

6th Annual Cold Hands Paddle Recap
In Memory of Stephen Dempsey

Cabrillo Beach
San Pedro, CA

Dempsey wouldn't have wanted us to make such a big fuss about it, but this year's Cold Hands Paddle was special. Stephen Dempsey was a local South Bay native and glassed surfboards & paddleboards for many years before he recently passed. On Sunday, March 1, 2009 family and friends gathered, along with more than 120 paddlers who "paddled out" at Cabrillo Beach for the start of the 2009 Cold Hands Paddleboard Race.

Just before the start, in the middle of the circle formed by the paddlers about 200 yards from shore, Mike Baker, long time friend of Dempsey, called him the "watermen's waterman". As Baker and Nick left their Orchid lei's in the middle of the circle, we just knew "Demps" was looking down, smiling upon us all.

One could not have asked for better weather at the start of the race. Air temp in the 70's, water temp in the mid 50's, little to no wind, partly cloudy skies, no swell, no bump...it was flat and fast. The race drew people from all over California and even a few from Hawaii, once again in record numbers. Volunteers opened registration just before 7 o'clock and the race was the perfect price...free! ...thanks to continued support from sponsors and volunteers.

There was a great atmosphere of families and friends, with veteran paddlers, beginner paddlers, children paddlers, stand-up paddlers, kayaks, a Dory, and also an outrigger canoe.

At about 8:30am, immediately off the start, the unlimited's and stand-ups were out in front. Jared Vargus (SUP) and Eric Abbott (Unlim) were fighting it out for the lead. As they rounded the Los Angeles Lighthouse, not far behind were George Loren, Gary Fortune, Ben Vail, Mark Shulein, Brad Thomas, and several others. A pod of about 8 to 10 dolphins could be seen swimming through the pack and the rest of the paddlers on their way to the finish, as this is a rare sight to see dolphins this far into the harbor.

At the end, Jared Vargus prevailed as overall winner, with a new course record of 34'30". Eric Abbott, the 2008 Cold Hands Paddle winner finished in a close second at 34'38". Shane Scoggins finished first place in men's stock class at 38'24". We did not figure out until later Sunday evening a mystery paddler on our results sheet was Gary Fortune (a previous Cold Hands Paddle winner) who came in 3rd overall with a time of 35'36" (Sorry about that Gary). He had entered the race at last moment from Baywatch. Aaron Maes finished 1st in the Fourteen Division at 45'15".

In the women's divisions: Cori Raffaelli (Stock) finished strong in first place overall 39'56"; Jodie Nelson 47'38" 1st Place Women's SUP; Christina Powers 47'45" 1st Place Women's Unlimited; and Leah Bebee finished 1st Place in the women's Fourteen Division at 48'50". It was great to see the increased participation of female competitors, compared to years past, giving the men a run for their money. It was also awesome to see the high turnout of Stand Up paddlers to make this years race more challenging and diverse.

Immediately following the race, Joe Bark and Charlie held a demo for all to try different boards. Also, paddlers and their families were treated to breakfast burritos complements 710 Grill in San Pedro. Mark and Amy from O2H were also on hand with a booth set up for the Ocean of Hope Campaign to help raise awareness and funds for those affected by cancer. We ended the day with a large raffle from all our great sponsors and awards made by co-founder Jason Welke.

It was a great day for a paddle and the goal is to continue make this a fun and friendly paddle event for beginners and advance competitors alike. Thank you to all who came out and we look forward to next year.

Special thanks to all of our sponsor for their continued support:

Frank Bird at Akolu

Joe Bark

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San Pedro Brewing Company – *thanks for the after party refreshments and all the great schwag for the raffle*

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