"They Can, Canew?"

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Experienced canoeists and paddlers know that not all canoes are created equal. This is especially true of the "CANEW," Competitively Aggressive Novelty Engineered Watercraft, being readied by the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) for this year's 12th annual National Concrete Canoe Competition. The competition, sponsored by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and Master Builders, Inc. of Cleveland, OH will be hosted by the Florida Institute of Technology (FIT) on June 17-19, 1999, in Melbourne, Florida.

This unorthodox competition is intended to give students hands-on experience by challenging them to apply sound engineering principles to design and race a concrete canoe. There are no restrictions on the hull, but teams must build a new boat every year. UAH won their fourth title in six years with a 23' long boat that weighed 47 lbs.

At the competition, the top teams from across the US and Canada will be judged on oral and written presentations detailing the canoe's design, as well as a "swamp test" in
which submerged canoes must pop up and float.

The use of concrete in floating vessels is not new. In 1848, Joseph Louis Larnbot built thin-walled, reinforced concrete boats for use at his estate in Miraval, France. The origin of the National Concrete Canoe Competition can be traced to the 1960's when several ASCE student chapters held intermural races. The University of Illinois at Urbana and the University of California-Berkeley both claim they held the first regional competitions in the early 1970's. The competition was elevated to the national level in 1988, and regional winners have carted their canoes across the country since then in their quest to become the national champion.

Sixty percent of this year's competition will be scored based on the technology underlying the hydrodynamic and structural designs. The remaining forty percent will be awarded for performance. When the boats hit the water on Saturday, June 19th at the Cocoa Beach Country Club, men's and women's teams consisting of two paddlers will race against the clock over a 600 meter endurance course. Together with a four person coed team, they must also face off on a 200 meter sprint course.

UAH's CANEW is designed to allow the school's five different teams to achieve maximum performance under all racing conditions. The CANEW's hull is hydrodynamically designed and structurally tuned to allow the paddlers to convert their energy into the momentum required for speed and maneuverability. At a maximum output, the UAH men's sprint team can achieve speeds greater than 14 ft/sec.

Many of the 250 plus teams involved in this competition are coached by avid canoeists, and schools are always looking for help and sponsorship. Interested parties should contact the ASCE Student Chapters in their areas, or Ms. Ping Wei, coordinator of ASCE Student Services at 1-800-548-ASCE.

Tradition dictates that schools allow their canoes to be paddled by others following the races at the National competition. So, if you have never seen or paddled a concrete canoe before, here is your chance.