

Olympian Joins OCC Novice Paddlers

By Michael Durkin



Coach Liz Perry welcomes two-time Olympic Gold Medalist Caryn Davies to the Novice B.



Caryn shows off her Gold Medals to the Sixty-Plusers at the Ala Wai.

This summer, Caryn Davies will become the first Olympic Gold Medalist since Duke Kahanamoku to paddle for the Outrigger Canoe Club. Caryn, who has won more Olympic medals in rowing than any other American woman, is now learning to paddle with the Novice Bs, coached by Liz Perry.

Caryn won gold medals as the stroke seat in women's eight rowing at the 2012, and the 2008 Summer Olympics. She also won a silver medal at the 2004 Olympics.

She began paddling this winter with Jim Iams' Sixty-Plus group on the Ala Wai, accompanied by her father, Cornell University Professor Peter Davies. Responding to popular request, she brought her medals to the practice one evening. It was a thrill for all of us Sixty-Plusers to see up close, and to hold in our hands, an Olympic gold medal.

During her first week of training with Novice B, I asked Caryn how it was going so far? "I feel like I'm a complete novice in terms of paddling technique," she said.

She noted two skills that she learned from rowing, that also apply to paddling. One is timing. She said, "I might not be doing the right technique, but I am pretty sure my blade is entering the water, and exiting with the stroker."

The other skill is sensory. "I can feel when the boat is going fast, and moving smoothly," she said. "But I can't tell what I, or anyone else, is doing to produce that."

I asked her, what is the biggest difference between rowing and paddling? "Facing forward: it's terrifying", she replied with a laugh. "I try not to look."

Her fellow Novice B paddlers describe her as being very quiet. Not everyone knew that she is an Olympic champion. I asked Coach Liz Perry, what's it like to coach an Olympian? "I'm sure it's going to be a wonderful experience," Liz said. "She catches on really fast. Right now she is just one of the gang. I am sure that she will bubble to the top quickly."

Caryn graduated from Harvard University, where she is the most decorated Harvard Olympian in any sport, and Columbia Law School. She came to Hawaii to serve as clerk to Judge Richard Clifton of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit in Honolulu.

I asked Caryn, what is more fun, rowing or paddling? "Winning is fun," she replied. "So I don't know yet." The entire Club wishes Caryn and the other Novice B paddlers lots of fun this regatta season.

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