

Novice 2012 – Shari Laine

First AIAB DragonBoat Practice Up the Creek 2012: A Dreadful Dip or a Daring Delight?



The muscles have been toned, the heart rate is strong, rain gear has been purchased, we have donned our pink team shirts and have had our warm-up with very fit paddler Karen. So why, as we walk down the ramp to the dock, do I feel as if I am walking the plank to dive into the deep dark waters of disaster?

Are we going to capsize? Will I get cold and wet? Will I be strong enough? Can I keep up? Will I get clobbered with a paddle or clobber someone else? Will my implants shift position? Will my arm swell up from lymphedema from just holding this paddle? How did I end up here surrounded by

all these pink women? What am I doing HERE?

The first hurdle was getting into this very skinny looking boat that in my opinion surely wasn't going to stay afloat with all these women aboard. But after a lengthy struggle we are finally seated and surprisingly we haven't capsized. Coaches Jenny, Barb and Carol give us some final instructions and the boat pushes away from the dock. There is no way out-it is time to paddle.

What a relief to hear Coach Jenny tell the novices to sit and let the others paddle us out of Alder Bay. But soon, the novices hear the inevitable 'Paddles Up' and prepare to take our first dig into the very windy, choppy sea. After a few strokes we stop for a lovely stretch and words of encouragement from Coach Jenny. Off we go again but soon stop for more stretches, encouraging words and this time a candy. The wind is howling and huffing and as Coach gives us instructions, blows us up the creek candies and all.

Then we hear Coach Jenny say we should head back in because it is windy and the novices will get tired. I take this as a code for 'these winds are going to capsize us at any moment and we'd better get out of here fast.' There is some quick paddling and then to my surprise, as we turn the corner into Alder Bay, some of the paddlers burst into song! It seems this is a tradition-when the boat heads into (I mean, toward) the dock, they sing a song-there seems to be a slight tuning problem but it is a good song nonetheless.

We struggle again to get out of the boat and climb back up the plank (I mean, ramp), Karen leads our cool down exercises and our first practice is over.

We did not capsize, we were strong, we kept up, no one got clobbered, my implants are still in place, and my arm did not swell. The 2012 novices survived the first practice. We dared to join the AIAB Dragonboat team and.....we are DELIGHTED!