



Three-Time Olympian Traci Phillips to Coach OCC Women

By Diane Esecson

The OCC paddling program has been blessed with great coaches over the years and this season is no exception. Three time Olympian Traci Phillips is bringing her vast experience to the program, eager to impart her wealth of knowledge to the women's team.

Born and raised in Hawaii, Traci started canoe racing as a child, also competing in volleyball and surfing. It was not until 1986 that she started kayak training, where her athletic abilities and dedication culminated in making her first Olympic team in 1988. Traci became America's premier sprint kayaker for the next decade, earning a spot on the U.S. team for the 1992 and 1996 Olympics.

When asked about a favorite Olympic moment, Traci said that walking in the 1996 Atlanta opening ceremony

was especially memorable surrounded by the "Dream Team" and seeing Muhammad Ali.

Of course in between training in Newport and Lake Placid, Traci was part of the winning OCC women's paddling program. Traci was on the crew for the first Na Wahine O Ke Kai win in 1979, and also the winning OCC crews of 1984, 1985 and 1992. Honored as a Winged "O" recipient in 2004, Traci's contributions to the OCC paddling program are numerous. Now as a coach as well as a paddler, she is taking on her new role with enthusiasm.

Coach Traci describes herself as a "technician", focusing on the technical aspects of the stroke, to be as efficient in the water as possible. Despite her years on the water, Traci said that she is constantly trying to improve her own stroke as well.

In addition, she is emphasizing weight training as integral to the program, part of the overall conditioning to be an effective paddler. Traci also is getting help from some of her friends from the Hawaii canoe and kayak team to lend their expertise.

Having a former Olympian as part of the women's crew has been inspiring, now as a coach... even better.

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