



CANADIAN OUTRIGGER HALL OF FAME

Hugh Fisher



Summary

Hugh Fisher has remarkable athletic credentials and has made significant contributions as coach, builder, and pioneer through his career. Hugh's distinguished paddling career includes being a Canadian Champion 22 times in various K1 / K2 / K4 / C4 events. Hugh was selected to the Canadian team for the 1976 Montreal, 1980 Moscow, 1984 Los Angeles, and 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. Hugh and Alwyn Morris took Silver in K2 1000M at the 1982 ICF Canoe Sprint World Championships and Bronze in K2 500M at the 1983 ICF Canoe Sprint World Championships. Hugh and Alwyn took Bronze in K2 500M and Gold in K2 1000M at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. Hugh took 10 Gold and four Silver medals at the 2005 World Masters Games. Hugh would race with USA Mainland crews coached by Billy Whitford to four Molokai Hoe Outrigger Canoe World Championships. Hugh raced with the original False Creek Racing Canoe Club Mens dragon boat crew at the 1986 Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival that would take Silver and be the first of only two non-Asian club-based crews to ever medal in this World Championship event. Hugh took Bronze, Silver, and Gold at IVF World Sprints. Hugh was one of the original founders of False Creek Racing Canoe Club in 1985. Hugh founded Pemberton Canoe Association as Head Coach in 1997. Hugh began his professional career as a medical doctor in Pemberton in 1991 with a practice that grew to be one of the largest in the province. Hugh was named a Member of the Order of Canada and has been inducted into the British Columbia Hall of Fame, Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame, Canadian Sports Hall of Fame, as well as Burnaby Sports Hall of Fame.

Early Career

Born in New Zealand in 1955, Hugh moved to Canada in 1965 and settled in Burnaby, where he began canoeing and kayaking in 1970 at the Burnaby Canoe Club on Deer Lake. [01] A rowing venue was created on Burnaby Lake in the early 1970s for the 1973 Canada Summer Games. [02] Hugh began to train seriously for competition in 1974 at the world-class venue on Burnaby Lake. Hugh would train there for the next decade with many world-class rowers and kayakers including future Olympic partner Alwyn. In 1975, Hugh won the Junior K2 and Senior K4 events. Hugh made his Olympic debut on home soil at Montreal 1976 and was part of the Canadian K4 1000M team finishing tenth. Hugh trained extensively in Europe and Canada with hopes of reaching the podium at the following Olympics. Despite making the Moscow 1980 team and not competing due to Canada's boycott, Hugh set his sights on Los Angeles 1984. In the spring of 1982 Hugh and Alwyn began a rigorous training program in Europe and were instantly successful. Hugh and Alwyn would take Silver in K2 1000M at the 1982 ICF Canoe Sprint World Championships and Bronze in K2 500M at the 1983 ICF Canoe Sprint World Championships. Hugh and Alwyn would take Bronze in K2 500M and Gold in K2 1000M while setting a new world record at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. [03]

Outrigger Canoeing Achievements

Hugh was one of the first Canadian paddlers to participate in the Catalina Channel Crossing race and the Molokai Hoe. Hugh was in Newport Beach in 1978 training for the 1980 Olympics where he met Billy Whitford who was coaching the Blazing Paddles team, a group of Olympic hopefuls, who would be the first USA Mainland team to win the Molokai Hoe race. [04] Hugh would race with crews coached by Billy Whitford in 1978 for Blazing Paddles, [05] 1981, 1982, and 1984 for Offshore Canoe Club to four Molokai Hoe Outrigger Canoe World Championships (fibreglass). [07] The 1978 Blazing Paddles crew introduced a pioneering achievement for outrigger canoeing by breaking with tradition, using single bend, top handle gripped, shorter river paddles. With the introduction of river canoe paddles into the 1978 Molokai Hoe race, outrigger canoeing stroke rates and paddling techniques Pacific-wide changed dramatically. [08]

Hugh would take Bronze in V1 500M Open Men at 1992 Sacramento IVF World Sprints, [09] Silver in V1 500M Masters Men at 1996 New Caledonia IVF World Sprints, [10] advance to Finals in V1 500M Masters Men at 2004 Hilo IVF World Sprints, Silver in V1 500M Sr Masters Men at 2008 Sacramento IVF World Sprints, [11] and Gold in V1 500M Sr Masters Men at 2012 Calgary IVF World Sprints. [12]

The BC men's provincial team delivered a first for Canada in 2000. [13] A crew of paddlers racing as "Team BC" from Jericho, Pemberton, and False Creek including Hugh, Rick Nu'u, and Don Irvine would finish Spec 1st Open and 1st Overall in the Catalina Channel Crossing race – the best ever showing for an all-Canadian crew at Catalina. [14] It was a major upset, especially as sponsorship for outrigger racing in Canada is nonexistent. [15]

Coach-Builder Achievements

Hugh was already an Olympic Gold Medalist and four-time Outrigger Canoe World Champion by the time he became involved with False Creek Racing Canoe Club from the outset when it was formed in 1985 by David Boulding, Heather Taylor, Don Irvine, and Patrick Couling, with help from False Creek Community Centre Director Carol Sogawa. [16]

Hugh competed in the 1988 Seoul Olympics shortly before graduating from UBC medical school, and then returned to his birthplace New Zealand to complete his medical residency training. While Hugh was doing his internship in New Zealand, he put together a dragon boat team that went on to win the 1990 New Zealand Championships. [17]

Hugh arrived in Pemberton BC in September 1991 where he decided to start his medical practice. [18] Hugh borrowed Voyageur canoes from Tim Malone at Whistler's Outdoor Experience and spent a few years coaching local Pemberton paddlers with Whistler Canoe Club. [19] Hugh has helped to develop the Pemberton training program from its inception. [20] The first junior dragon boat crew from the Pemberton area was formed in 1996 and Pemberton Canoe Association was founded at One Mile Lake in 1997. [21] The Laoyam Eagles dragon boat team won the junior championship in the 1999 Vancouver International Dragon Boat Festival in their third appearance and then for 15 consecutive years through 2014. [22] The Laoyam Eagles junior dragon boat team has represented Canada at IDBF World Championships and IDBF Club Crew World Championships. [23] The club's outrigger program has qualified athletes to represent Canada at 2004 Hilo IVF World Sprints, 2008 Sacramento IVF World Sprints, 2012 Calgary IVF World Sprints, and 2016 Australia IVF World Sprints. [24]

Pioneering Achievements

Hugh, David Boulding, Mike Neckar (Necky Kayaks), Bud Hohl (SCORA Historian), and Grace Morissette would each play a part in the story of the Canadian *Malias* as the first generation of six-person outrigger canoes in Canada. [25] Billy Whitford and Bud Hohl had a side business of building *Malia* canoes. They were looking to spread outrigger racing to other parts of North America and perceived Hugh Fisher, with his Olympian status, to be a good person to represent outrigger canoe racing in Canada. It was understood that Hugh was given a choice of buying the "longer and narrower boat designed for taller paddlers" or the *Malia*. Hugh chose the *Malia* because clubs in California were moving to the newer boat designs and he was offered the California *Malia* mould which was just sitting in someone's backyard. Based on an article by Doug Mancell of Lotus Sports Club, we know that David raced the Catalina Channel Crossing after Expo '86 and, while in California, learned about the *Malia* mould that had been stored in some fellow's backyard for quite a while. [26] David and Grace would import the California *Malia* mould into Canada in Autumn 1986.

Hugh returned from a 1988 Hong Kong dragon boat race with a wooden paddle for Grey Owl Paddles owner Brian Dorfman to add to his product line. Grey Owl Paddles is now the world's largest manufacturer of dragon boat paddles. [27]

Canadian Outrigger Racing Association (CORA) was incorporated in 1992 through the efforts of Garry Mancell (Lotus), David Boulding (False Creek), and Hugh Fisher (Pemberton) representing the first three outrigger canoeing clubs in Canada, to solidify a place for Canadian outrigger canoeing by filing the requisite documents with the federal ministry.

Exemplary Achievements

Hugh has exceptional Hall of Fame honours. Hugh was named a Member of the Order of Canada in 1985, [28] inducted into the British Columbia Hall of Fame in 1985, [29] inducted into the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame in 1986, [30] inducted into Canadian Sports Hall of Fame in 2000, [31] and inducted into Burnaby Sports Hall of Fame in 2007. [32]

When Canada opted not to send Canadian teams to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, Hugh penned a letter to the Canadian Canoe Kayak National Team offering perspective based on his experience with the 1980 Moscow Olympics boycott. [33]

References

Note	Article	Link
[01]	Burnaby Canoe & Kayak Club Alumni	http://cfly.ca/canoe/Burnaby.htm#HughF
[02]	Province Invests \$10M For Burnaby Lake Rejuvenation	https://archive.news.gov.bc.ca/releases/news_releases_2005-2009/2008OTP0144-000863.htm
[03]	Canoe Kayak Canada Club Chronology	http://cfly.ca/canoe/Timeline.htm
[04]	1978 Blazing Paddles Molokai Hoe	https://cdn.outriggercanooclubsports.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/28170945/1978-10-16-HA-West-Coast-Paddlers-Blaze-to-Glory-in-Aloha-Cano.pdf
[05]	Molokai Hoe Race Results	http://www.molokaihoe.com/race-results.asp
[06]	Molokai Hoe Race Results & Blazing Paddles	http://holoholo.org/hoe/96hoe/past_win.html
[07]	Molokai Hoe Race Results & Blazing Paddles	https://www.scora.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/California-Teams-Placing-in-Top-National-and-International-Races.pdf
[08]	Molokai Hoe History & Blazing Paddles	https://vault.si.com/vault/1993/02/22/hawaii-digging-to-diamond-head-high-tech-training-meets-ancient-tradition-in-the-molokai-to-oahu-outrigger-canoe-race/
[09]	1992 Sacramento IVF World Sprints Results	http://www.ivfiv.org/uploads/2/5/3/8/25381158/1992_worlds_sacramento.pdf
[10]	1996 New Caledonia IVF World Sprints Results	http://www.ivfiv.org/uploads/2/5/3/8/25381158/1996_worlds_new_caledonia.pdf
[11]	2008 Sacramento IVF World Sprints Results	http://www.ivfiv.org/uploads/2/5/3/8/25381158/race_results_2008.pdf
[12]	2012 Calgary IVF World Sprints Results	http://www.ivfiv.org/2012-canada.html
[13]	2000 Catalina Channel Crossing Race	https://www.scora.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Catalina-Men-Winners.pdf
[14]	2000 Catalina Channel Crossing Race	http://www.jerichoutrigger.com/races2000/catalina2000.html
[15]	2000 Catalina Channel Crossing Race	http://www.jerichoutrigger.com/news/Oct2000Straight.html
[16]	False Creek Racing Canoe Club History	https://www.gogophotocontest.com/paddlersoffcrcc/pages/3487/
[17]	1999 New Zealand Dragon Boat Championships	https://books.google.ca/books?id=L2OVAgAAQBAJ&pg=PA112&lpg=PA112&dq=hugh+fisher+canoe&source=bl&ots=dKjsFXwTT1&sig=ACfU3U132VbSBjpK7DFjHG9_XoRXTx_rfA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewi455uw1M_vAhUgFzQIHYZ7CNg4MhDoATAGegQICxAD#v=onepage&q=hugh%20fisher%20canoe&f=false
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[19]	1997 Pemberton Canoe Association Founded	http://cfly.ca/canoe/Pemberton.htm
[20]	Pemberton Canoe Association History	https://www.pembertoncanoe.com/about/history
[21]	2008 Hugh Fisher Pemberton History	https://www.piquenewsmagazine.com/opinion/hugh-fisher-winning-as-a-way-of-life-2479766
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[33]	2020 From Hugh Fisher to National Team	https://paddlesup.canoe kayak.ca/a-letter-from-hugh-fisher-to-the-national-team/

