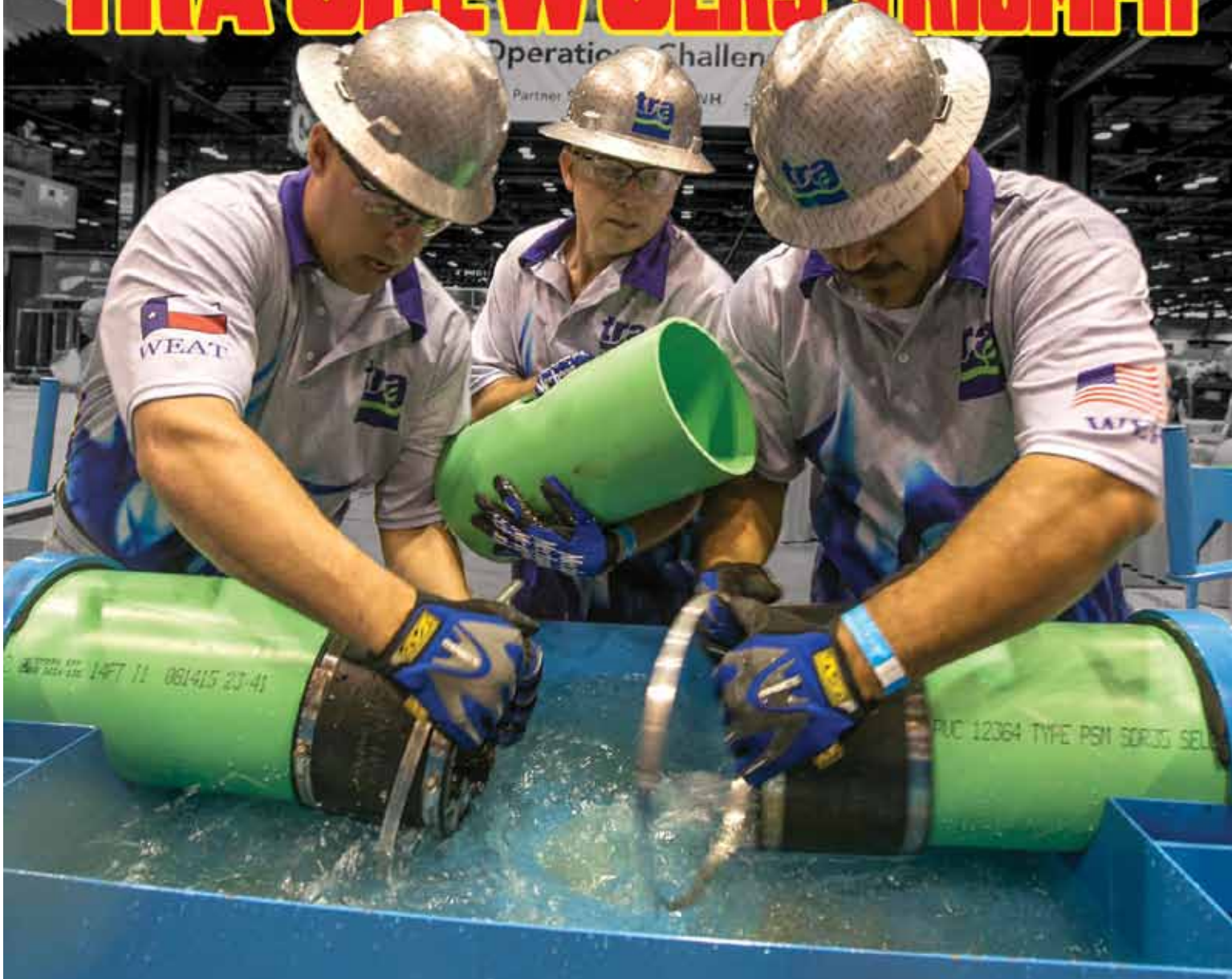


# TRA CREWSERS TRIUMPH



## TEXAS TEAM ASSEMBLES FOR DIVISION 1 WIN

# HEROES OF W ASSE TO COMPETE IN OPERA

By Jennifer Fulcher and Steve Harrison  
Photos by Kieffer Photography



# WASTEWATER CHALLENGE OPERATIONS CHALLENGE 2015



The stage was set at WEFTEC® 2015. The challenges were clear. Five obstacles stood before each Operations Challenge team.

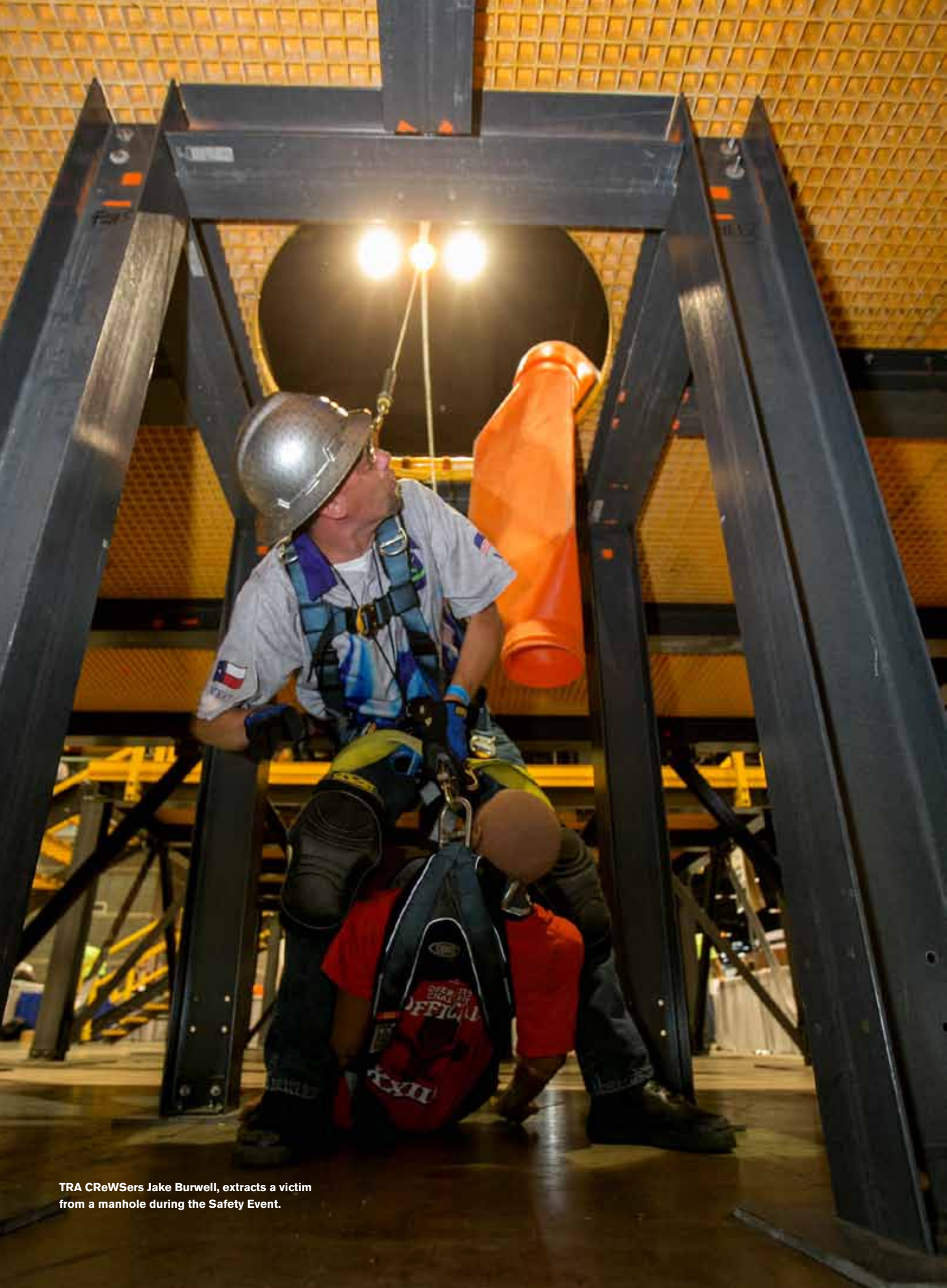
Competitors were armed with skills learned from hours of practice and training. As four sets of boots stepped up to the line for each event – Process, Laboratory, Collection Systems, Godwin Maintenance, and Safety – the crowd hushed. At the captain's signal, the team sprung into action to test their skills.

Competitors worked together with a sharp precision and quick feet. Teammates supported each other both on the competition stage and before the competition even began.

Once a year, wastewater professionals prove their skills during the national Operations Challenge competition. During WEFTEC 2015, 44 teams – the largest number ever assembled – stepped up to vie for the title.

The competitors represent the often-unsung heroes of wastewater treatment worldwide. Teamwork serves as their key to success both within the competition and on the job.

This year, teamwork led the TRA CReWSers to place first in Division 1 and Motley Poo to place first in Division 2.



TRA CREWSers Jake Burwell, extracts a victim from a manhole during the Safety Event.

# DIVISION 1 WINNER

## TRIED AND TRUE TEAMWORK CLINCHES DIVISION 1 WIN FOR TRA CREWSERS

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fter nearly a decade of working together, TRA CREWSers attribute their Division 1 win to experience both with the competition and each other, said captain Dale Burrow.

“We all know each other’s weaknesses and strengths at this point because we’ve all been together for so long,” Burrow said. “You put the best person in the right spot. I think that’s one of the big advantages we have.”

The Texas Water Environment Association team also included David Brown, Jake Burwell, Raudel Juarez, and coach Steve Price.

“You must try and eliminate any dead spots so you don’t have anybody standing around,” Burrow said. “Busy hands at all times.”

Success in the competition depends on maximizing the efficiency of each competitor. Each member is assigned tasks that he or she excels in, and the team choreographs runs so that everyone always has something to do and everyone finishes at the same time.

“[It’s] very important that your team works really well together,” Burrow said.

Because of the team’s past experience with the physical events – this is the 10th year this team has been together – the members spent more time practicing for the Process Control Event. The hard work paid off with a second place win in the event. The team also placed second in the Safety and Laboratory events.

**TRA CREWSers Dale Burrow, Jake Burwell, David Brown, and Raudel Juarez spring into action during the Safety Event.**



# DIVISION 1 RUNNERS-UP

## SOLID ROUTINE EARNS LA WRECKING CREW SECOND PLACE

**T**he LA Wrecking Crew – Tom Jauregui, Nick Janicke, Carlos Vasquez Rivera, captain Matthew Linn, and coach Dale Dollins – has been together for 4 years.

As new members have joined, Linn has enjoyed watching the team work its way back up to the top. “Hopefully your routine is good enough to take you to the top of the platform,” he said.

This year the routine captured the team second place in Division 1. The team also earned third in the Laboratory Event and second in both the Godwin Maintenance and Collection Systems events.

“Everybody’s input is very valued,” Linn said. “There’s no bad idea.”

Working well together during practice is key to success in the competition.

“After each run, you’ve got to talk it out and say, ‘hey, I was done early, I was standing here for 15 seconds. What can I do to help you out?’” Linn said.

**LA Wrecking Crew member Nick Janicke competes during the Laboratory Event.**



## TAKING A TEAM APPROACH HELPS JERSEY DEVILS SECURE THIRD



**F**or the Jersey Devils, working together and being positive about each team member’s opinion is important. The New Jersey Water Environment Association team – George McCabe, Josh Palumbo, Ken Wuerker, captain Art Cowan, and coach Tim Fisher – won third place in Division 1 despite having little time to practice.

“We overcome [challenges] by taking a team approach to figure them out, trying different things or methods, and using what works,” Fisher said. “Teamwork starts with a group of guys that are competitive, team-oriented, willing to learn and try new things, and on top of all that, can get along together and be able to work under pressure and have passion for the team to succeed.”

“Teamwork is fostered through good communications,” he added. The Jersey Devil’s efforts and teamwork also earned them first in the Laboratory and Safety events.

**“We are all on the front-lines of keeping the environment safe and [we’re] committed to making water clean,” said Tim Fisher, coach of the Jersey Devils. “There are many operators, mechanics, electricians, and lab techs doing the jobs while we compete and we represent them ... We are proud to represent our fellow workers, our authority, and the state of New Jersey.” Jersey Devils team members George McCabe, captain Art Cowan, Ken Wuerker, and Josh Palumbo accomplish their tasks during the Safety Event.**

# DIVISION 2 WINNER

## COMMITMENT AND COMMUNICATION TOP THE TOOLBOX OF SKILLS MOTLEY POO USES TO WIN

**M**otley Poo used a combination of practice, commitment, communication, and respect to earn first place in Division 2. The Chesapeake Water Environment Association team, which formed 3 years ago, had two new members this year – that meant practice was essential. “We’ve learned you have to be willing to try new things,” said captain Bradley Yeakle.

The team, which includes James Elliott, Patrick Ross, Wayne Rumbaugh, Yeakle, and coach Ellen Frketic, runs practices like competitions by keeping times and giving critiques.

“One thing that our team does well is communicate ... by communicating well, we know where each other is at any moment and where we should be,” Yeakle said.

“Commitment is a very large part of Operations Challenge,” he explained. “Each team member needs to be focused on learning and executing their part of the event.”

Motley Poo’s commitment helped them also earn first in the Safety and Collection Systems events.

The Operations Challenge experience also helps competitors on the job.

“I think the biggest thing that I take back to my job is learning that everyone has strengths and weaknesses,” Yeakle said. “But if you put a team together and build off those relationships, you are going to be successful.”



Top: Motley Poo team members James Elliott, Patrick Ross, and Wayne Rumbaugh work together during the Collection Systems Event. Bottom: Motley Poo team members James Elliott, Wayne Rumbaugh, and Patrick Ross work to complete the Godwin Maintenance Event.

# DIVISION 2 RUNNERS-UP

## CONSISTENCY PROVES KEY TO SECOND-PLACE FOR THE COMMODOE COMMANDOS

**W**ith three new members this year, Commode Commandos used teamwork, leadership from team veteran and captain Brian Pritekel, and assistance and advice from previous team members to earn second place in Division 2.

"We fostered teamwork through mutual trust and respect for one another," said new Commode Commando Kacie Allard. "When you genuinely care about and trust the people you are working with, it is easy to develop a successful working relationship."

The Rocky Mountain Water Environment Association team included Allard, Paul Gaetano, Mike Muro, Pritekel, and coach John Wright. While the team did not place in any of the individual events, their consistently high score across the board earned them second place overall in Division 2.

Allard overcame the stress of competing by "trusting in the work that my teammates and I put in," she said.

With only 1 year of experience in the water sector, Allard's commitment to practice and studying has paid off. "The skills and knowledge I have gained have been invaluable," she said. "This competition has provided me the opportunity to learn and grow in an industry that I now respect and admire."

**Commode Commandos Paul Gaetano and Mike Muro focus on measurements during the Laboratory Event.**



**Larry Camp with the Re-Wa Blackwater Bruisers competes in the Laboratory Event.**

## RE-WA BLACKWATER BRUISERS BELIEF IN ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT EARNS THE TEAM THIRD-PLACE

**A**s teams improve and the event becomes more competitive, the Re-Wa Blackwater Bruisers attribute placing third in Division 2 to working continually to improve and fostering friendships among team members. The team also placed second in the Collection Systems Event.

"There is always room for improvement in making up better times and precision during the events," said Russ Moore, captain of the Re-Wa Blackwater Bruisers. "I believe teamwork works so well for us because we are not only coworkers, but also have developed a friendship." The bond provides trust and comradery, he said.

The team – Larry Camp, Adam Harvey, Moore, Joe Ortiz, and coach Doug Allen – stays active in different levels of the competition December through October. During practices, events, and competitions, they try to encourage each other regardless of performance and stay focused on what they are – a team, Moore said.

"Not only has it helped me build strong team-working skills but it has also helped me within my job at handling pressure in a more positive manner," Moore said. "Ops Challenge is a very positive lesson in staying focused and knowing what your next move is and how exactly that move is going to be [carried out]."



# OPS CHALLENGE 2015



Left: WEF House of Delegates members Howard Carter (left) and Dan Bisson (right) stand with Force Maine team members Dan LaFlamme, Ian Carter, Alex Buechner, and Scot Lausier. Michael Spring

Below: Ian Carter continues in his father's footsteps by competing in Operations Challenge as a member of the New England Water Environment Association team Force Maine. Michael Spring

## THE CARTERS MAKE OPERATIONS CHALLENGE A FAMILY TRADITION

**THE CARTER FAMILY** from Maine touts a legacy of competing in Operations Challenge. Howard Carter, who represents the New England Water Environment Association (WEA) in the Water Environment Federation (WEF; Alexandria, Va.) House of Delegates, created the Operations Challenge team, originally named Pump Fiction in 1998. Now his son, Ian Carter, competes on the same New England WEA team – it's now known as Force Maine.

"When I started that team as the coach, one of the guys I brought on is still on the current team with Ian," Howard said. Howard participated on the team in 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2004. WEFTEC 2015 marked Ian's second year on the team.

Howard held practice sessions at his house. The team practiced for the Safety Event by rescuing Ian when he was a child.



### Operations Challenge offers a unique experience for operators

After a stint at a desk job, Ian entered wastewater operations.

"I wanted somewhere where I could use the same analytical skill-set but work with my hands at the same time," he said. Since arriving in the water sector, he hasn't "looked back," he said. "[I] absolutely love it. It's my thing."

When a spot opened up on the local Operations Challenge team and Ian was asked to join, he didn't hesitate.

"I'd grown up around it my entire life, so I said absolutely I'd take any opportunity to come to do these things," Ian said.

The experience of participating in Operations Challenge has been educational and beneficial for Ian. "You learn something every practice, every day, you're always learning more and applying things you wouldn't necessarily do on a daily basis."

"The average operator is not going to get a chance to come do something like this and meet these people and see all this amazing technology," Ian said.

### Competing helps advance leadership within WEF

Experience in Operations Challenge led Howard to becoming president of the New England WEA and member of the WEF House of Delegates, Howard said.

"That's usually how operations people get involved in WEF," Howard said. "A lot of it is through the Operations Challenge ... The skill sets you learn [competing], along with the people you meet, to me makes it worthwhile."



# OPS CHALLENGE 2015

## GERMAN COMPETITORS EXEMPLIFY THE SPIRIT OF TEAMWORK AND COMRADERY

**TWO GERMAN TEAMS** traveled to WEFTEC® 2015 to compete in Operations Challenge. Large crowds cheered on the international teams and the Illinois Water Environment Association Sewer Rats hosted a special training session.

“There seemed to be a lot of energy whenever they competed,” said Ed Staudacher, coach of the the Sewer Rats. “I think other teams and spectators enjoyed seeing them compete and having them be there. It was a great addition to Ops Challenge and the entire conference.”



**DWA Team Düsseldorf** members Maren Scholten, Tobias Häselhoff, Ulli Horst Winkler, and captain Hans-Joachim Ziethen compete during the Safety Event. Participating in a special training session helped the German competitors learn small tricks to improve time on the events.

### Veteran competitors show German teams the ropes and foster a bond

Past Virginia WEA competitors Donnie Cagle, Stephen Motley – from five-time Division 1 winner Terminal Velocity – and Wesley Warren – from Team HRSD – helped during the training. Their help enabled the German teams to practice multiple events at the same time.

“Working with a group of guys as knowledgeable and dedicated as [Cagle, Motley, and Warren] was awesome and made the day so much more productive and fun,” Staudacher said. “Everyone trained hard, but at the end of the day it was a great experience working side-by-side with the German teams and guys from [Virginia].”

Spending so much time together fostered a bond between the foreign and native competitors. “The experience exemplifies what the competition is about to me: working with your peers in the industry, networking, learning from each other, and a little healthy competition,” Staudacher said.

“It was amazing how much time they took for us and how open they were, Scholten said. “They answered every stupid question we had and they showed us everything twice or three times, a hundred times. It was fun too.”



**DWA/IFAT All Star** team members Sven Theus, Peter Albrecht, Achim Höcherl, and captain Michael Dörr compete during the Godwin Maintenance Event.

## Illinois Water Environment Association team hosts training event

DWA Team Düsseldorf and the DWA/IFAT All Star Team were busy the weekend before the competition.

“[The teams] got a nice sightseeing tour and excellent training,” said Rüdiger Heidebrecht, coach for both German teams and head of education and international cooperation at DWA – German Association for Water, Wastewater, and Waste (Hennef, Germany).

The members of DWA/IFAT All Star Team are Peter Albrecht, Achim Höcherl, Sven Theus, and captain Michael Dörr. The members of the DWA Team Düsseldorf are Maren Scholten, Tobias Häselhoff, Ulli Horst Winkler, and captain Hans-Joachim Ziethen.

“The goal was to give the German teams a chance to practice on our equipment and have our team share how we approach each event,” Staudacher said.

Scholten, who is still training to be an operator, enjoyed the entire experience and support from other teams during the competition.

“We’re kind of famous here,” she said. “Everyone wants to take a picture and the teams are really nice. They talk to us and they give us tips and help us out whenever we have questions. It’s pretty awesome just to see what’s going on in the field of wastewater in the U.S.”

**“We want to have fun and we want to learn,” Heidebrecht said. “When you have fun, you learn the most because your brain is laughing.” Ulli Horst Winkler, member of Team Düsseldorf, competes during the Safety Event.**



## German competitors gain experience and spirit awards at the U.S. competition

“We learned a lot,” said Sven Theus, member of the DWA/IFAT All Star Team. “I think the main thing is everything here is faster in this competition than in Germany... These guys are really fast, really, really fast. It’s tough.”

While DWA Team Düsseldorf placed 29th and the DWA/IFAT All Star Team placed 32nd out of 36 Division 2 teams, neither walked away empty-handed. Team Düsseldorf won the spirit awards for Team Congeniality and Best Fan Support and the All Star Team won the spirit award for Team with Best Effort.

**Donnie Cagle (left) and Stephen Motley (right) pose with Operations Challenge competitors from DWA Team Düsseldorf Ulli Horst Winkler, Maren Scholten, Hans-Joachim Ziethen, and Tobias Hasselhoff during a special practice session hosted by the Illinois Water Environment Association team, the Sewer Rats. “I don’t think we have ever cheered for a competitor as much as we did when the German teams were competing,” said Ed Staudacher, coach of the Sewer Rats. Rüdiger Heidebrecht**





## OVERALL SCORES

Division 1			
Place	Team	Member Association	Final Score
1	TRA CReWSers	WEA of Texas	450.78
2	LA Wrecking Crew	California WEA	419.94
3	Jersey Devils	New Jersey WEA	418.63
Division 2			
Place	Team	Member Association	Final Score
1	Motley Poo	Chesapeake WEA	454.59
2	Commode Commandos	Rocky Mountain WEA	432.89
3	Re-Wa Blackwater Bruisers	WEA of South Carolina	432.64

## LABORATORY EVENT

Division 1		
Place	Team	Member Association
1	Jersey Devils	New Jersey WEA
2	TRA CReWSers	WEA of Texas
3	LA Wrecking Crew	California WEA
Division 2		
Place	Team	Member Association
1	TRA Waste Warriors	WEA of Texas
2	Sewer Rats	Illinois WEA
3	Bat City Water Works	WEA of Texas

## COLLECTION SYSTEMS EVENT

Division 1		
Place	Team	Member Association
1	Blue Ridge Brawlers	Virginia WEA
2	LA Wrecking Crew	California WEA
3	OCWA Jets	WEA of Ontario
Division 2		
Place	Team	Member Association
1	Motley Poo	Chesapeake WEA
2	Re-Wa Blackwater Bruisers	WEA of South Carolina
3	Operational Hazards	North Carolina WEA

## SAFETY EVENT

Division 1		
Place	Team	Member Association
1	Jersey Devils	New Jersey WEA
2	TRA CReWSers	WEA of Texas
3	Team HRSD	Virginia WEA
Division 2		
Place	Team	Member Association
1	Motley Poo	Chesapeake WEA
2	Controlled Chaos	WEA of South Carolina
3	Bat City Water Works	WEA of Texas

## PROCESS CONTROL EVENT

Division 1		
Place	Team	Member Association
1	Blue Ridge Brawlers	Virginia WEA
2	TRA CReWSers	WEA of Texas
3	Dumplings	Nevada WEA
Division 2		
Place	Team	Member Association
1	Volatile Solids	Ohio WEA
2	Seacoast Sewer Snakes	New England WEA
3	Force Maine	New England WEA

## GODWIN MAINTENANCE EVENT

Division 1		
Place	Team	Member Association
1	OCWA Jets	WEA of Ontario
2	LA Wrecking Crew	California WEA
3	Blue Ridge Brawlers	Virginia WEA
Division 2		
Place	Team	Member Association
1	Volatile Solids	Ohio WEA
2	Wasatch All Stars	WEA of Utah
3	Wasted Gas	WEA of Utah