

1st Chinese National Concrete Canoe Competition

Huangshi City, China

June 12, 2010

China, a country with a population of 1.3 billion, has more than half of the cement production in the world. China also has the largest group of college students majoring in cement and concrete that study Civil Engineering or Materials Science and Engineering in various universities or colleges.

The First Chinese National Concrete Canoe Competition was held on June 12, 2010 on Cihu Lake in Huangshi City. Huangshi is located in southeastern Hubei province, along the southwestern bank of one of the major bends in the Yangtze River. It is located 100 km south-east of Wuhan which is famous for its cement industries.

Five colleges and universities took part in this commemorative competition. Categories included a design paper, oral presentation, product evaluation, and canoe races. A team from the Wuhan University of Technology won the Championship.



Races take place at the 1st Chinese National Concrete Canoe Competition

The concrete canoe competition is an extension of the dragon boat races traditionally held as part of the annual Duanwu Festival observance in China. A dragon boat is a human-powered boat (Paddled Water Craft) traditionally made of teak wood that must conform to various design standards and dimensional constraints.

Dragon boat competitions have taken place annually for more than 20 centuries as part of folk ritual. In December 2007, the Chinese government added Duanwu, Qingming and Mid-Autumn festivals to the schedule of national holidays observed in the People's Republic of China. This provided an opportunity for Chinese college students to participate in the concrete canoe races.



Dragon boat races have been held for 20 centuries in China

In 2005, Dr Weiguo Shen, an associate professor of Wuhan University of Technology, became a visiting scholar at Northwestern University. He decided to introduce the concrete canoe race into China after seeing concrete canoe races at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2008.

Dr. Shen organized the first concrete canoe team in China and encouraged his students to make their first concrete canoes in his laboratory. In 2009, sponsorship was gleaned from a company that serves as a consultant to the concrete industry (see: www.snsqw.com) and a concrete canoe exhibition was held in the East Lake of Wuhan City. Two groups of students from professor Shen's university took part in the exhibition that attracted over 5,000 spectators, among them delegates from ten other universities.



The 1st Concrete Canoe Exhibition was held in 2009

Dr. Shen and his sponsor also organized the first Chinese National Concrete Canoe Competition. A team from Huangshi College of Technology won the men's and women's endurance races, and was neck and neck with Wuhan University of Technology in the co-ed sprint. The Southwestern University of Science won the design paper and oral presentation. But Wuhan University of Technology won the product category and the overall Championship.

The championship canoe was made of lightweight concrete with a flexural strength around 14 Mpa. It was decorated with an elaborate pattern of Beijing Opera Facial Masks.



Wuhan University of Technology fielded the championship canoe

All of the colleges that took part in the competition promised to participate next year and twenty others have already expressed an interest in competing. So it is very likely that a second Chinese National Concrete Canoe Competition will take place.



A woman from the championship team paddles the winning entry