



Brian calling the Start for Race 2 Photo by Dave Biss

## Racing the CPA Way

By Cyndi Janetzko

Last year, a few CPA regulars got interested in going forward fast. This rather inevitably led to wanting to see how fast was fast and a growing desire to race. At the time we weren't aware of many races in our area, so Brian Blankenship and I started the CPA race series. Rather than venues for cut-throat competition, we designed these races with an eye to having fun, to learning our limits, and to meeting other paddlers seeking efficiency and speed. Now in our second season, I think we can safely say we have achieved these goals.

This year's series kicked off with a season opener at Jack's Boat House on the Potomac River. It was a beautiful morning as the 13 racers sped from Jack's Boathouse past Three Sisters, crossed to the Virginia side, headed downstream, circled around Roosevelt Island and then re-

turned to the docks. Total distance averaged 4.65 miles – a bit more if you wandered and a bit less if you tried to cut the corners. Given that it was the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend, the river was a bit busy, so the racers had the extra challenge of not being run down by power boats of eight-man rowing shells. We even had a special guest appearance from Brian Houston of Epic Kayaks. It seemed only fitting that he should be racing with us that day, as Epic was well represented with various Epic 18s and V10s on the water.

Next we headed down to the Occoquan Reservoir and Fountain Head Regional Park. To make sure there was a race for everyone, we laid out both 5-mile and 10-mile courses. 12 boaters showed up. You would have thought that this was a "serious" race given the gear that was around. With four full-on racing boats plus three racing sea kayaks strung about, not to mention wing paddles and inflatable PFDs, people were looking fast! Competition was fierce and there were several races-within-the-race, each with a battle to the end. Afterward, the competition was forgotten as we celebrated with a picnic brunch.

Our last race took us south to the Wicomico River. Mark Woodside handled all the logistics and planning for this one. That gave Brian and me a chance to just show up and paddle. The races were advertised as 6- and 12-milers, but they ended up being more like 6.5 miles for the short course and 9 miles for the long course. For some reason this course just felt slow and many of us were more than happy to find the turn-around buoy, marked by Todd playing the French national anthem since it was Bastille day, about two miles sooner than we expected.

The races draw paddlers of all speeds and skill and really are just another way to spend a great day on the water. To keep things interesting, we try to move the races around to introduce the racers to new paddling locations and challenges. Picnics usually follow. Despite all that, we know that some people need other motivations to race – motivations like hardware. I know many a paddler who decides which races to attend based on the likelihood of winning a medal, a ribbon or even better, cash. CPA might not offer up cash prizes, but hardware does flow freely. In fact, everyone has left the race with either a medal or a ribbon for finishing in their class.

To ensure that classes are fair and that you are racing against similar boats, we break down the classes as follows:

- **Racing Kayaks:** Less than 20 inch beam, wing paddles allowed. For those paddlers who concentrate on racing and have the equipment to go with it. Previous top finishers of the Fast Touring Kayak class are encouraged to enter this class.
- **Fast Touring Kayaks:** 20 inch beam or greater, wing paddles allowed. For fit paddlers who do not specialize in racing but have faster than average kayaks and/or are faster than average paddlers.
- **Touring Kayaks A:** 20 inch beam or greater, 17 feet or longer, no wing paddles. For first time racers in typical sea kayaks, and experienced paddlers who are less serious about racing.
- **Touring Kayaks B:** 20 inch beam or greater, less than 17 feet in length, no wing paddles. For first time racers and beginner paddlers in slower boats.



Jessi Krause: "My favorite part of the races are the camaraderie, learning to pace myself so that I can complete the distance w/o stopping, and just watching the really fast kayakers" Photo by Cyndi Janetzko

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We then split out men's and women's categories within each class. In the first and second races, we had seven different classes with medals awarded to each. Who knows, if enough people show up for season three, maybe we'll further divide by age group or maybe add a Greenland class!

Instrumental in all the races are our beloved "corkers" and the land crew. The corkers are the kayakers who come out to support the racers. They act as buoy turn markers, course directors, traffic cops and cheering section. Our land crew helps with registration, timing, ranking, and also has cheering duties! They all deserve a huge Thank You!



Lots of different kinds of boats Photo by Dan Hoke



Mark Powell fighting it out around the buoy at Fountain Head Regional Pak Photo by Dave Biss

Going forward fast is fun. Speed is addictive. Efficiency leads to more enjoyable kayaking. Just ask any of the below people who participated in the series this year and plan to join us next year!

For all the details on CPA's races visit our new race page: [www.cpakayaker.com/cparacing.html](http://www.cpakayaker.com/cparacing.html). It includes details on this year's races with links to the results, information on other races in the area and will be home for next year's schedule once we get that far.

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- Eugene Buchanan, Editor-in-Chief, *Paddling Life*  
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