

olympic whitewater venues

learning for london 2012

By: Whitewater Parks International

What makes an Olympic whitewater venue successful? If you ask the world's leading Slalom athletes and coaches you'll hear a variety of opinions, but also discover some common themes: continuous whitewater, distinct features, consistency, evenness, and suitability for training are several of these thematic characteristics for which there is wide-ranging consensus.

Advice from the best

Recently research has been conducted involving surveys and interviews among the ICF Canoe Slalom community regarding the most critical considerations in planning an ideal slalom course for the 2012 Slalom Olympic venue. In addition to ensuring appropriate technical requirements are met, the ICF and its member federations also have a vested interest in promoting Olympic Canoe Slalom courses that highlight challenging whitewater with fair and predictable features, enough in-channel space to accommodate numerous boats, multiple access points, ample water depth, effective warm up/down areas, spectator areas situated close to the action, aesthetically pleasing surroundings, and well-designed support facilities, including a separate low-cost training channel.

Considerations for legacy were also identified in the surveys as critical to a Slalom venue's long-term success. A facility should be able to maximise capacity after Olympic

competition has been completed and serve as large a number of constituencies as possible. Commercial rafting, organised Slalom training, canoe freestyle, general instruction, recreational paddling, youth development programs, corporate group functions, and professional service training are all high on the list of ongoing post-Games activities that are needed to sustain these purpose-built facilities over the long haul.

Various companies, organisations, the London Organising Committee (LOCOG), Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA), and the ICF have worked together to incorporate the value of these observations and concepts, gleaned from experience, into a design that will serve the objectives of the Olympic Games, giving the venue owners, the host community, and the future of paddle sports a truly lasting canoeing legacy.

The Broxbourne Whitewater Canoe Centre (BWWCC) will be built in Hertfordshire, UK inside the River Lee Country Park and will be owned and managed by the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, which means ideal access to a large population area of London. The venue will be approximately 30km from the Olympic Village and able to be accessed by

convenient transportation links. The facility is due to be completed for Olympic Games training and testing by 2010-2011.

The Olympic course, as well as having a completely separate training course, will have water pumped around the course supplied from an 11,500m³ self-contained lake. The 300m long Olympic channel will be capable of flows up to 15m³/sec with up to 5.5 metre of drop from start to finish. The 160 metre long training channel will flow up to 10m³/second with up to 2.1 metre of drop. This two-channel configuration represents a new innovation in Olympic venue design, as the two courses can be operated independently, each serviced by its own boat conveyor belt. Support facilities include a building that will house a café, changing rooms, offices, storage space, and a spectator viewing area will be a legacy to the venue.

Beyond its Olympic destiny, the BWWCC is poised to become a catalyst for regenerating the Waltham Cross area where it resides, providing a valuable Legacy as a major visitor destination for canoeing and whitewater rafting, as well as a venue utilised and enjoyed by the local community. Fundamentally, it will be the venue for the amazing Canoe Slalom competition during the Olympic Games 2012.

Whitewater Parks International provides professional services for developing and operating state-of-the-art whitewater sport facilities. www.whitewaterparks.com