

Water Environment Federation



CREWSERS IN CONTROL

TEXANS TAKE 2005 OPERATIONS CHALLENGE

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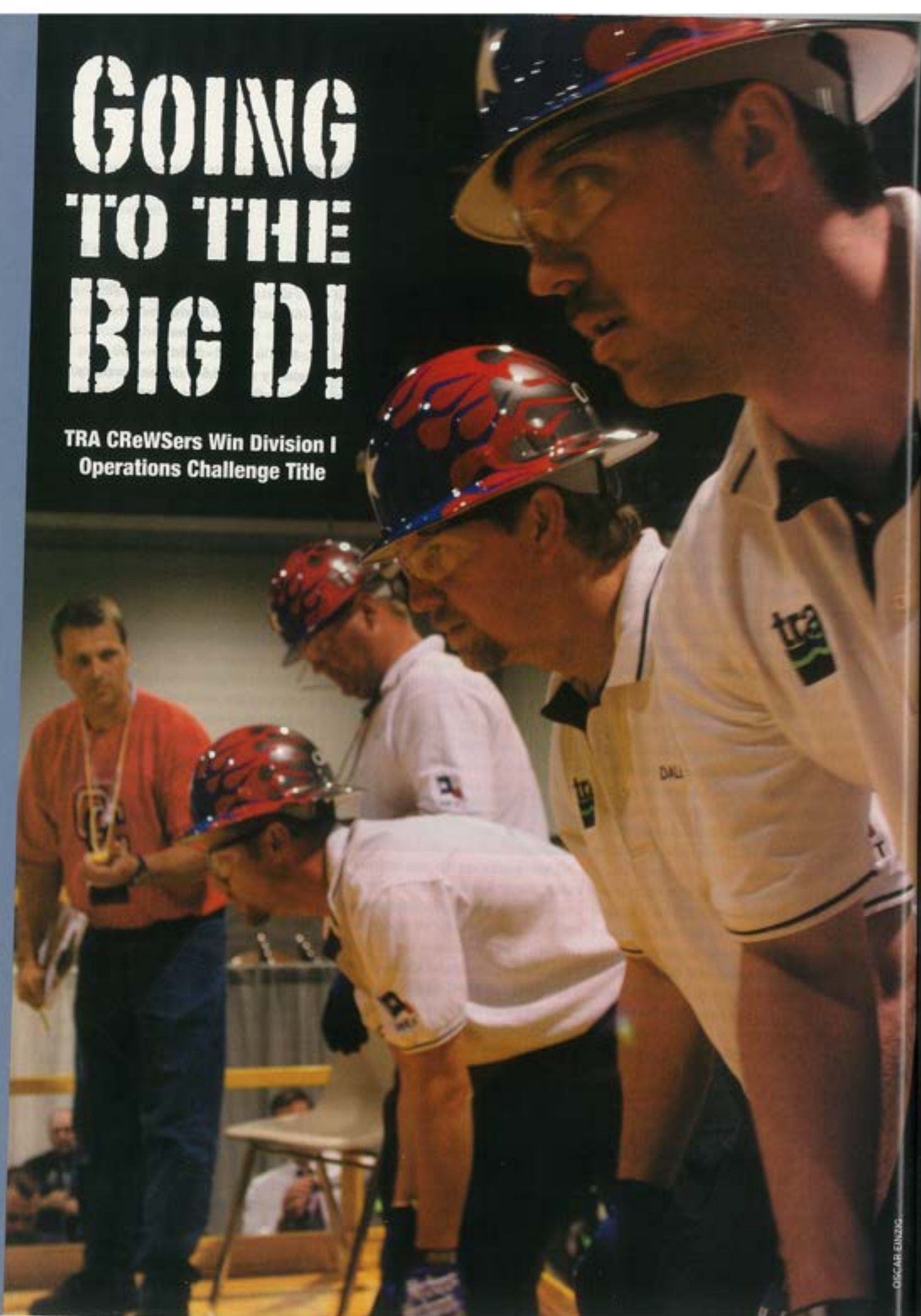
OPERATIONS

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A SPECIAL SECTION
FOR OPERATORS

GOING TO THE BIG D!

TRA CReWSers Win Division I
Operations Challenge Title



As the saying goes, everything is bigger in Texas. The Division I TRA CREWSers of the Water Environment Association of Texas proved that at this year's 18th Annual Operations Challenge by not only winning the Division I competition, but also racking up an impressive 57-point lead.

"We had no idea that we would be that far apart as far as points go," said CREWSers captain Dale Burrow. "This is the first win in Division I for a Texas team, and so we were real proud of that."

The CREWSers are only the second team from outside California or Virginia to win Division I since the competition's inception in 1988. The team — made up this year of Burrow, Jacob Burwell, Steve Price, Troy Pratt, and David Brown — has been a runner-up in Division I at the national competition for 7 years, he

said. The team has earned second place twice, third place four times, and one fifth-place finish.

"We've been right there for so many years," he said. "I think that's one of the biggest hurdles that we feel like we got over — we finally won first place."

But this year, just after finishing the final competition of the day, the team was unsure of its chances of winning, Burrow said.

"It's always been one event that has ... put us out of first place," Burrow said. "We had a major penalty [on the safety event] that was two minutes long, and I was sure that had knocked us out yet another year."

The CREWSers team changed its tactics this year, Burrow said. "In the past, we've always come in and tried to run the fastest time in the event," he said. "This year we decided we would go in with a little

Final Overall Standings

Division I	Member Association	Points
1. TRA CREWSers	Texas	446.00
2. Fluid Dynamics	Virginia	388.49
3. HRSD Bio-Force	Virginia	368.48
4. Commode Commandos	Rocky Mountain	357.84
5. Cape Shore Workers	New Jersey	353.81
6. Seacoast Sewer Snakes	New England	344.13
7. River Rangers	Pacific Northwest	294.84
8. LA Wrecking Crew	California	253.72
Division II	Member Association	Points
1. s.C.R.A.P.P.E.R.S.	Ohio	463.52
2. HRSD Extractors	Virginia	457.64
3. SRCSD Interceptors	California	435.57
4. Sludge Hammers	Ontario	431.55
5. Force Main	New England	419.74
6. Canadian Cross Connection	British Columbia	418.30
7. Reno/Sparks Rattlers	Nevada	410.90
8. Brown Tide	New York	404.68
9. Caustic Solution	New England	401.12
10. Aqua Techs	Texas	400.19
11. Anaerobic Aces	Virginia	399.43
12. VA Beach Collectors	Virginia	387.79
13. Midland Microbes	Michigan	381.77
14. Orange Crush	Florida	380.48
15. Allen County Incinerators	Ohio	369.33
16. Bowery Bay Boys	New York	359.22
17. Shovelers	Central States	358.65
18. DELCORA Loo-Natics	Pennsylvania	357.93
19. Centrifugal Force	Chesapeake	354.60
20. OCWA Force	Ontario	351.79
21. Dillo XXpress	Texas	349.96
22. Mountain Currents	West Virginia	345.29
23. Dung Beetles	Ontario	341.66
24. Virtual Velocity	South Carolina	340.96
25. Wasatch Allstars	Wisconsin	338.96
26. Aurora's Ascending Aerobes	Rocky Mountain	338.14
27. LRWU Connection	Arkansas	334.86
28. Pumpers	Central States	311.03
29. Maui Bad Boys	Hawaii	294.98
30. Capital Flow	Chesapeake	276.48
31. Zoogical Mass	Indiana	171.93



In the safety event, Keith Williams and Winston Delozier of Chesapeake WEA's Centrifugal Force perform a rescue. The LA Wrecking Crew from the California WEA won in Division I and the WEA of Texas Aqua Techs won in Division II in this event.

bit more relaxed attitude." The goal this year was to go penalty-free.

To get ready for the competition, the CREWSers dedicated 3 half-days per week for six weeks to practice; and the week before the competition, they spent half of each day practicing, Burrow said.

Even at the awards ceremony, Burrow said he was sweating bullets, thinking that the team had not won. "Until they called out those names at the

awards ceremony, we had no idea what was going to fall," he said.

While their penalty knocked the CREWSers to fifth place in the safety event, they finished the day with a final score of 446 points, outpacing their closest competitor by 57 points. "Fortunately, we had done so well in the other four events that we were able to place pretty low in [the safety event] and still come out ahead," Burrow said.

At the awards ceremony, the second- and third-place Division I teams were announced — Fluid Dynamics and HRSD Bio-Force, respectively — and Larry Knight, chair of the Operations Challenge Committee was stalling to announce the first-place winner, Burrow said.

"We had a lot of teams out in the audience yelling out 'Texas' and 'CREWSers.' I'll tell you that was the one thing that moved the team the most," Burrow said. "The fact that all these other teams knew it had taken so long for us to get there and they were really rooting for us, it was pretty moving."

Fluid Dynamics was the first team to sprint across the room and congratulate the CREWSers, he said. "I think there's so much respect among all the teams," Burrow said. "We all know how hard it is to get there and how much practice is involved."

Burrow said the team is excited about defending its title in its home state of Texas at WEFTEC.06 in Dallas. The entire team will be back to compete next year, he said. He added that he's excited that Texas is able to send four teams to the national competition next year.

"We're definitely going to train hard for it and give it our best shot," Burrow said.

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s.C.R.A.P.P.E.R.S. Overcome Penalties To Win Division II

Even winners get nervous.

Jim Borton, team captain of the Ohio Water Environment Association s.C.R.A.P.P.E.R.S., who won Division II in the 18th Annual Operation Challenge, said that joking around between events is the best way to deal with the stress of the competition.

"The only way I was going to survive was to crack jokes with people," Borton said. "I had breakfast, but after that I couldn't eat the rest of the day because I was so charged up," Borton said. "About the only thing you could do was joke with each other to break the tension."

That tension lasted all the way through the awards ceremony. The team, which includes Borton, Michael Sigg, Larry Rouhler, Kevin Givens, and Bob King, got nervous as other teams won awards for individual events.

How did they feel when the s.C.R.A.P.P.E.R.S. were announced as the Division II winners?

"We were surprised, shocked, and then it starts to set in — and it feels pretty good," Borton said.

"As a team, we were kind of surprised that we were able to hang on," he said. "We didn't feel we'd done as well as we should have in couple of events." The team accumulated substantial penalties in the safety event, he said, but Borton said that he thought the team had done well in process control and had the best time in the collections event all day. The unknowns for the s.C.R.A.P.P.E.R.S. were the Godwin pump maintenance and laboratory events.

"We knew if we were going to win, this is the time. We had to do it because we did well at the regional [competition] in New Jersey ... [we] felt that if we cleaned up the mistakes we made there, we had a good shot."

The s.C.R.A.P.P.E.R.S. trained at least 40 hours



The s.C.R.A.P.P.E.R.S. from the Ohio Water Environment Association, overall Division II winners, also took home the first place trophy for the collections systems event. Here Rocky Mountain Commode Commando Craig Pritekel prepares a replacement section in the collections event.

for the competition, Borton said.

So are they looking forward to competing in Division I next year?

Yes and no, Borton said. "We're looking forward to coming back; we always have fun doing it," he said, but "I've sat down and looked at our times compared to the Division I times this year, and we have a lot of work to do."

Operations Challenge Attracts New Teams, Old Friends

The Division II team Mountain Currents entered the record books as the first-ever Operations

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Maintenance Ginny Farmer
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Process Control Mike Ross
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Safety Richard Leger
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Scoring David Vogel
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Richmond, Virginia

Challenge team from the West Virginia Water Environment Association (WEA). Team member Carl Curry said he wasn't sure why West Virginia hadn't sent teams to the competition in the past, but he hopes that they continue in the future. "This is great, and it's something I love doing," he said.

The team, which includes Curry, David Gray, Marcus Mercer, Michael Ferrell, and team captain Mark Whittington, formed specifically to compete at WEFTEC.05® since West Virginia does not have a state competition.

The team was most confident in the laboratory event, Curry said. He added that the safety event was the most nerve-racking for Mountain Currents because they did not have access to the specific safety equipment used in the event.

For the Godwin pump maintenance event, however, team members worked with their local Godwin dealer, Rick Reynolds, to practice on the Godwin Dri-Prime-model CD100M pump used in the event.

While this was the first Operations Challenge from the WVWEA team, it was the 18th for Jim Miller from the Central States WEA Pumpers. Miller has participated in every Operations Challenge, as a competitor or a coach, since the competition began in 1988. He said that the great friendships he's formed keep him coming back.

The competition has changed over the years, he said. "At the first one, our [CSWEA] team met on the steps of the Dallas convention center." Now all of the competitors, past and present, are great friends and look forward to reuniting each year.

CSWEA has a unique way of choosing members for its two teams, the Pumpers and Shovelers. Four team members are determined by the operations awards from each state member association — Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin — as well as the



OSCAR EINZIG

New this year, the Godwin pump maintenance event was received well by the teams, including the first time competitors Mountain Currents from the West Virginia WEA, Brian McDaniel pictured. Virginia WEA teams took first place in both Division I (Fluid Dynamics) and II (the Virginia Beach Collectors) in the Godwin pump maintenance event.

collection system award given by CSWEA itself. That means the team members are often spread several hundred miles apart and may not even know each other. This year, for example, the Pumpers met only three times at the Madison (Wisc.) Metropolitan Sewerage District plant to practice, Miller said.

The teams usually have one or two returning team members who join a new crew, Miller said.

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



Collections Event
John Hart
City of Saco, Maine



Godwin Maintenance Event
Bryan Gassler
Godwin Pumps
Bridgeport, New Jersey



Laboratory Event
Stacie Metzler
Hampton Roads
Sanitation Districts
Virginia Beach, Virginia



Process Control Event
Susan Hier
Texas Commission on
Environmental Quality
Austin, Texas



Safety
John Reardon
Cape May County Municipal
Utilities Authority
Cape May Court House,
New Jersey

"We've thought of having one super team from one plant, but we like giving everyone a chance and it avoids friction among the states," Miller said.

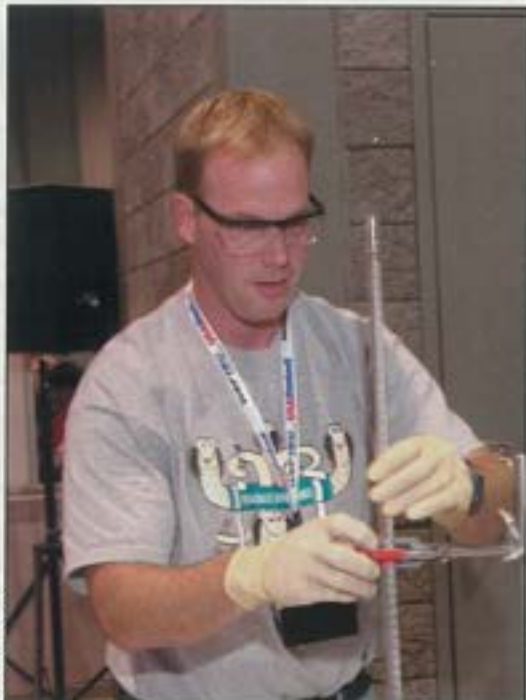
He added that his role as coach is a little different. "I have been told that I'm coach until I die," Miller joked.

Fla. Team Responds to Real-Life 'Challenge,' Forgoes Competition

While 39 teams battled to see who would take home the trophies at the 18th annual Operations Challenge, the Ft. Lauderdale Knights were fighting to restore drinking and wastewater service to their customers in the wake of Hurricane Wilma.

The Division II Knights were scheduled to compete in the Challenge, but the hurricane forced a change in their plans, according to team captain John McGeary. The team includes Ft. Lauderdale's chief operator (McGeary), a distribution and collections chief (Keith Hutchinson), a regional operator (Scott Hull), a laboratory supervisor (James Crawford), and a utilities mechanic (Carlton Grate). That mix, which makes the Knights a strong team, also made them indispensable to the city as it recovered.

"We didn't have potable water to any customers



OSCAR EINZIG

for 2 days and we had no power," McGeary said. In fact, the first day that everything was up and running was Nov. 3, he said.

In the laboratory event, teams had to complete a worksheet in sample preservation and holding times, perform a total residual chlorine sample analysis, prepare a standard solution and conduct an acid-based titration, and determine and report the number of fecal coliform colonies present on membrane filter plates. Sean Greig of the Division I New England WEA Seacoast Sewer Snakes performs a titration.

"This competition is great fun, but responding to an emergency is what is really important," said John Haak, captain of the Florida Water Environment Association Orange Crush. Haak said that he was disappointed that the Knights weren't able to attend. After Hurricane Katrina, Orange Crush team members lost a few weeks of practice time because of their response efforts in Harrison County, Miss., Haak said.

McGeary said that had Wilma been a few days earlier, the team might have been able to attend and compete. "We missed the camaraderie," he said. "We had practiced really hard this year and were really planning to make a good showing."

The team was energized after placing in some events in the New Jersey WEA Operations Challenge Invitational, McGeary said. The team took third in the process control event and second in the safety event. "We were getting better; we were getting good; [we thought] this was our year," he said.

McGeary added that he hopes the team can earn a first or second place finish in the Florida WEA competition next year to have another shot at the national competition at WEFTEC.06® in Dallas.



OSCAR EINZIG

Both the Division I TRA CREWSers and Division II S.C.R.A.P.P.E.R.S. (pictured in the foreground) felt their times in the safety event had knocked them out of the competition. But fantastic performances in the other events led them to claim first place wins in the overall competition.