

PPWVC

Pikes Peak White Water Club

June 2006

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River Clean-up
5-13-2006
25 Club Members

Early Season Report

Chris Brobin

As the water finally begins to rise, its a good time to reflect on the season thus far. If you want to paddle early and have no pride in what you run whatsoever, Mike Griffin and Jim Sprouffske are the ones to contact. They have run the Royal Gorge dry in a snowstorm this year. Katy Fitzgerald and Greg Horton seem to tend this way also. There are a lot of early runs on the Parkdale section. Plenty of veterans are willing to show newcomers to our sport the lines and there is even a spot where loops are possible. Besides the Gorge and Parkdale, the North fork of the South

Platte runs early due to the Roberts tunnel coming out of Lake Dillon, sending water to Denver. I did a run with Jim and Katy on the boulder section of the Foxton run. Jim S and Mike G ran it all the way to Waterton Canyon. This is all III to III+ (very enjoyable paddling, nonetheless). Bill Tiedt reportedly enjoys a play hole on the Foxton run. Seth Yearout and Dave Bum did a run on Bailey (class IV+ to V+), and two weeks later I did too.

As the weather warmed up the numbers became an option and one day we had fourteen club members out at one time. Ben Carter and Mike Griffin did the Pine Creek rapid (500 cfs) with me and said it was the hardest rapid they had ever done. Whitewater is like doing drugs, give them a little and see who comes back for more. Jim S, Mike Brown, Lynn Koester and Greg Horton were showing the numbers to Justin Smith and Steven Gleason so we joined them. Both guys looked very good. Don Grall and Rick Dukes helped us with the shuttle and we also saw them near the take-out.

There have been numerous beginner trips and even one that picked up 500 pounds of trash and had twenty five participants. Doug Wheat found a tire with brakes (I think it was the largest thing recovered).

We currently have about 100 members signed up.



Jim Sprouffske and Chris Brobin on the Boulder Garden Section of Foxton (North Fork of the South Platte near Pine Colorado)

Low Water Run on the Royal Gorge

Early April 2006

Chris Brobin

As I put on the Royal Gorge run of the Arkansas River near Canyon City, Colorado I had this feeling of impending doom. I shouldn't have, because I've only had difficulty on the run once. But this run chewed up the club something fierce last year, I had a completely lame swim on Sunshine at low flows and another paddler had to be fished out of Sunshine with a throw rope (at one point he and his boat were in the hole together, but he wasn't in it). Two paddlers were injured ten minutes apart and had to take the funicular train out to the hospital. One of the men told me it was the most pain he had ever felt in his life AND he's in his late sixties. Yet another paddler from the club made it through the hard stuff at 2000 cfs and then took a nasty swim in the narrows. He told me that when he got a grip on the shore he was absolutely getting out right there and that was it, his boat went for two miles before his partner retrieved it (it's never a good day when your boat has more fun than you do).

Still the Gorge is usually a good time at a wide variety of levels and 475 cfs is an amusing early season level. I did the run with fellow PPWCer Mike Griffin along with Denver Brian and Bruce Bradshaw. I had met Bruce in Minnesota once at a put-in, but never paddler with him.

The run was fairly uneventful. We spent time watching the canyon walls close in preparing for Sunshine. Sunshine went fine, Bruce had a big C-1 that cruised through the drop and Mike G did his usual skillful run on the drop followed by myself. Not much to tell after that. Brian got wallslammed (its not really a day in the Gorge if that doesn't happen to somebody). Mostly, we just enjoyed being on the water. Brian invited us up to do the Poudre (and we might).

During slower sections I just enjoy looking at the canyon.



Abbreviations

Chris Brobin and unknown PPWC member

CFS - our lifeblood (Cubic Feet per Second)

Alfonso's - our fuel.

BV -(Buena Vista) is the center of the universe, home of the almighty CKS.

CKS - Colorado Kayak Supply in BV

EJ - Eric Jackson- is the prophet of paddling

El Gordo - our shepherd

Gh - Greg Horton-Sidekick of El Gordo

IMPORTANT

To view the Following video you will need.

1. Download the .avi file in the PPWC Web site
2. Download the latest Acrobat reader. Link is here or click on image.
3. Download Quicktime 7 video viewer Click here or the image. Quicktime is a free product from Apple.



Heliodorus – Dane Patterson

WAB - Wednesday afternoon boating

PPP - Pueblo Play Park

BSOE - Bastrd Son Of Elvis-Actually a real person named Josh.

P-Wave - Often is used for the Pueblo whitewater park (I'm not touching the M-Wave).

P-dale - often passes for Parkdale.

The Gorge - anywhere near Colorado Springs, refers to Royal Gorge (Forget the Gilman Gorge, Cross Mountain Gorge and the rest).

RG - works for the Gorge also.

RJ - RJ Neff

M-wave - Don't ask

ThAB - Thursday afternoon boating

TAB - Tuesday afternoon boating (could be Thursday)

afternoon boating, helps to clarify)

AW - American Whitewater (I assume you are already a member)

CRC - Colorado Rivers and Creeks; THE book on Colorado Whitewater By Gordon Banks and Dave Eckardt.

Mega-group - anytime there are ten or more paddlers in a group.



Jim Sprouffske, Boulder Garden Section of Foxton on the North Fork of the South Platte

Interview With Jim Sprouffske

By Chris Brobin

CB - You have been involved in helping the beginners, how is that going?

JS – Very well. I've seen a marked change in the last two years in the ability of the beginners. This year most of the people who have completed the roll sessions have been running much harder section than previous years. It used to be old Parkdale. This year some people ran some pretty big stuff at Paddlefest.

CB - Where and when did you start paddling?

JS – Thirteen years ago. I lived in Washington

State on Olympic Peninsula west of Seattle. I took some classes and got involved in Washington Kayak Club. There were trips every weekend, much like PPWC. An easy place to find people to Kayak. I also came out of rafting, so I already knew how to read whitewater.

CB – What are some Washington rivers you enjoyed?

JS – Skykomish, Green River headwaters and both gorge sections. My favorite section is the middle middle section (no typo) of the Snoqualmie (class III some IV and lots of play). The White Salmon in southern Washington is pool drop, ledges and ends in a fifteen foot waterfall. I enjoy expedition kayaking: Middle fork of the Salmon, Main Fork of the Salmon, The Colorado (Grand Canyon). The hardest continuous section I have run is the Selway in Idaho.

CB – What is your favorite Colorado river or section?

JS – The Numbers on the Arkansas, I haven't done that many.

CB - When did you join the club?

JS – April of 2004.

CB - What are some sections that you would like to do?

JS – Locally the Lower Taos Box (near Taos New Mexico).

Also the Tea Cups in California (possibly on Brush Creek which runs into the Forks of the Kern). Editors Note: The only paddler in our club that I know is from California is from Northern California and this section is from the Southern Sierra's.

Special Bailey Section

Bailey: the cure for Hypoadrenalism

Chris Brobin

While most people find me completely lethargic, the truth is I suffer from acute hypoadrenalism (abnormally low levels of adrenaline), I just don't like to burden my friends with my illness. Pills and shots just don't seem to do the trick. Jim Sprouffske tried to help by skiing the Double Blacks at Breckenridge with me this winter, but it only seemed to reduce the symptoms. Likewise, Ben Carter and Mike Griffin joined me on my second low water run of Pine Creek this spring, but the condition persisted.

I needed to do something to help reduce this scourge. I read CRC twice (ok, three times, actually four times) this winter in search of help. Lo and Behold I came across Bailey (the North Fork of the South Platte from Bailey to Pine). The description of the run made it appear that it would do the trick. I contacted a Bailey veteran Chris Cowan after finding a post of his on the Buzz and he agreed to paddle with me. By the time we left the take-out for the put-in, our group had swelled to seven and briefly on the river it was nine and for good measure the river had risen to 500 cfs. With four Jefes in the group we looked like Team Jefe (I of course chose my twelve year old Prijon Rokit).

The run begins innocuously enough. In the first four miles, the only thing to worry about was hitting your head on low bridges. The easy phase ended quite suddenly with the Four Falls. The first is a very nasty V+ that no one my group had ever run. The crux below that was Number 2, a fairly straight forward V-. I tried a left to right move which worked out as left to left, but no problems as I was still able to catch the eddy I wanted. Number three looked easy enough, I did a right to left line which dropped me into a small hole below the pour over and then I graduated to a larger hole under a larger pour over river left. Pour overs bite, and being caught in one is worse. I tried a couple of rolls and finally took nice under water

stroke, rolled and was free. Number four was fairly simple and I eddyed out and relaxed a bit. Our group had one swim, but I missed it being downstream. I felt some improvement in my hypoadrenalism.

CRC really falls down in its description of Bailey, mentioning only three rapids, failing to mention that the mile past four falls is continuous IV, IV+ with no breaks. The AW site has a much better description of the river. In the next mile, it mentions the Notch, Steepness I, Steepness II and the Steeps. At the start Chris said, "Follow me" and was off. I can barely remember any of it, it was simply the hardest section of whitewater I have ever run without scouting. Chris was a great guide in this section, but he couldn't boat for me. I actually ran it clean, it just went on and on and on. By the time we eddied out for a look at SuperMax, my hypoadrenalism was gone replaced by hyperadrenalism. Everyone skipped the top half of SuperMax and ran the lower half. While it looked pretty straightforward (most ran it straight river left), I needed a break and walked it (I was actually having difficulty calming down). Chris did an elegant right to left move that should be in a video.

One of my concerns of late has been the strength of my river roll. I haven't done a run that truly pushed me in years, so I was wondering if I could roll in class IV rapids. The next section was a bit of a step down from the steeps, but it was still relentless and we weren't scouting if it wasn't class V. At one point, I was going through a slot as part of a ten foot drop when I pitched on a rock. I was thrown into an under-cut, fortunately my roll was solid and even slamming a rock with my shoulder as I came up did not affect me. I rolled a couple more times later in the run as fatigue was starting to affect me, but my roll held up. I believe that a roll is only tested when there are consequences to failure.

I also portaged Deer Creek rapid because I was pretty wasted by this time. The rapid is fairly straight forward, but an error would have some pretty

negative consequences. The last couple of miles got progressively easier, but there was still the odd class IV to run without scouting.

My hypoadrenalism is gone. For now.



Seth Yearout running the Class V Supermax on Bailey

Bailey

Seth Yearout

Boat with someone who knows the run well the first time you go. There are some places you don't want to go, so knowing where and when those are, will keep you out of a bad situation. The big rapids are easily portageable. You can even skip the most dangerous part (undercuts) and then put in just below and run the rest. Tons of fun for those who are stepping up their boating to the next level. Be prepared for the worst by having any and all rescue gear as well as boaters experienced in rescue. Boat within your ability and enjoy the creek right side up.

Roy on Bailey

Roy

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Since I'm posting this is in the hope that others can benefit from my experience, I'll start out with "lessons learned":

1) Always, always, always wear a river knife someplace easily accessible when kayaking. I've paddled over 15 years with them and never used one in a real emergency until yesterday. Sometimes you wonder why you keep replacing them when they fall out every few years, but if I didn't have mine yesterday, I doubt I'd be typing this today.

2) Kevlar rimmed skirts are really hard to cut. This didn't even cross my mind when I initially made the purchase, but I won't be owning another one.

3) Bad things can happen very quickly during a swim. Better to stick it out, take a few knocks and get the roll than to bail.

Here's the rest of the story...

We're coming into the first significant IV after SuperMax. I think people call it Trash Can. I've done this run at least 20 times and am pretty much unconcerned, but get flipped in the manky stuff and end up swimming. Current is taking me towards a big rock on river left, so I "assume the position" to bounce off feet first. I hit the rock and go under and around the right, where the current is, and then YANK!!! Something's got me by the waist and I'm stuck underwater in a lot of flow. I managed to get my feet on some rocks and push up to get an air pocket, so I can breathe, but I'm stuck, I can't see what's got me and there's a shitload of water pouring over my shoulders and occasionally head.

Somewhere between the YANK and scrambling for footing, my skirt got spun around backwards, which is what had me confused. I didn't think "skirt" when trying to figure out what could be pulling me from behind, so it probably took me about a minute or so

to figure out what was snagged. There's probably a couple hundred pounds of water pouring down on my back, so it's REALLY tight on front (I've got a ring of bruise across the front of my waist) and I'm not sure I can slide out of it. In any case, doing so would mean surrendering my foothold, which is my air, so that's the last thing I want to do.

So I pull out the knife and go at the skirt. I had lost my last knife in the river late last season, and thank God I replaced it before my first run this year! I got a Bearclaw, because of the blade shape. It's curved blade looked to me like it would be ideal for cutting rope, which I expected to be the most likely use. What I hadn't really paid much attention to was the finger hole right below the blade. This is a GREAT FEATURE in a river knife! I spent at least 10 minutes stuck there and I don't know if my numb hands could have held onto a normal knife handle that long with the river blowing on me like that.

By now, I can see Jeff on a small cliff river right offering to throw a rope, but I'm waving him off, because that would just occupy my hands that are cutting a skirt. Ture is on river left, he can't get any closer than rope distance either. I start to realize that I'm the only one who's going to be able to free me. The rock is too tall to get anything but a rope to me and nobody would be able to stay where I was without being tied in, in which case they'd be just as screwed as I am. I can't feel my hands and I'm getting really tired fighting the current. If I relax, my head goes under. And the damn skirt ain't cutting! It's really hard to see what your doing, since it's all under water and the current's blowing my hands all over the place. It's more shielded from the current in front, but the thing is SUPER tight around my waist due to the current and I'm not wanting to slice into a major artery in my gut. I keep working at the sides in the current.

Eventually, the blade finds good purchase on a thinner section of kevlar on the side and goes all the way through in one slash. It wasn't like "I'm getting closer...almost there...", more like "this aint working, but what else to do?" and then all the sudden it worked. The thing cut in one swipe and I was instantly blown downstream for an exhausted, bumpy, but very relieved class IV swim.

Soooo, what to say? Thanks to Ture and Jeff for all their help. Thanks to Red (local fisherman) for giving me a ride out at Deer Creek. See above for lessons learned. Keep a knife handy. Bearclaw's a good choice. I'm in need of a skirt and it won't have a Kevlar rim. Also, if anybody comes across a Woody Creeker paddle in the North Fork of the South Platte, it's got my name and contact info on it. Loads of river Karma and fine beer for its return.

Ture on Bailey

Ture

When it comes down to it, Roy had to save himself. If he hadn't cut through that skirt he probably would have tired and drowned before Jeff and I could have touched him. The water was shooting off of his body and he was completely under water several times. I have never felt such an awful feeling of dread as I did while Jeff and I watched Roy fight for his life.

Please, everybody out there: never paddle without a knife, keep physically fit in case you need some super strength/endurance, and remember that even a non-scary rapid can kill you.

I highly recommend that Bear Claw design with the sure-grip trigger hole for your pointer finger. If Roy had dropped his knife he probably would have died. That water was ice-cold and jetting on him full blast so I think a regular knife would have been hard to hold onto.

As for what I would do differently next time? I think we did the right thing by having 1 guy with a rope get close and maintain communication with Roy and get ready to throw the rope if Roy decided to give up. Roy had a rescue vest so I would want to throw him a rope with a beaner on the end for him to clip to. With a team of 3: 1 victim and 2 rescuers, there wasn't a easy way to set up a fixed rope across the river without keeping someone ready with the throw bag for Roy so I think I would have liked to have a team of 4. I always thought 3 felt like a safe number but 4 is a lot better because that way you have 2 people free to do whatever.

Jeff was on the right bank on a cliff straight across from Roy with the throw bag and I was on the wrong side of the rock (left bank) so I spent about a minute trying to figure out how to get on that rock while Jeff talked to Roy. It was a big rock and way too tall and vertical on the backside to eddy behind it and crawl up. Roy was snagged on the front right hand side so you couldn't reach him from the back. The front of the rock was tall, slick, undercut, and had water rushing FAST on both sides. There was no way to swim up to it and jump on. I ended up swimming to the bottom of the cliff on the right hand side but Roy was out when I got there. It is a good thing because I would not been able to do much from there. The only thing I could think of was to beaner myself to Jeff's rope and make a grab for Roy but that would have had a 99% chance of failure and Roy needed to concentrate on cutting his skirt instead of having people trying to jump on him. I guess if I had to do it over I would have concentrated on getting a fixed line across the creek while Jeff held the bag for Roy. The thought crossed my mind but I thought it would take so long that Roy would be dead first...so I swam closer to try to make a desperate grab... but next time I would just start setting up a fixed line even if it looked hopeless.

