last weekend's Barrie Dragon Boat Festival. Photo by Dawn Stoutley Photography.

Paddlers bring home the hardware once again

Submitted by Joanine Ransberry

It's becoming a tradition.

Once again, the Haliburton Highlands Paddlers have come home as winners from a weekend race.

The Haliburton dragon boat team placed second in the Iron consultation race at the annual Barrie Dragon Boat Festival.

But, the local team's fortunes didn't end there. The 20-member squad was thrilled when race officials announced them as winners of the Rookie of the Year award

Saturday's well-attended festival was especially competitive, Haliburton team president, Elli Armstrong, said.

"With 55 teams from across Ontario, we knew before the races got underway, we'd have to work hard, stay focused and give it our all," Armstrong said.

The Haliburton team was made up of 18 women and two strong men.

"Some teams came with 10 young men with muscle," said Armstrong. But what gives Haliburton the edge is the attention and respect given to synchronicity, he said.

Coach, Janine Papadopoulos was especially proud of the performance.

"Our team was awesome. We reduced our time with each race. It was a wonderful day."

The Paddlers completed the third race at 1:32 and last 250-metre race in one minute and 26 seconds, a team record.

The team will certainly remember

Saturday, said Armstrong. "It was the first time the Haliburton team paddled in a large lake."

We learned about racing on big water. We knew we were up against muscle and lots of testosterone. Some of the young men could be our grandsons."

Saturday marked the team's fourth competition, and they've come home with hardware in all four, winning a bronze in Port Perry, a gold in Dundas and a silver in Port Perry last month.

Originating in China, dragon boating dates back to the 4th century.

Meanwhile, with 55 members, the Paddlers are enjoying their third season.

The team practices twice a day on both Monday and Wednesday and Sunday afternoons on from the Patient News' dock on Grass Lake from late May to early October.

Joining Papadopoulos to coach is Scotty Boyd. Both are certified steer persons and coaches. They both do an excellent job of steering the boat and giving direction, said Armstrong.

The Barrie festival is in its 15th year. It raises money for local charities. To date, the Barrie festival has raised \$1.6 million.

In keeping with the spirit of giving, the Paddlers raised \$1,600 to be given to Haliburton's Point in Time. The funds will be presented to Point in Time director and dragon boater, Marg Cox, at a coaches' appreciation dinner today.

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