

Regatta with a difference!



Final preparations to PPC's entry.

Victoria Lake Club at Germiston Lake, home to some of the country's top rowing and yachting talent, had a regatta with a difference on November 22 when it played host to the first ever concrete canoe race held in South Africa.

Concrete canoeing started in America, where they have been holding races since the early 1970s. Concrete canoe races are also held in Europe and Australia, and the idea was adopted by the Concrete Society of Southern Africa's Transvaal branch as a fun way for civil engineering students at universities and technikons to put their knowledge of concrete technology to use. Once the idea was mooted, there was so much interest that another category, for industry, was opened.

Instructions were simple: entrants had to design and construct a two-man canoe to race over a 500 m U-shaped course. The binder used in construction had to be Portland cement on its own or in combination with extenders.

In total, 18 canoes made it to the lake on race day but only 16 competed, as two sank before reaching the starting line. This left eight craft in the universities and technikons category, and eight in the industry category. After their respective heats and finals, a free-for-all open event was held at

the end of the day.

The CSSA Transvaal put up R3 500 in prize money for the university and technikon finals, giving both the canoe team as well as the engineering faculty of the respective university or technikon cheques of corresponding amounts for first, second and third. There were no monetary prizes for the industry category, but trophies were awarded.

At the end of the day, it was the University of Pretoria team, in their boat *Pegasus*, who took top honours by winning both their own category and the open event. Second and third in the universities and technikons were Wits and RAU respectively, while in the industries section Anglo Alpha came in



first, a joint entry by Gillis-Mason and Sternson second and Santar Pipes third. In the open event Anglo Alpha's beautifully prepared *Cocnoo Too* came second and RAU third.

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The Tukkie canoe was built as a joint venture between the university's civil engineering department and Grinaker Precast. A standard K2 fibreglass canoe mould was used to form the craft, and a cementitious composite was specially developed for its construction. This consisted of OPC as a binder, siliceous fillers, lightweight aggregates mixed with water and air entraining admixtures to form a lightweight matrix reinforced with continuous networks of fibrillated polypropylene fibre. The mould was lined with fibre reinforcing and plastered to a uniform thickness with the cementitious composite. After curing, the hull and deck were joined together with epoxy. The final thickness of the material was between 3 and 4 mm, impermeable to water and with an energy absorption capacity of more than 600 kJ/m³. The light weight allowed the university's Rauten Hofmeyer and Wally Fisher to power Pegasus around the course in a fastest time of 1 min 52 sec.

Anglo Alpha's craft was also manufactured from a standard K2 racing canoe mould, using a slightly heavier reinforcing of two layers of polypropylene membrane and one layer of flyscreen. The canoe was immaculately turned out and even featured a small pump "in case of emergencies". It was paddled by Kevin Jacobs and Clyde Sutherland of Hippo Quarries, who had a best time of 2 min 10 sec.

At the other end of the scale was a styrofoam-filled battleship from the Pretoria technikon which needed eight strong men and true to launch. Although it survived the racing, another entry from the same institution caused loud laughter when it broke in half and was carried across the finishing line by its game crew.

Overall, the regatta was a splendid success and I've no doubt it will become a regular — and keenly contested — event in the concrete industry's calendar.

Good work by "Class of '61"

I see that a group of civil engineers, all "Class of '61" University of Natal graduates, has raised in excess of R100 000 per annum for the next five

years for the subvention of salaries of civil engineering academic staff at the University of Natal.

Bean Bornheimer, chairman of the Civils Support Group, said that a committee to raise funds was formed because the problem of poor remuneration of engineering teaching staff was placing the proper function of the Department of Civil Engineering at Natal University in jeopardy.

Careful study revealed that salaries were low in relation to reasonable market norms and that this had made it extremely difficult to retain the services of suitable young engineers as lecturers. The youngest lecturer in the department is now over 40 years old. In addition, the department has the highest student/staff ratio of any civil engineering

department in the country.

In spite of these problems, it still manages to turn out students who are sought after both in South Africa and internationally.

I've heard people in our industry discussing the subject of salary subvention for years but this is the first time I've actually seen words being translated into action. My congratulations to the Civils Support Group for its hard work and, of course, to all the donor companies for their generosity.

Peter Hooke

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