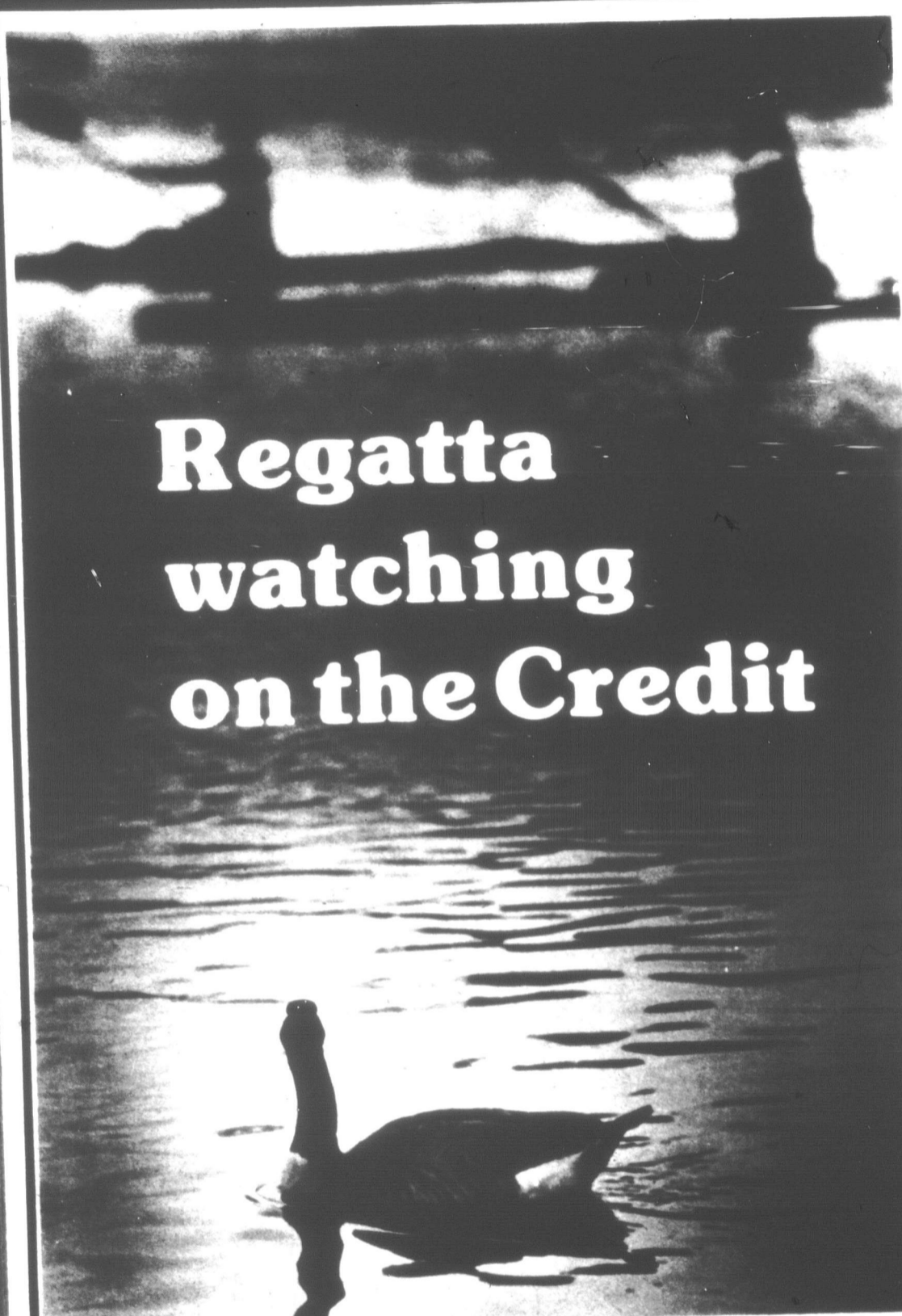


Sports/recreation



Regatta watching on the Credit

A landlubber's guide to flatwater paddling

By TOM MALONEY
Times staff writer

The Mississauga Canoe Club will host its 23rd regatta this weekend and chances are the MCC will win it for the 23rd time.

Commodore Jean Abbott points to the enthusiasm in the bantam age group and says they usually generate enough points to ensure victory for Mississauga. They may not be in the limelight — attention usually goes to the Olympic veterans and national team members — but the bantams are the backbone of the club's strength.

The bantam group is one of five age groups that will compete against five other clubs this Saturday, June 23, starting at 8:30 a.m. and running till late afternoon. All races take place at the mouth of the Credit River in Port Credit. There is no admission charge.

MCC coach Marjorie Homer-Dixon, being a former Olympic paddler, knows the intricacies and the frustrations of canoeing. She speaks of today's scientific attitude towards the sport and tries to explain the psychological barriers through which a national paddler must pass.

"When a paddler first comes to the club, we start him out in the (14-man) war canoe to get him into the spirit of the sport," says Homer-

Dixon. "Above all, the sport must remain fun."

There is a point when a paddler shows he has the makings of a national competitor, according to Homer-Dixon. From that point, it's hard work and dedication that combine with talent to make a national champion.

MCC was the first Canadian club to adopt scientific training programs, says Homer-Dixon.

"We used to go out and do several 250 metre sprints, but we weren't sure why we were doing them," she says. "Now we know how to do speed work and how to properly do endurance work."

National team members such as Dean, Reed and Scott Oldershaw benefited not only from scientific training methods, but also from having the Credit River on their doorstep. The national team continues to make its home there and other clubs use the Credit early in the season.

The mental crux of the race occurs near the halfway point, or the belly of the race as Homer-Dixon terms it.

"There are 20 to 30 strokes during the belly," says Homer-Dixon. "They usually decide the race."

Homer-Dixon says five to six hours of training a day are needed to meet international standards.

Now that's a win streak

By TOM MALONEY
Times staff writer

For the 23rd consecutive year, the Mississauga Canoe Club Regatta takes place on the Credit River this weekend. The regatta is probably the best sports entertainment this summer in Mississauga.

People line the banks of the Credit to watch the kayak and canoe races, but their enjoyment can be limited by lack of understanding of the sport.

There are five age divisions and two types of boats: kayak and Canadian canoe. Kayaks are manned by

one or two paddlers while canoes are guided by one, two or four paddlers. The length of each race is 500 metre races. The 1,000 metre race had to be cancelled due to unusually high water conditions. The paddlers can't get under the railroad trestle.

Kayaks are faster, more manoeuvrable boats and can be recognized by the spray deck fitted to the paddler's waist.

Paddlers sit upright and paddle with a double bladed paddle. It is controlled (or scooped) by a twist of the wrist. According to MCC coach Margorie Homer-Dixon, the key to kayaking is the twisting motion of the back.

"Most of the power comes from the back," says Homer-Dixon. "Arm paddlers tire very quickly. They tend to chop and lead with their head as the race comes to a finish."

There is also the crucial question of balance, since a kayak is easy to capsize. A skilled competitor rolls back to the surface by levering with his paddle on top of the water.

The glide of the boat is controlled by the paddler's stroke and power from the legs inside the boat.

Recreational canoes bear little resemblance to competitive canoes, which are lighter and less durable. Paddlers race in a kneeling position, using a straight blade fiberglass oar with a hollow handle.

The paddler pulls water only on one side of the boat as opposed to both sides in a kayak. Direction is controlled by a rudder and the stroke motion, called a J-stroke.

"Almost every stroke is designed to keep the boat in line," says Homer-Dixon.

Balance comes mainly from the front leg, which is bent at a right angle to the boat bottom. Many paddlers tie both feet to the bottom of the canoe.

Races in competition are run over courses of 250, 500, 1,000, 5,000 and 10,000 metres.

