

A BOATLOAD OF ENTHUSIASM



David Moll, Calgary Herald

Drummer Kelly Jubenvill of the Cathay Pacific Draco Flyers motivates her team Sunday at the Alberta Dragon Boat Festival on the Glenmore Reservoir. The team finished third in their heat.

Sun shines on dragon boat sisters

PAUL DROHAN
CALGARY HERALD

The sun sliced through the slate grey sky to spotlight eight boats on the Glenmore Reservoir and two men among the thousands of spectators beamed.

The crowd was waiting to see who would win the women's division of the 1999 Alberta Dragon Boat Race Festival. But the two men knew who the winners were even before the race started.

Sistership I and Sistership II, crewed by women who have or have had breast cancer, were the crowd favourites and — in the men's minds — clear winners in a

much more important contest.

"They have already won just by participating," said Bert Moddejonge, who watched the race with friend Kevin Bryan.

"I can't believe the sun came out for their race," said Bryan. "No one can say they are defeated."

Last year, Kevin Bryan's sisters — Kelly Bryan and Kim Blaikie — were part of Sistership I when it won the novice class and sportsmanship award in their first year of dragon boat racing.

Kelly Bryan died six weeks later.

This year, Kim Blaikie thought of her sister during the races. "We really miss her at a time like this," she said. "I feel really

strong. It's good to be together." Cancer has forged a special bond among the crews of Sistership I and II, she said.

The men marvelled at the effort by all eight crews in the women's championship race. A brisk wind gave a slight chop to the water. A sprinkle of rain didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the crowd.

With the first drum beats, the boats started and signalled the start to a wildly cheering crowd. Paddles sparkled in the sun as they dipped and dug down into the water. Eighteen paddles moving in unison to the beat of a drummer.

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