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Albion College Canoe Team Named First-Ever Collegiate National Champs



Story by Jake Weber



Kasey Kaplan (center) comes down the Rappahannock River as an unneeded rescue official looks on. In addition to exceptional performances in the collegiate races, Kaplan also won the 1-person Open Canoe race at the Whitewater Canoe Competition held in conjunction with the collegiate nationals. Sue Havens photos

Albion College's canoe team recently made history, winning the first-ever American Canoe Association (ACA) Collegiate Canoe and Kayak Championships, held June 2-3 in Fredricksburg, Virginia. Despite a lack of competition and an excess of rain, Albion competed in several challenging races over two days to be declared national champions

"We were well prepared and it was disappointing that there wasn't any competition," said coach Keith Havens, a physical education professor at Albion College. "Our team did a remarkable job of getting down some very tough rapids. No one flipped and we all had a very good race."

"My mom was really nervous, because another college team went home because they thought the water was dangerous," said first-year student Liz Reimann, one of many team members who only began canoeing this academic year. She noted, however, that the team was confidently prepared to compete.

"When you've never been on a river before, it's hard to figure out which way to go," Reimann explained. "Keith took us over the course and pointed things out that were really helpful. We were ready to do our best."

This was a really nice opportunity to paddle against people my own age," said first-year student Zaak Havens, a veteran of national competitions for several years. In addition to winning many of the collegiate races, Zaak also



Albion College's 2007 Canoe Team, winners of the Canoe American Canoe Association) Collegiate Canoe and Kayak Championships, with their medals. From left to right: Keith Havens, Kasey Kaplan, Lisa Colville, Danielle Huelskamp, Liz Reimann, Ben Whiting, Emily Magyari



A six-person relay race was a new competition for the collegiate nationals. Zaak Havens and Emily Magyar pull up to a waiting Paul Krone and Liz Reimann.

The collegiate nationals, Zaak predicted, “will be an opportunity to get more competition, not just for me but for everyone. I’m excited about being with more people to enjoy the same things that I do. It’s a lot of fun.”

Coach Keith Havens stressed that the Albion team is not resting on its laurels when it comes to collegiate competition. “This year, we’re only losing one member to graduation,” he noted. This team’s got a couple years together and we will be pretty powerful competition.

“I was so proud of the whole group on how well they represented Albion,” Havens concluded. “People at the race were very impressed with the team.”

The Albion College Canoe Team wishes to thank Bill Brown of Walden Kayaks for the loan of two kayaks for the races; Starr Commonwealth for the loan of their canoe trailer; and Bill Micks of the Virginia Outdoor Center in Fredericksburg, VA, for donation the campsite for the team.

Tuesday, June 12, 2007

won the advanced one-man open canoe race in the Whitewater Canoe Competition held in conjunction with the collegiate nationals.



A Sunday downpour didn't slow Ben Whiting the Open



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