



Phantom Dragons Team Profile

The Phantom Dragons is one of Colorado's premiere dragon boat race crews. The team is affiliated with the Dragonboat Racing Association of Colorado (DRACO), an IRC 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to promote the sport and culture of dragon boat racing locally, and to train competitive dragon boat paddlers to compete in local, national and international races.

The team was initially formed in 2003 by a group of TaeKwon-Do instructors and students who competed in the Colorado Dragon Boat Festival as a fund-raiser, raising money to send several students to Australia to compete in an International TaeKwon-Do Championship. A few of the participants were immediately hooked, and have been paddling ever since.

Members of the Phantoms crew have played a pivotal role in Colorado dragon boating history. Until 2007, dragon boating in Colorado was a one-weekend-per-year proposition, marked by the annual Colorado Dragon Boat Festival in July. There were no boats anywhere in the state - they were hauled in from Iowa solely for that event, and then promptly returned. Phantom Dragons members Michael Boyd and Tom Ging were among the enthusiasts who spearheaded an effort to form the first racing association (now DRACO) to facilitate dragon boating here on a year-around basis. In the spring of 2007, the CDBF (in cooperation with the Arizona Dragon Boat Association) acquired two dragon boats, and Phantoms Captain Boyd made a solo trip to Tempe to transport the first boats to their new Colorado home. For several years thereafter, his group assumed responsibility for all boat/equipment transport, team and steer practices, course setting, and race management/logistics for the annual CDBF.

In 2009, the Phantom Dragons marked another important milestone by racing in the inaugural Rose Regatta in Las Vegas, capturing 1st Place in the B Division. This was the first time for a Colorado crew to compete anywhere outside of the Denver area! A short time thereafter, the crew won the “Spirit of Qu Yuan” award for sportsmanship at the 2011 Arizona Dragon Boat Festival, and in 2012 they were recognized by Senator Mark Udall for “helping transform Dragon Boat Racing in Colorado” after a strong third place finish in the San Francisco International Dragon Boat Festival.

Since that time, the Phantoms have continued to race in distant venues including Arizona (annually), San Diego, San Francisco, Las Vegas, and Portland - often bringing home “bling” to show for their successes. Until recently, Phantoms was the only Colorado team to practice year-around, and regularly compete in other venues. After this year’s CDBF, the crew is scheduled to race at the local Riverdale Regatta and in Kansas City in September.

The Phantom Dragons train year-around, and generally race at least 4 time each season. Off season / early season indoor sessions are held in the swimming pool at the Wheat Ridge Recreation Center using a training platform designed and built by Coach Boyd to simulate dragon boat paddling in a swimming pool. This training enables the Phantoms to effectively compete in Arizona every March against west coast teams that have the luxury of paddling on open water year-around. During the summer months (roughly April through October) the crew trains three times per week on Sloan’s Lake in Denver.



The Phantoms crew is led by Head Coach Michael Boyd (Captain Bligh). He is a certified Dragon Boat Canada Level II (Competitive) Coach, and has over 20 years of experience training dragon boat paddlers and crews. In addition to coaching for local events, he has trained five paddlers who have gone on to qualify for national teams and compete in the IDBF World Championships (four on Team USA and one on the Japanese National Team). Three went on to win multiple medals.



An avid competitor in his own right, Boyd tried out for and was selected to race on a Team USA crew in the 2015 IDBF Dragon Boat World Championships in Welland, Ontario. For dragon boaters, this is the pinnacle event - the equivalent of what the Olympic games represents to more conventional sports. That marked the first time a paddler from Colorado had ever been selected for a Team USA World Championship crew.



In 2019, Mike tried out again to race in the IDBF Dragon Boat World Championships in Thailand. After a very extensive and competitive tryout and training process, he competed as a member of the Team USA Senior C Open crew, an elite group of 60+ year old athletes who emerged victorious in every heat they raced in, capturing gold in each distance category (2000-meters, 1000-meters, 500-meters and 200-meters). The crew also set a World Record for Senior C competitors at 1000-meters. The stellar performance of Team USA Senior C crews at the 2019 World Championships took the international dragon boating community by surprise, as the senior divisions had historically been dominated by crews from Canada.



DRACO's Phantom Dragons pride themselves in providing an inclusionary, family-friendly training environment where everyone is encouraged to participate, regardless of age, ability, financial resources, political/religious affiliation, sexual orientation, medical condition, etc. Our programs are recognized for providing a positive recreational outlet for at-risk youth, and encourage the development of confidence, discipline and self-esteem. We never want anyone to be excluded based solely on finances, so we often provide "informal" scholarships to those in need, defraying costs associated with participating in our events using our own funds.

In 2017 we established Colorado's first breast cancer survivor (BCS) dragon boat program, and subsequently expanded our scope to provide the positive physical and emotional benefits that result from participating in dragon boat programs to all cancer survivors. The Cancer League of Colorado has been very gracious in supporting our program each of the past eight years via grant funding. Among other related activities, we host a dragon boat event each year for the Shining Stars Foundation (a non-profit that provides recreational activities for kids w/ cancer and their families) and frequently find opportunities for our cancer survivors to compete on survivor crews at venues where they have separate BCS/ACS divisions.



Are you a competitive or avid recreational athlete looking for a new challenge? Or a cancer survivor looking for an activity that will provide positive physical and emotional support? Or perhaps you're seeking a great, family-friendly activity that fosters competition at all ages/ability levels? The Phantoms would love to introduce you to the exciting sport of Dragon Boat Racing! Start paddling now, and you could be racing w/ us soon! www.DragonboatCO.com

