

Water Environment Federation

The Official Publication of **WEFTEC**

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TRA CREWSers Maintain Title

Texas team wins fourth Operations Challenge

December 2009

www.wef.org/magazine

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FORUM** Page 55

TRA CReWSers Collect Another Victory at Operations Challenge.09

Texas team earns fourth first place title in 5 years

Written by Steve Spicer and Britt Sheinbaum. Special thanks to Steve Harrison.



The 2008 defending champions, TRA CReWSers from the Water Environment Association of Texas, took top honors at the Oct. 12–13 Operations Challenge.09 in Orlando, Fla. Coached by Raudel Juarez, the team of Jacob Burwell, Dale Burrow, Steve Price, and David Brown competed against 40 teams from the United States, Canada, and Argentina — taking home trophies in four of the five events as well as the Division 1 win.

David Brown, Steve Price, Dale Burrow, and Jacob Burwell, the TRA CReWSers from the Water Environment Association of Texas, fought off competitors to earn first place in the Collection Systems event as well as Division 1 overall.



Division I	Member Association	Points
TRA CReWSers	WEA of Texas	445.50
Terminal Velocity	Virginia WEA	438.16
Commode Commandos	Rocky Mountain WEA	380.78
Division II	Member Association	Points
Windy City Wizards	Illinois WEA	476.20
Team HRSD	Virginia WEA	453.05
Seacoast Sewer Snakes	New England WEA	430.02



Dillo XXpress from the WEA of Texas finishes the Safety event by replacing the cover on the simulated confined space.

“The team has worked really, really hard to get to this point, and we’re very proud,” said Burrow, who serves as team captain.

This is the fifth year that the CREWSers have fielded the same team, and it is their fourth Division 1 win.

Terminal Velocity from the Virginia Water Environment Association (WEA) earned second place in Division 1, and the Commode Commandos from the Rocky Mountain WEA secured third place.

Composed Competitors

In addition to the overall title, the CREWSers earned first in the Safety and Collection Systems events, second in the Laboratory event, third in the Godwin Maintenance event, and fourth in Process Control.

In addition to practice, Burrow credits the team’s exceptional performance to how comfortable the team members are competing together and how well they know each others’ roles.

“That’s one of the reasons that this team does so well, we’ve been together now for 5 years now — the same four guys competing. And we’ve just gotten much more comfortable,” Burrow said.

A lot of teams make one or two mistakes and let it affect the whole run, Burrow said. After one mistake, nerves kick in and lead

to more and more mistakes. The CREWSers had the same problems in the past years, but now have learned to accept the mistake and move on.

“I think that’s the real difference for this team,” Burrow said.

One of the team’s main goals this year was to be as penalty-free as possible, he said. Avoiding penalties has been a perennial strategy for the CREWSers.

The team only drew penalties in two events, and had just one penalty in each of those events. “We are definitely proud of that,” Burrow said. “I think we all realize that’s key.”

As raw times are posted on the results board, it feels as if all of the other teams are right on your heels, Burrow said. But the raw times can be misleading because they don’t take into account adjustments for penalties; the win always seems to come down to penalties, he said.

Burrow added, “you have to have the speed, too, because these teams are definitely coming at you.”

Close Challengers

The second-place winners in Division 1, Terminal Velocity from the Virginia Water Environment Association (WEA), finished just 6 points behind the CREWSers in the overall scores. Such a close race both frustrates and motivates the team, said Stephen Motley, team captain.

This competition marks the first year back in Division 1 for Terminal Velocity after taking first place in Division 2 last year. The team includes Motley, Donnie Cagle, Jason Truitt, and Paul Cubilla. Robert Williams is the team’s coach as well as alternate.

Moving into Division 1 requires a change in perspective, Motley said, especially for team members who have never competed at that



Steve Kaczor of the Ohio WEA Wastewater Rangers concentrates on the Laboratory event.



This year the Safety event used a different fall-protection device and added an external automatic defibrillator training module.

level before. "There's a big difference between Division 1 and Division 2. You're scrutinized closer [in Division 1] and so you have to work that much harder."

Until a month before the competition, Terminal Velocity practiced about once every other week. As WEFTEC approached, the team stepped things up to once or twice a week, Motley said. An added challenge for Terminal Velocity is that the team members are spread over several facilities. Trying to match up everyone's schedule can be a challenge, Motley said.



The River Rangers from the Pacific Northwest Clean Water Association compete in the Godwin Maintenance event.

Individual Event Standings



Laboratory Event

Event Coordinator: Mary Ann Pietrowicz, Spotsylvania County Utilities (Fredericksburg, Va.)

Division 1 Winners

1. Terminal Velocity (Virginia WEA)
2. TRA CRWSers (WEA of Texas)
3. Commode Commandos (Rocky Mountain WEA)



Division 2 Winners

1. Windy City Wizards (Illinois WEA)
2. Team HRSD (Virginia WEA)
3. Septic Soljahs (Hawaii WEA)



Safety Event

Event Coordinator: Starlin Jones, City of Sparks, Nev.

Division 1 Winners

1. TRA CRWSers (WEA of Texas)
2. Terminal Velocity (Virginia WEA)
3. Cape Shore Workers (New Jersey WEA)

Division 2 Winners

1. OCWA Jets (Ontario WEA)
2. Dillo XXpress (WEA of Texas)
3. Team HRSD (Virginia WEA)



Team	Monday		
NO	Lab Event	9:15	9:45
1	12:00		
2	11:30		C
3	12:30		
4	15:30		A
5	15:00		
6	13:00		
7	16:00		
8	15:30		
9	13:30		
10	14:00		
	13:30		
	14:30		



John Reardon, Art Cowan, and Tim Fisher of the New Jersey WEA Cape Shore Workers focus on the Process Control event. The top two teams in both divisions emphasized the importance of a good performance in this event.

Those practices paid off for Terminal Velocity, with first-place finishes in the Laboratory and Process Control events, second in the Safety event, fourth in the Maintenance event, and sixth in the Collection Systems event.

Consistent Performers

In addition to winning third place, the Commode Commandos made a very consistent showing at the competition. The team — Stacey Walker, Caleb Vannice, Chong Woo, Brian Pritekel, and Leonard Robb (coach) — earned second-place trophies in the Collection Systems and Process Control events, third place in the Laboratory event, sixth in the Safety event, and seventh in the Godwin Maintenance event.

In 2007, a similarly consistent performance led the Commandos to win Division 1, handing the CREWSers their only overall defeat in the past 5 years.

Training Tips

The top two teams in Division 1 walked away with first-place trophies in four of the five events. (The Cape Shore Workers from the New Jersey WEA took first in the Godwin Maintenance event.) So what sets apart these teams from the rest?

In general, the top teams really focus on the Process Control and Laboratory events, Motley said. Those two events are not as active an exciting as the other three, and, often teams don't want to put in the work for them, Motley said.

"You need to practice all five equally," he said. "It doesn't do you any good to do very well in what I call the physical events, if you're not going to do well in the other two. They all have equal footing in the scoring system."

Another major difference, especially between Division 1 and 2, begins when teams are planning their runs, Burrow said. It's important to make the most of

each team member's talents. Trying to copy a routine that moves very quickly for another team is risky because they may have a team member that can complete a certain task much faster than you can, he said.

"You pretty much have to come up with your own run," Burrow said. "You have to put your guys where they're the quickest and where they can help the team best."

The Heart of the Challenge

Making the most of operators' skills and performance is at the heart of Operations Challenge, according to Cordell Samuels, vice chair of the Operations Challenge Committee.

"The value of Operations Challenge is the training and the learning that people get from it," Samuels said. He added that as the competition expands, it is able to expose more operators to new operations procedures, new safety measures, and new types of equipment.

Burrow echoed those sentiments, "You can't have a better training tool than Operations Challenge. There are so many things that we've actually used on Ops Challenge that we take into the field with us and use."

Handling equipment in the



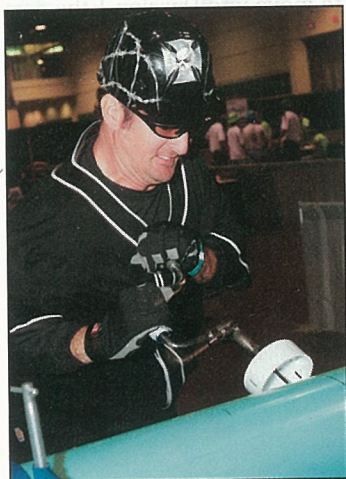
For the second year in a row Operations Challenge included a team from Argentina. Here, AySA Propulsion works to complete the Collection Systems event.



WEA of Utah Wasatch All-Stars hoists their "unconscious team member" out of the simulated sewer during the Safety event.

competition when speed and accuracy are so important makes using that equipment on the job that much easier, he said. Additionally, meeting other teams from around the country creates a support structure for operators to network and share information.

"You have a problem at your plant, a new piece of equipment, a new technology, you just pick up the phone and call these folks," Burrow said.



Darin Morris of Wasted Gas from the Water Environment Association of Utah drills a hole in a piece of replacement pipe for the Collection Systems event.

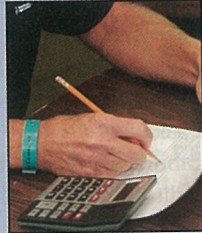


Process Control Event

Event Coordinator: Mike Ross, CH2M Hill/OMI (Fayetteville, Ark.)

Division 1 Winners

1. Terminal Velocity (Virginia WEA)
2. Commode Commandos (Rocky Mountain WEA)
3. L.A. Wrecking Crew (California WEA)



Division 2 Winners

1. Windy City Wizards (Illinois WEA)
2. Aurora's Ascending Aerobes (Rocky Mountain WEA)
3. Pumpers (Central States WEA)



Collection Systems Event

Event Coordinator: John Trofatter, Accusonic Technologies (West Wareham, Mass.)

Division 1 Winners

1. TRA CRWSers (WEA of Texas)
2. Commode Commandos (Rocky Mountain WEA)
3. L.A. Wrecking Crew (California WEA)



Division 2 Winners

1. Team HRSD (Virginia WEA)
2. Dillo XXpress (WEA of Texas)
3. Seacoast Sewer Snakes (New England WEA)



Godwin Maintenance Event

Event Coordinator: Tony Starks, Hampton Roads Sanitation District (Virginia Beach, Va.)

Division 1 Winners

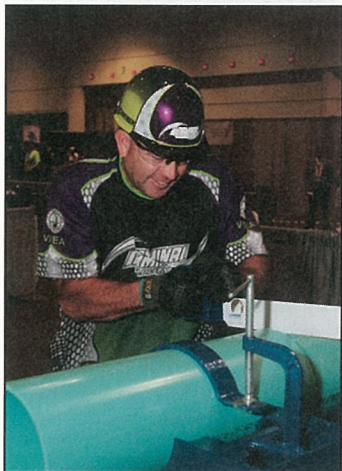
1. Cape Shore Workers (New Jersey WEA)
2. Wasted Gas (Utah WEA)
3. TRA CRWSers (WEA of Texas)



Division 2 Winners

1. Wasatch All Stars (Utah WEA)
2. Liquid Force (South Carolina WEA)
3. Seacoast Sewer Snakes (New England WEA)

Windy City Wizards Cast a Spell On Division 2 Competition



Paul Cubilla from Virginia's Terminal Velocity team saws through a pipe in the Collection Systems event.

The Windy City Wizards from the Illinois Water Environment Association (WEA) surged past the rest of the Division 2 teams to take home first place. Winning Division 2 in just their third year competing is especially sweet for the Wizards, said Ed Staudacher, the team's coach. "You work hard for it, but sometimes after the first 2 years, you're not even close and it seems almost impossible," he said.

Second and third place in Division 2 went to Team HRSD from the Virginia WEA and the Seacoast Sewer Snakes from the New England WEA, respectively. This year marks a return to Division 2 for both teams as they add new members.

Blowing Into the Lead

The Wizards — Paul Wysocki (captain), Jim Kaminski, Jim McNamara, Rich Stubing, Bob Jones, (assistant coach and alternate), and Staudacher — took an early lead in the competition; though at the time, they didn't know it. The team earned first-place honors in both the Laboratory and Process

Control events, which were held Oct. 12, but the final scores weren't released until the next day.

A win in the Process Control event reflects the team's increased emphasis on that event this year. Each team member studied separately, and at every practice the whole team took a new exam, Staudacher said.

In the Laboratory event, the Wizards credit composure with the win.

"We used the same procedure that we used last year," Staudacher said. "We focused more on getting everything right and not panicking if anything went wrong."

That calm, cool, and collected manner was part of the team's overall strategy, along with keeping penalties to a minimum. "We went almost 2 days without a penalty, until the last event," Staudacher said. The Wizards had just one penalty in the Collection Systems event.

Having kept the same team members each year helps the team to not lose focus when things go wrong, Staudacher said. On top of that, team members switched things up during practices to

keep on their toes and get used to adapting during the competition, he said.

"Every year helps," Staudacher said. "It's a world of difference between year one and year three."

The Wizards train about once a week throughout the year, stepping up the frequency just before regional competitions, and again at the beginning of September to prepare for WEFTEC.

New Blood

It might seem strange to hear Team HRSD and the Seacoast Sewer Snakes announced as the second- and third-place winners in Division 2 because both teams have competed in Division 1 for the past several years. This is a rebuilding year for the teams.

Whenever two or more of the four members on a team are replaced, the team automatically drops back to Division 2. The first- and second-place teams from Division 2 have the option to move into Division 1 the next year.

To introduce new team mem-



During the Godwin Maintenance Event, the WEA of Texas Dallas Aqua Techs position the Godwin Dri-Prime® model CD100M pumpset in place.



In addition to the competitors, Operations Challenge draws spectators and cheering sections. Here supporters of the DELCORA Loo-natics from the Pennsylvania Water Environment Association cheer on the team.

bers to the competition, previous members of Team HRSD come to the first practice to show the newbies how it's done, said Eric Washbon, team captain. "They're basically in awe."

After that, training begins and multiple routines are tried out to find the ones in which each new member excels, he said.

Team HRSD — Washbon, Ken Scott, Riley Riggins, Demetrius Cross, and Wesley Warren as coach — earned first place in the Collection Systems event, second

in the Laboratory event, and third in the Safety event.

This year's line-up for the Seacoast Sewer Snakes included Jeremy Boston, Sean Greig, John Sykona, Paul Fritz II, and Paula Anania as coach. The Sewer Snakes took home the third-place trophies for the Godwin Maintenance and Collection Systems events.

Moving Up

What's the main difference between Division 2 and Division 1?

"Honestly, it's the same to me," Washbon said. "We still had the same struggles we would in Division 1." Especially with a new team, the goal is getting comfortable with each other and knowing what each other is doing.

"You're moving so fast you have to really know what the other person is doing next," Washbon said. You need to stay focused on your routine, but also be paying attention to what's going on in case something doesn't go to plan, he said.

All the members of Team HRSD are planning to return to next year to compete in Division 1. "Now we're going to get comfortable with each other. We're going to get faster at certain events, and it's going to be fun," Washbon said.

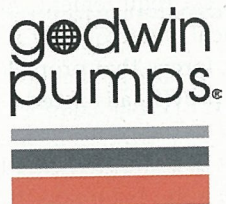
After a few years getting a feel for the competition, Wizards goal this year was to be at the top of Division 2.

The new goal is to get to the top of Division 1.

"It might be a little ahead of schedule, and we definitely have our work cut out for us ... but we're looking forward to the challenge," Staudacher said.

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