

ARIZONA

DRAGON BOAT ASSOCIATION

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ARIZONA DRAGON BOAT ASSOCIATION



Great memories from Coach Tek's clinic this past spring!

Welcome to the first edition of the Arizona Dragon Boat Association quarterly newsletter. We are hoping you enjoy the news from your own teams, as well as the news from others. Members from many teams and several board members contributed the materials to help make this edition happen. Be sure to share photos, stories, and information with your coaches and captains if you would like them to be featured in our upcoming editions. We also hope to use this forum to remind everyone of safety protocols, volunteering for fundraisers, and social events.

COACHES' CORNER

TEAM NEWS

See what's new for the Dragon Riders, Gila Dragons, ASU, Phoenix Desert Dragons, Team Blue, and CrAZy Cuddlefish. Several teams have attended festivals and have events coming up. Check to see what you might have missed from your own team and what is going on with others.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SAFETY, VOLUNTEERING, AND MORE!

We have at least two volunteer opportunities over the next few months. The AZDBA volunteers for specific bike-pointer positions during the Ironman half and full, October 16th and November 20th. These volunteer opportunities bring in much-needed funding to our organization. Please ask your coach or contact Michele Laye for more information (michele.laye12@gmail.com).

FROM YOUR AZDBA BOARD

NOTICES

The AZDBA board is here to serve. We have been working to update the website, streamline boat sign-outs, repair damages, and plan for future costs. Be sure to help out by arriving early when we need to bailout the boats. Bailing the water out of all the boats will help keep the boats in good repair.



ASU Dragon Boat Club

The Dragon Boat Club at ASU has just begun another school year and race season with a great start! We have just finished our recruitment event and are prepared to welcome new students to this amazing sport. A big event that we have been looking forward to is the San Diego Festival in September, which we have been working towards for months through hot summer practices, perg days, and more. We are excited to introduce the new paddlers and paddlers from covid years to experience their first festival in California!

We are proud of all of our paddlers, encouraging everyone to reach for their personal goals, on and off the water. Our paddlers have had a wonderful summer following their personal paddling goals, whether it be paddling for the Club Crew World Championships or consistently improving perg and oc1 times. Our president this school year is Andrew James, a senior with a double major in Finance and Economics. He plans to grow this club, focusing on the team's culture and community. Through our support of each other, we maintain the drive and commitment to prosper as a team and as individuals.

Our practices are Mondays 6:00pm - 8:30 pm and Saturdays 8:00 am - 10:30 am.
Any ASU student interested in joining our club is more than welcome!





The AZ Dragon Riders recently competed in the Long Beach Dragon Boat Festival, which resumed for the 1st time post-Covid. The Riders faced fierce competition along with strong 10mph side winds to battle into the Division IIIA Final. The race was very close, with a solid surge to finish 2nd amongst 32 teams. We are very proud of the team's effort in achieving a Silver medal with one of the best finishes in our team's history. A funny thing is the medals and trophy are printed with 2020 with stickers on them for 2022! The Riders are entered into the San Diego International Dragon Boat Festival Race on September 25th. Look for our race results in the next issue.

Since our March festival, The Dragon Riders have organically grown our team through word of mouth and introductions to new friends. We are developing a few experienced paddlers to coach in the future as we expand. The key is to keep training simple to make sure all team members are brought up to the same level. We strive to foster a fun team atmosphere with great sportsmanship & respect for others. We also had a great time at the AZDBA Open House, educating the public on our sport. We are excited to organize some community volunteer events such as Feed My Starving Children or participating in United Way's Food Bags for the Homeless closer to the Holidays.

Jin Hwan, one of the Riders' coaches, traveled to Sarasota, Florida, for the 13th International Dragon Boat Federation World Championships, July 13-22, 2022, as one of the race officials. Jin received the Grade 1 Certificate of Achievement for the IDBF Technical Race Official for completion of training and assessment. We are hopeful that we can represent AZDBA for the World Championship in Italy in 2024!

No one could imagine that Arizona could support a Dragon Boat team in the desert. The addition of Tempe Town Lake in 1999 provided a body of water perfect for water sports. Coaches Lana & Jeff Walther formed the AZ Dragon Riders in 2006, bringing like-minded people together. Both Lana & Jeff have a passion for giving back as they have served as Board members for AZDBA. Jeff has volunteered many hours in maintaining the Dragon Boats for practice and competition. They also volunteer annually to coach corporate teams for the AZDBA Festival. We are hopeful the sport will continue to grow for decades to come.

The AZ Dragon Riders





Phoenix Desert Dragons

Phoenix Desert Dragons participated in the Castaic Lake Dragon Boat Festival- this was our first out-of-town festival since October 2019 and our very first 10-man race. We had a mix of paddlers from seasoned paddlers, those that had only participated in our festival in March 2022, and some that had never paddled in a race before. We took 2nd place against an all-cancer paddler team. Both races were photo finishes, and the final heat was a difference of .15 seconds; we definitely worked hard and earned that silver. In addition, we were gifted beautiful handmade leis at the breast cancer survivor ceremony. Check us out in the news article about the festival- <https://signalscv.com/2022/06/3rd-annual-dragon-boat-festival-draws-huge-crowd/?fs=e&s=cl>

Phoenix Desert Dragons will be traveling to Santa Fe Dam to participate in the LA County Dragon Boat Festival at the beginning of October to participate in the women's division. We are also planning for New Zealand in April 2023 to participate in the International Breast Cancer Paddler's Commission festival. Breast cancer paddler teams from around the world will be participating in this event; they are anticipating approximately 130+ teams. We also have several supporters from other AZ teams joining us to cheer us on! We have been and continue to fiercely fundraise for this event. We have an open fundraiser on Facebook if anyone is interested in contributing. <https://www.facebook.com/donate/727761895221837/>

Melissa Adams, Phoenix Desert Dragons' coach, has served on the United States Dragon Boat Federation Special Interest Committee and the All Cancer Paddler (ACP) subcommittee since April 2021. The ACP subcommittee aims to expand and grow the all-cancer paddler division/teams and encourage festivals to include a separate ACP division. If anyone would like to join the sub-committee, please contact Melissa at melissa@arizonabcs.com.





TEAM BLUE

Team Blue is a diverse team that accepts people of all abilities, ages, genders, and levels. We are growing quickly right now! Word of mouth, social media, and Ability360 outreach are bringing in many new paddlers. We welcome paddlers from other teams to practice with us too. In October, we plan to attend the Santa Fe Dam festival. However, we might need a few more male paddlers for the community division. So please consider sending your male significant others or friends our way!

Team Blue practices on Monday nights from 6:15-8:15 pm and usually takes out two boats. Our team has great camaraderie, and our practices are filled with drills and skill-building and occasionally racing against the amazing ASU student paddlers! In addition, we train and certify steers-people during our practices. Those steers-people return to their teams ready to steer. Our head coach, Michele Laye. Michele is also the AZDBA secretary, a steersperson, and a member of other teams. She is encouraging and patient and has a great sense of humor!

Adaptive Adventures and Ability360 are two organizations that partner with Team Blue to provide support. Ability360 serves the disabled community here in the valley and offers in-the-boat support for our members with disabilities. Adaptive Adventures is a nationwide group supporting veterans in outdoor sports and activities. We welcome everyone on the boat regardless of experience or ability. Paddles up!



CrAZy Cuddlefish



Arizona's first and only youth dragon boat team, the CrAZy Cuddlefish, has recently resumed practice after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic. It has been a struggle to have enough paddlers just to take a boat out, but we have persevered and recruited new paddlers! We hope to expand the team and return to where we once were when we needed two boats for practice. We are pleased to finally have a Team Manager on-board, Queena Ly, who has joined our leadership team. Coach Ash Lagazo continues to lead the way, along with Assistant Coach Zach Butler. We would also like to thank all the steers who come out every practice to help the team. We are excited for future races, such as the LA County Dragon Boat Festival on October 1st, which will be our first race back in three years!



We would like to give a shout-out to one of our former paddlers, Ivy McNeil, who started her paddling journey with the CrAZy Cuddlefish when the team was formed in 2017 and has now transitioned over to the collegiate level and continues to help with the CrAZy Cuddlefish. We're so proud of you, Ivy, and so happy to see you continue your paddling journey! We hope many of our young paddlers will do the same as they grow up to be wonderful people. If anyone ages 8-17 is interested in joining our team, please reach out to us at crazycuddlefish@gmail.com. Membership for this year is FREE for this team, so now is the perfect time to join us! We are always recruiting, and no experience is necessary. So see you all on the water! Go CrAZy Cuddlefish!





For the Gila's, 2022 marks our 20th anniversary as a team. While plans were made to go to Hawaii to commemorate the occasion, that festival was postponed due to the pandemic. So, this year's GWR Northern Nevada International Dragon Boat Festival in Sparks, NV, on the weekend of Aug 20th, was a very special event for the AZ Gila Dragons. This was the first festival we traveled to since the 2019 Portland Dragon Boat Festival. Fortunately, the Gilas are a resilient bunch. After AZDBA re-opened, the Gila's went right back to work on the water to make up for lost time. That hard work paid off at the Nevada festival. The Gilas took the overall Gold medal in the Grand Final of the Premiere Mixed A Division across an international field of teams from California, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, Alabama, and British Columbia, Canada. On top of that:

- They recorded the top-3 fastest 500m race times across all teams (including Open Division teams) across the entire festival.
- They bested the 2022 Open Division Finals Winner's time of 2:05.29.
- They were the overall #1 team in the Reno Festival.

The Gilas are off to an excellent start for their 20th anniversary year.

Looking back over 20 years has been a great source of motivation. The Gilas started after future members were invited to travel to Tempe's sister city of Taiwan to paddle in their festival. The group had no experience, no training, no equipment, and no knowledge. They didn't medal in that race, but they came back with grit, attitude, and determination. With no boats to use, they set up milk crates on the side of Tempe Town Lake and team members' swimming pools to get their practice. The Gilas started after the second trip out to Taiwan and had their inaugural race in San Francisco.

The Gila's have come a long way and are not done with the 2022 season. After a quick medal celebration, the Gila's are back in the water as they gear up next for the Mercer County Dragon Boat Festival in Princeton, NJ, on Sept 17th. From there, the Gilas will end the season at the San Diego Dragon Boat Festival, bringing a smaller contingency to fill a 10-paddler boat for a single day of racing on Sept 24th.

Given the challenges of Covid and the slow re-emergence of the Dragon Boat community and festivals around the nation, the Gila's knew that their 20th anniversary celebration year would be somewhat toned down. Even these challenges have not dampened the Gila's spirit of camaraderie on and off the water. Every Tuesday and Saturday, you will find the AZ Gila Dragons doing their thing out on the waters of Tempe Town Lake, getting ready for the next competition, and preparing for even a better 2023!