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Water
Environment
Federation

LA team
cinches
sixth victory

Wreck ON!

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OPERATIONS FORUM

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Division II Champions Mud Slingers
(l-r) Brian Bellefeuille, Carol Weir,
David Freitas, Patrick Virgin



Division I Champions LA Wrecking Crew
(l-r) Paul Johnson, Clarence Scherich,
Bill Shuck, Steve Johnson

NORTH AMERICAN KNOW HOW

Courage and cunning triumph at
Operations Challenge 2001
Steve Harrison



As the nation was encouraged to go back to work after the events of September 11th, it was business as usual for the California Water Environment Association's (WEA's) LA Wrecking Crew. The team won their third Operations Challenge competition in 5 years at WEFTEC 2001, held October 15 and 16 at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta, Georgia. In the event's closest finish ever, the

Wrecking Crew narrowly edged out the Virginia WEA's Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) Bio-Force and the WEA of Texas' Trinity River Authority (TRA) CREWSers. Only eight points separated the three teams.

Thirty-nine teams from 23 Member Associations in North America competed in the 14th annual competition. Separated into two divisions, the teams

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District
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OSCAR B. ASSOCIATES

Duplicity's Paul Cubilla (left) and Donnie Cagle repair a metering pump in the debut of the two-person competition.

competed head to head in five events: Collection Systems, Laboratory, Maintenance, Process Control, and Safety. The Wrecking Crew placed in the top three of all five events.

A consistent performance also produced a Division II title for California's Municipal Utility District (MUD) Slingers, who finished in the top five in each event. Their second place plaque in the Process

Control event offered the team no hint of their overall victory. The MUD Slingers knew from competing the previous year that they didn't need any first place trophies to win, but team captain Carol Weir nonetheless described the team as "floored by [their] victory. I'm still shocked." Among the benefits of the program Weir enjoys "being able to try a different range of skills than my subject area."

Weir and teammates Brian Bellefeuille, David Freitas, and Patrick Virgin are employed by the East Bay MUD in Oakland, California. The team is coached by James Rockafellow, a member of the first team to win the Operations Challenge in 1988. Their victory automatically sends the MUD Slingers to Division I next year.

Return from Retirement

The Wrecking Crew's Paul Johnson, team captain Steve Johnson, and Bill Shuck are employed by Los Angeles County's Sanitation District at the Joint Water Pollution Control Plant in Carson, California. Teammate Clarence Scherich works at the District's Valencia Water Plant. After last year's victory in nearby Anaheim, former team captain Shuck left the team. While remaining trophy coordinator of the Challenge, Shuck thought competing in the event was behind him until replacement Scott Partridge was injured shortly before the conference. Shuck was "happy in retirement" and apprehensive about the lack of time to prepare for the event.

Top Ten Teams Overall

Division I	Member Associations	Points
LA Wrecking Crew	California	456.46
HRSD Bio-Force	Virginia	448.74
TRA CREWSers	Texas	448.69
Commode Commandos	Rocky Mountain	404.52
Flush in the Pan	Ontario	352.08
Highlanders	Ontario	345.39
Sewer Marines	New England	341.03
River Rangers	Pacific Northwest	285.69
Sacramento Wastewater Warriors	California	281.22
Pump Fiction	New England	276.77
Division II	Member Associations	Points
MUD Slingers	California	456.79
Totally Chaotic	Nevada	446.13
Blue Plains Specials	Chesapeake	427.54
Crustaceans	New England	425.02
Nitrobacters	Ohio	417.42
Nerk's Clearwater Revival	Ohio	400.13
HRWTF Wildcards	Virginia	396.14
Sludge Surfers	New York	394.99
True Grit	Arkansas	375.37
Evesham Environmentalists	New Jersey	372.19

Collections Crisis

But for a blown gasket in the collections event, the trophy may very well have gone to Texas. The TRA CreWSers completed the event in 1:43, but during installation of the saddle John Bennett rolled the gasket over on itself. When the repair was pressure

tested the gasket failed, likely washing away their hopes of a national championship.

Despite their disappointment, Captain John Bennett described this year's event as "probably the most fun yet. We're starting to relax," feeling equal to the other elite teams. Also, having put a lot of effort

Collections Event

Division I	Member Associations	Times	Points
HRSD Bio-Force	Virginia	95.94	100.00
LA Wrecking Crew	California	106.66	94.17
Flush in the Pan	Ontario	120.50	86.64
Highlanders	Ontario	130.13	81.40
Cowtown Hustlers	Texas	132.73	79.98

Division II	Member Associations	Times	Points
Totally Chaotic	Nevada	115.79	100.00
Blue Plains Specials	Chesapeake	119.50	99.07
Evesham Environmentalists	New Jersey	156.28	89.87
MUD Slingers	California	157.41	89.58
Ocean City Tiderunners	Chesapeake	164.75	87.75

ITT-Flygt Maintenance Event

Division I	Member Associations	Times	Points
TRA CreWSers	Texas	465.06	100.00
HRSD Bio-Force	Virginia	504.06	93.78
LA Wrecking Crew	California	539.09	88.19
Cowtown Hustlers	Texas	610.62	76.78
Commode Commandos	Rocky Mountain	621.08	75.11

Division II	Member Associations	Times	Points
Totally Chaotic	Nevada	665.91	100.00
Royal Flush	Florida	709.53	97.04
Crustaceans	New England	733.97	95.38
Sludge Surfers	New York	761.99	93.48
MUD Slingers	California	774.12	92.66

Laboratory Event

Division I	Member Associations	Times	Points
TRA CreWSers	Texas	943.35	100.00
Commode Commandos	Rocky Mountain	1132.67	85.41
LA Wrecking Crew	California	1207.13	79.67
HRSD Bio-Force	Virginia	1384.69	65.98
Highlanders	Ontario	1397.26	65.01

Division II	Member Associations	Times	Points
Nitrobacters	Ohio	1315.79	100.00
True Grit	Arkansas	1481.96	90.27
Crustaceans	New England	1493.95	89.56
MUD Slingers	California	1561.71	85.59
Evesham Environmentalists	New Jersey	1604.10	83.11



Tony Miley of Ohio's Nitrobacters prepares a Normal solution in the Laboratory event.

into preparing for it, he was "exceptionally pleased with [their] second place finish in the Process event," regarding it as "quite an honor." After five second

place finishes, the team also took pride in their victory in the ITT-Flygt-sponsored Maintenance event.

Close Competition

Bennett was among many who described this year's competition as fierce. Bio-Force captain Wesley Warren said, "the whole day ran well," but called it nerve wracking, and "expect[s] it will be even tougher next year." The absence of a few minor gaffes also could have resulted in a top prize for the Bio-Force, but they have accepted the results and are looking ahead to next year.

As close as the finish was, it would likely have been closer still had the Connoisseurs been competing. The Connoisseurs, from Arkansas' WEA, had placed in the top three of Division I for the previous 5 years. Instead, former members

Ronnie Horton and Eric Wassell were judges in this year's Safety Event. Wassell feels that competing in the event prepared him very well for judging,

Safety Event

Division I	Member Associations	Times	Points
LA Wrecking Crew	California	357.00	100.00
Flush in the Pan	Ontario	366.85	97.95
Highlanders	Ontario	403.59	90.30
HRSD Bio-Force	Virginia	409.93	88.98
TRA CREWSers	Texas	414.85	87.95

Division II	Member Associations	Times	Points
Blue Plains Specials	Chesapeake	437.16	100.00
Nerk's Clearwater Revival	Ohio	514.15	94.88
Totally Chaotic	Nevada	534.34	93.54
Royal Flush	Florida	558.53	91.93
MUD Slingers	California	582.18	90.36

Process Control

Division I	Member Associations	Times	Points
HRSD Bio-Force	Virginia	1830.66	100.00
TRA CREWSers	Texas	1899.62	97.23
LA Wrecking Crew	California	1969.59	94.43
Sewer Marines	New England	2023.25	92.28
Commode Commandos	Rocky Mountain	2052.75	91.09

Division II	Member Associations	Times	Points
HRWTF Wildcards	Virginia	1826.51	100.00
MUD Slingers	California	1887.35	98.60
True Grit	Arkansas	2000.00	95.99
SWAT Team	Michigan	2224.34	90.82
Nitrobacters	Ohio	2325.00	88.49



Pennsylvania's Precision Express complete repair of an in-service section of PVC pipe in the Collections event.

and "enjoyed all the camaraderie without all the pressure." Fayetteville's True Grit replaced the Connoisseurs as Arkansas' representative. Their distinguished debut in Division II included a second place finish in the Laboratory event and a third place finish in the Process Control event. Team Captain Bruce Richart described participating as "a great experience," and "would recommend it to anyone. The value for the time spent training is returned many fold."

Richart attributes their performance in part to competing in the Rocky Mountain Invitational shortly before WEFTEC. This "regional" competition began in 1998 in Arkansas as an opportunity for teams in the southern United States to prepare for the national event. The Rocky Mountain WEA and the

Littleton/Englewood Wastewater Treatment Plant hosted this year's event in September in Englewood, Colorado. It was attended by teams from Arkansas, California, Colorado, Missouri, Nevada, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia. The regional was to include the debut of the two-man competition, but September's events prevented the teams from traveling. The competition was created to encourage participation by employees of smaller facilities, and is limited to teams from plants of less than 10 mgd (38 750 m³/d) and fewer than 20 employees. The teams were, however, able to travel to WEFTEC and were then included in the day's competition. Operations Challenge II was won by the City of Franklin, Virginia's Duplicity. Duplicity's Donnie Cagle, a member of four person champions from nearby Hampton Roads in 1996 and 1998, said, "It was an exciting opportunity to pioneer a new event." Depending on the response to Operations Challenge II, it may be featured at WEFTEC 2003 in Los Angeles. The City of Henderson and the Nevada WEA intend to host a preparatory event in September of 2002.

Steve Harrison is a project manager and the Operations Challenge coordinator for the Water

The trophies for each event were contributed by the following individuals:

Collections

John Hart
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Biddeford, Maine

Laboratory

Tony Vigil
City of Greeley, Colo.

ITT-Flygt Maintenance Event

John Hart
OMI Inc.
Biddeford, Maine

Process Control

Bill Shuck
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Safety

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