



CANADIAN OUTRIGGER HALL OF FAME

Ron Dickinson



Summary

Gibsons head coach Ron Dickinson has been racing outrigger canoes for 25+ years. Ron had competed in well over 100 races in Canada, the USA and Fiji. Ron attended the IVF World Sprints in Fiji in 1998, the IVF World Sprints in Hilo in 2004 racing with an all-Canadian Native crew, and the IVF World Sprints in London in 2022 winning a Gold medal. Ron has raced the Columbia River Gorge, competed in several Canadian national long distance and sprints championships, and raced in both the Waikaloa Iron and Queen Liliuokalani long distance canoe races in 2011 in Hawaii. Ron is also one of the first Canadians to become an expert in paddling a Va'a (rudderless outrigger canoe). Ron was founder and head coach for Spirit Of Aloha Racing (SOAR) and is now a coach for Gibsons Paddle Club (GPC). Ron lives in Gibsons and was excited to offer youth development on the Sunshine Coast with SC (Sunshine Coast) Spirit of Excellence.

Early Career

Much of this background was collected in a series of virtual interviews with Suncoast Paddling Club aka Powell River Outrigger Canoe Society (PROCS) members Sue Milligan and Marc Lavertu and Michael Matthews, Gibsons Paddle Club (GPC) member Donna Harrison, and Spirit Of Aloha Racing (SOAR) member Ron Dickinson. Please see the "*Sunshine Coast Legacy*" document in the CORA website Cultural Continuity section for further details. [01] In 1956, Ron was born in Coquitlam BC. Ron attended Centennial Senior Secondary High School in Coquitlam BC and then Simon Fraser University in Burnaby BC. At some point, Ron relocated to the Sunshine Coast and acquired a home in Halfmoon Bay BC. There are no online references as to involvement in paddlesports by Ron prior to 1998 Fiji IVF World Sprints. [02]

Outrigger Canoeing Achievements

Spirit of Aloha Racing (SOAR) social media has minimal mention of their achievements in terms of participation in Western Canada or International paddling events. However, the Canadian Outrigger Racing Association (CORA) website race results indicate that Spirit of Aloha Racing (SOAR) has fielded crews and done well in the CORA Cup Series events from 2008-2015. It is known that Spirit of Aloha Racing (SOAR) has sent individuals to IVF World Sprints / Distance events over the course of many years. [11] [12]

Spirit of Aloha Racing (SOAR) would have a 1st Place team (Tammy Hartman, Manfred Hartman, Sonya Bergen, Ron Dickinson, Merrily Corder, and Greg Smith) and a 2nd Place team (Selina Williams, Dayton Skei, Brenda Webb, Birgit Breuer, Bill Drinkwater, and Ken Peterson) in the 2010 CORA Cup Series Novice Division. [13] [14]

Ron has represented Team Canada at International Va'a Federation (IVF) World Sprints from 1998-2022. At 1998 Fiji IVF World Sprints, Ron would race with V6 500M and V6 1000M and V12 500M crews, but would not medal. At 2004 Hilo IVF World Sprints, Ron would race with V6 500M and V6 1000M and V12 500M crews, but would not medal. At 2022 London IVF Outrigger World Sprints, Ron would race with a V12 500M crew, and take Gold. [15] [16]

Coach-Builder Achievements

Most Canadian outrigger canoe clubs are founded through the efforts of a single or small group of individuals with a vision. Ron Dickinson would be the individual who would start Spirit Of Aloha Racing (SOAR). Ron was Spirit Of Aloha Racing (SOAR) CORA club representative continuously from the time SOAR joined CORA in 2008 until SOAR folded in 2015. [21]

Spirit Of Aloha Racing (SOAR) never hosted any CORA Sanctioned Racing Events. However, Spirit of Aloha Racing (SOAR), in partnership with Sea Cavalcade, hosted the Shoal Channel Sea Sprints, an exciting paddle race for adults and kids on 2013-July-28, right after the Keats Island Swim. The race was open to sea kayaks, canoes, OC1, OC2, and surfski, and ran from Armours Beach to Soames Point and back. [22]

Following the 2004 IVF World Sprints at Hilo, the 2 Vakaloloma Fijian (Tafaga) OC6s remained in Ron's backyard for 4 years. The solo outriggers continued to be used regularly for training but the sixes rarely left Ron's yard. Over time, all but one of the V1 canoes were sold to other paddlers. Most went to Powell River and the one that remained was paddled by Ron for many years until Ron gave it to elite sprints paddler Tamas Mihalyi. The canoe needed some work so Ron gifted it to Tamas to work on while he was recovering from a serious shoulder injury.

Starting in 2013, SC (Sunshine Coast) Spirit of Excellence partnered with Gibsons Paddle Club to offer a six-week outrigger canoeing program for youth, followed by continuous youth development. Ron as Gibsons Paddle Club head coach, who had been racing outrigger canoes for more than 15 years at that time, was leading the program to train a boys and a girls team for ages 14 to 16 and 17 to 19 for the IVF World Sprints in Rio de Janeiro in August 2014. [23] [24] [25] A commitment by Ron to growing the sport of outrigger canoeing on the Sunshine Coast from 2004 to present day has contributed to Gibsons Paddle Club becoming perhaps the largest recreational canoe club on the west coast of North America.

Pioneering Achievements

An initiative began in 2020 by the CORA Racing Committee as an effort 1) to capture an inventory of CORA "big-boats" (much like the SCORA / OH CRA / HCRA Registries) and 2) to capture details (names / IDs / colours / weights) of CORA "big-boats". This initiative led to the discovery of 2 OC6s at the Gibsons Paddle Club (GPC) Marina venue unlike any other OC6s in Canada. Research on OC6s of a design similar to the OC6s at the Gibsons Paddle Club (GPC) Marina venue led to the publication of an article on the CORA website Chronology of outrigger canoes as follows: [31] [32] [33] [34] [35] [36] There are presently 2 Vakaloloma Fijian (Tafaga) OC6s at a single CORA club (Gibsons). Sometime after the 1998 Suva Fiji 8th International Polynesian Canoe Federation (IPCF) World Sprints, Ron Dickinson of Spirit of Aloha Racing (SOAR) on the Sunshine Coast acquired 2 Vakaloloma Fijian (Tafaga) OC6s each weighing 230lbs that had been shipped in a container to the West Coast. Gibsons acquired the 2 Vakaloloma Fijian (Tafaga) OC6s in 2015 when Spirit of Aloha Racing (SOAR) folded.

The CORA Historical Committee pursued the origin of these 2 OC6s 2020-2023 until a very detailed story of these 2 OC6s was eventually provided by Ron Dickinson. That detailed story has been provided almost verbatim. *"The 2 Fijian V6 canoes currently owned by GPC were brought to Canada with 6 Tiger Surf Rider (Surfrigger) V1 canoes in 2003. All had been used in the World Outrigger Canoe Sprints in Fiji in 1998. The blue V6 canoe was used by Tahiti's Mens open crew to win the 1500-meter men's race while the green one was used by Tahiti's womens open crew to win their 1500 race. My friend Edward Sanday and I imported the canoes to Canada with the thought that we could introduce more Canadian outrigger paddlers to sprinting. At the time, the Canadian World Sprints contingents were much smaller than they are today with most paddlers focused on distance racing."*

It was not until 2008 that Ron and two of his paddling friends approached the owner of the Gibsons Marina (Art McGinnis) to see if SOAR could have some space at the marina to store the canoes. Permission was granted, the canoes were moved to the compound and Ron and his two friends Sonya Bergen and Greg Smith formed a racing club in 2008 called SOAR (acronym for Spirit Of Aloha Racing). Despite difficulty recruiting enough members, the club continued for about 7 years and then amalgamated with GPC in 2015. That is how the two SOAR V6's became the property of GPC. They only weigh 240lbs fully rigged, are amazingly good for surfing. Literally they are the predecessors of the ultra-light sixes of today. [37]

Exemplary Achievements

Ron has made significant cultural engagement contributions. Before any of the Fijian canoes touched the water, Edward Sanday and Ron approached the Squamish Nation tribal council in North Vancouver to request permission to use the canoes in their traditional waters that surround Gibsons. This was done as a show of respect. It was at this time that Edward Sanday also arranged a cross-cultural exchange between Vancouver's Fijian community and the Squamish Nation. This exchange occurred at Ambleside in West Vancouver in the fall of 2003 and included elders and chiefs from both the Squamish Nation and Vancouver Fijian community as well as Edward Sanday and Ron. Since official permission to ply the waters off Gibsons had not yet been granted and the canoes had not yet been blessed; Edward Sanday and Ron had to transport all the canoes on a flatbed semi to Ambleside from Gibsons. Once the exchange was completed and all of the canoes blessed in a cedar bough cleansing ceremony with female Squamish Nation women (4 generations), the canoes were launched. Anyone wanting to paddle a V1 or either of the V6s were invited to do so.

References

Note	Article	Link
[01]	CORA Cultural Continuity	https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/community-2/cultural-continuity/
[02]	Ron Dickinson Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/ron.dickinson.545/photos_of
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[12]	2013 Lotus Iron & SOAR & Ron	https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2013-OC6-Race-Grid-June-28.pdf
[13]	2009 Spirit of Aloha Racing (SOAR)	https://www.coastreporter.net/local-sports/local-sports-briefs-3386059
[14]	2010 Spirit of Aloha Racing (SOAR)	https://www.coastreporter.net/local-sports/soar-wins-canadian-championship-3385499
[15]	2022 London IVF World Sprints Results	http://www.ivfiv.org/uploads/1/3/7/9/137911945/results_-_all_days.pdf
[16]	2022 Gibsons Paddle Club Athletes Win International Outrigger Hardware	https://www.coastreporter.net/local-sports/gibsons-paddle-club-athletes-win-international-outrigger-hardware-5771490
[21]	2013 CORA AGM Minutes	https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Nov-2-2013-CORA-Meeting-Minutes.pdf
[22]	2013 Sea Sprints Powerful Paddles	https://issuu.com/brianhubenig/docs/the-local-july-25-2013-2
[23]	Sunshine Coast Spirit of Excellence	https://www.calisting.net/biz/scspiritofexcellence
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[25]	2014 First Year For Spirit of Excellence	https://www.coastreporter.net/local-sports/an-exciting-first-year-for-spirit-of-excellence-3375418
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[32]	1998 Fiji IPCF Outrigger World Sprints	https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/IVF-Race-Results-1998-Fiji-Pix.pdf
[33]	1998 IPCF VIII World Sprints Suva, Fiji	https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=166XXqrywGnBqfyoYzwQRBaQQO_aPEJwUbeT6jWS6_-M&font=Bevan-PontanoSans&lang=en&in
[34]	CORA Outrigger Canoe History Vakaloloma Fijian	https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/races/racing-resources/treatise-outrigger-canoe-history/#CH-17
[35]	Rotuman Seafaring in Historical Perspective	http://www.hawaii.edu/oceanic/rotuma/os/howsel/23seafaring.html
[36]	Front cover image for IPCF 8th Va'a World Sprints, Fiji, 1998	https://www.worldcat.org/title/ipcf-8th-vaa-world-sprints-fiji-1998/oclc/663395793
[37]	IPCF 8th Va'a World Sprints, Fiji, 1998 [videorecording]	https://natlib.govt.nz/records/20966579?search%5Bi%5D%5Bsubject_text%5D=IPCF+Va%27a+World+Sprints+%288th+%3A+1998+Fiji%29&search%5Bpath%5D=items