Walt Disney World News

Canoe Races Foster Competition and the Spirit of Camaraderie

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., (July 28, 2011)- As the sun came up over Cinderella's Castle, cheers and laughter filled the air as hundreds of Walt Disney World cast members took to the Magic Kingdom before park open to compete in the 38TH annual Canoe Races Of the World, or C.R.O.W.

For two weeks each July, Disney cast members paddle off into the Rivers of America at the Magic Kingdom Park to train and compete in predawn canoe races. A longtime favorite event among cast, the 82 teams averaged five to six minutes to complete the one-mile course, which stretches from Splash Mountain to the Haunted Mansion.

The dedication and commitment of Disney VoluntEARS and competitors have made the canoe races an annual tradition that dates back to 1973. Together, they work year-round contributing hundreds of hours of brainpower and muscle to make the event a success.

Sarah Nowak, recreational guest service manager and team captain of BadROWmance, said the motivation to come together and work hard helped lead her team to become the women's pro division champs.

"You really become a team when you're out in the water together at 6 a.m. day after day," she said. "Just being out there having fun and then coming back to get our scores is the most exciting part."

The annual tradition fosters some fierce competition, but cast members say they return annually to get a work-out and boost camaraderie among co-workers.

"It's my fourth year competing and our first victory, so I'm really proud of all the hard work that went into getting us here today," said Scott Hall, industrial engineer and captain of the grand champion team, IE Oars 3.

Click here to see video from the 2011 C.R.O.W races.