



BEN'S BABBLES

By BEN MCCARTY

Like Moths to a flame, sailors flock to C-Locks

Australian, New Zealand and British-accented voices waft over the marina at the Port of Cascade Locks.

Mixed in amongst the Aussies, Brits and Kiwis are more than a few Americans and a smattering of folks from Japan, the United Arab Emirates, Canada, Germany, Singapore and Switzerland.

It is a veritable United Nations of sailing. However, instead of racing under the blue and white globe of the U.N., they are sailing under the banner of the black moth.

Some of the best sailors in the world are in Cascade Locks through next week for the Moth class world championships.

For those uneducated in sail boat classifications (such as myself), the moth class are small, lightweight, one-man dinghies. They gain much of their speed from running on hydrofoils; not sailing on the water, but careening several feet above it.

Getting the boats into the water, climbing into them, getting them moving and then up on the hydrofoil is a sport practically in and of itself.

First the sailor has to get the boat into the water, typically with the help of a support crew member, without ripping its sail on the jutting hydrofoils of boats lying on their sides on the beach; then they have to carry the boat into deep enough water to avoid scraping the foil on the river bottom.

Then they have to clamber aboard without tipping the boat over. Then it's just the small matter of maintaining perfect balance to get the boat up to speed to raise it on the foil. It's basically a piece of cake.

"This is always the toughest part, huh?" one sailor said to another as they struggled to get the boats upright.

One poor guy was having some serious problems with the balance in his boat and could not get it to go more than a few feet before it tipped over. Once he actually managed to get up on the foil, but the boat promptly went

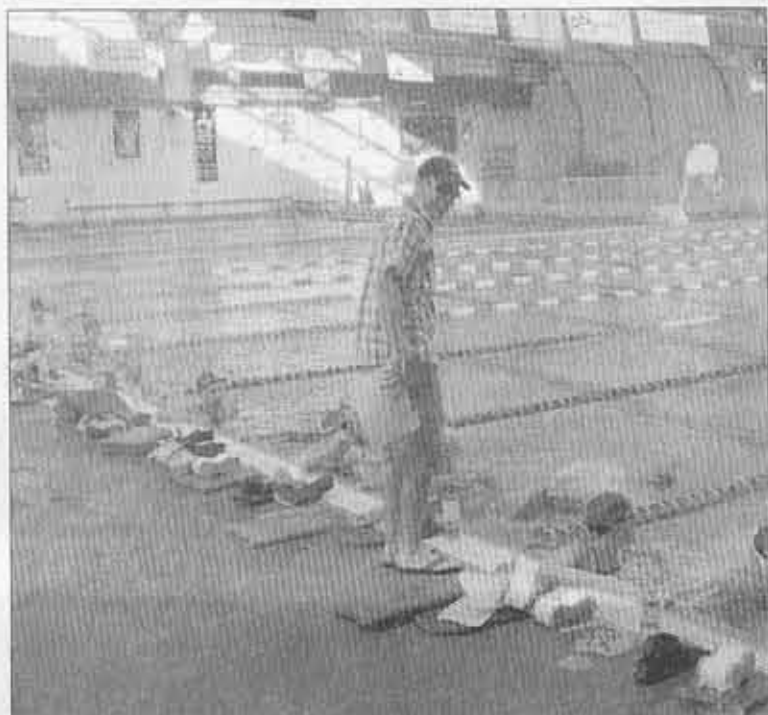


Photo by Ben McCarty

PAUL JONES instructs the Columbia Gorge Masters swimmers on their next set of swim reps Wednesday morning at the Hood River Aquatic Center.

Masters group just keeps swimming

By BEN MCCARTY
News staff writer

They arrive at the pool with pink streaks still flashing across the early morning sky.

That's an improvement from most months, when the sky is still covered in inky pre-dawn blackness as the sleepy Columbia Gorge Masters Swimmers roll into the Hood River Aquatic Center.

In the last few years, the group, which has members ranging from their mid-20s into their 60s, has seen nearly 100-percent growth.

When Paul Jones began coaching the program three years ago, the team had around 15 members. Today, it is over 30.

"Some days I drove up and there was a foot of snow on the ground and people would be standing there

waiting for me to open the pool," Jones said.

Some of the group compete in meets across the region, as well as nationally when they qualify, but many of the swimmers show up at 6 a.m. every day simply to swim because they enjoy doing it.

On this particular cool summer morning, the roof of the aquatic center is off, allowing the stiff Gorge winds to blow right over the pool.

It was strong enough to keep most of the swimmers in the relatively warm waters of the pool for the entire workout, and those who had to leave early went scrambling for the locker room, coffee mugs in hand.

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STRETCHING THE SAILS

White Salmon's Andy Mack (above right) sails around the west marker during the opening day of pre-worlds competition in Cascade Locks for the International Moth Class championships on Thursday. At left, defending U.S. champion Bora Gulari of Detroit heads out on the water for the final race of the afternoon. World championship races begin Monday at 11 a.m. and go through the end of the week.

Photos by Ben McCarty



Photo by Ben McCarty

MOTH BOATS (left) line the beach prior to afternoon racing Thursday; no matter how hard he tried this competitor (right) could not get his boat to stay upright, and had to come in before the final race.

BABBLES

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bow first into the water, ejecting him into the Columbia.

He got it going again, only to have it completely capsize. Trying to right a boat with its sail being held down by the drag created by the water is a real pain in the butt.

He eventually gave up and packed it in for the day after not being able to get it into the starting area.

Those who did make it to the starting line presented a magnificent sight.

The Moth boats absolutely fly, and in the hands of a skilled sailor, they seem to almost be able to turn on a dime.

I had never seen Moth boats in action before, and my jaw actually dropped when they got up on the foils and started going.

"That is really cool," I said to myself as they started zip-

ping across the water.

Cascade Locks is the perfect place for the race. Spectators have a view for miles down the river, including several close-ups of the action, and get up-close and personal with the boats and boaters right at the Marina.

It's also a nice boost to the economy of a town that could badly use the boost. You have dozens of racers, their support, and spectators

all staying and eating locally.

That's good money, and a nice high-profile get for Cascade Locks, considering the event has not been held in the U.S. since 1977.

So help out the town and help out the sport of sailing and go watch the races this week. The world championships start Monday and run through Friday except for Wednesday, which is an off day.

After a few minutes of watching the Moth boats, I'm pretty positive your jaw will be dropping as well.

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