

Water Environment Federation

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Take Two!

Second Ops Challenge Win for TRA CREWSers

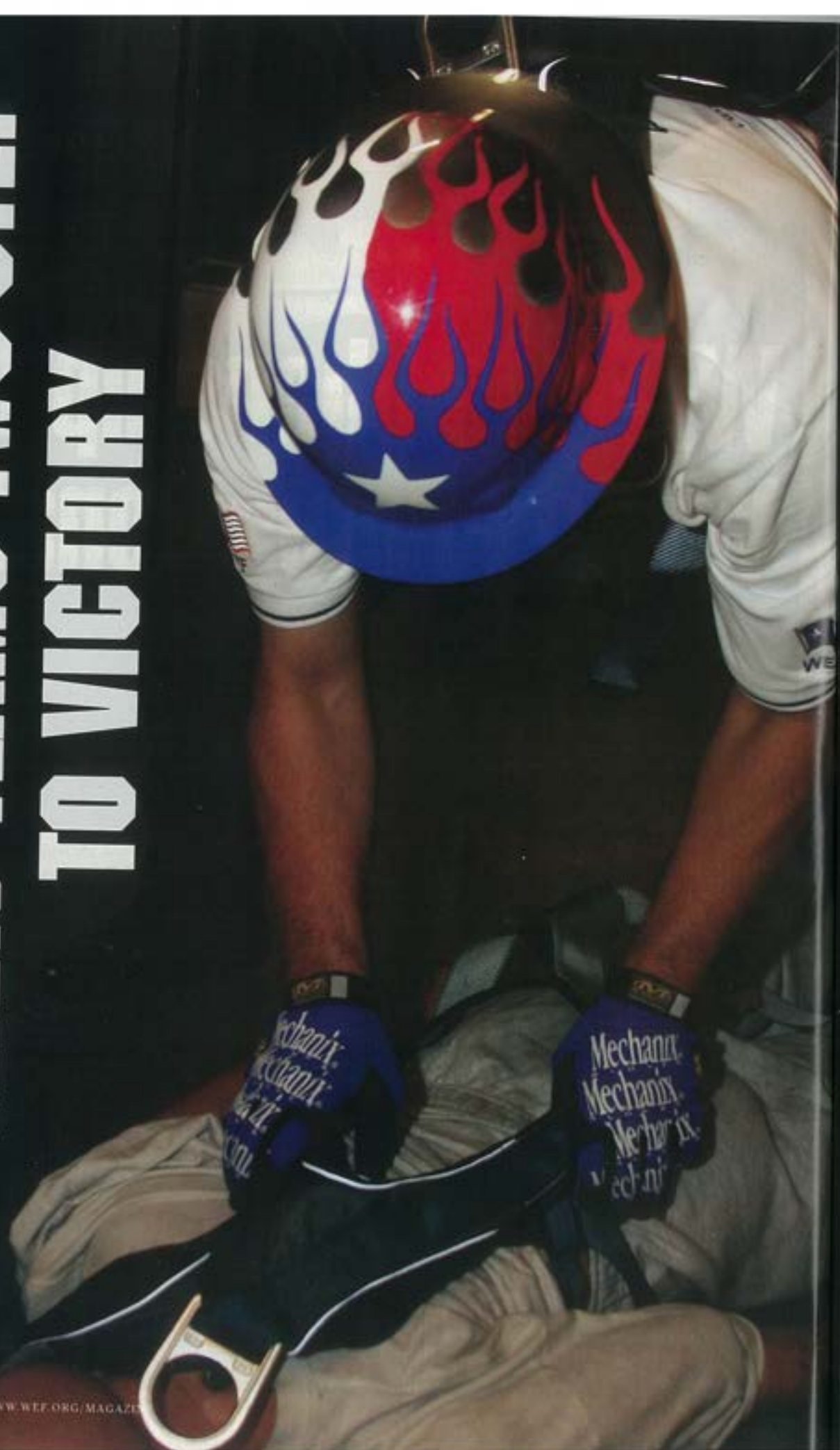
Texans Triumph in Divisions I & II

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**OPERATIONS
FORUM** Page 67

TEXAS TEAMS TWO-STEP TO VICTORY



Texas ruled the competition at the 19th Annual Operations Challenge at WEFTEC® 06 in Dallas. The TRA CREWSers from the Trinity River Authority in Arlington, Texas — last year's Division I champions — successfully defended their home turf for another first-place finish. In Division II, the top two spots went to Texas teams; the San Antonio Power SAWS and the Dallas Aqua Techs, earning first and second place, respectively.

From the start, the TRA CREWSers were prepared to win.

"We feel pretty confident," said CREWSers captain Dale Burrow as the team was about to begin its first competition of the day, the safety event. The CREWSers took first place in that event.

In fact, the CREWSers dominated throughout the day. The team also earned first place in the Godwin Pump Maintenance Event, took second in laboratory and collections, and finished seventh in process control. The TRA CREWSers are Burrow, coach Troy Pratt, Steve Price, David Brown, and Jake Burwell.

Division 1	Member Association	Points
1. TRA CREWSers	Texas	421.77
2. Team HRSD	Virginia	379.00
3. Commode Commandos	Rocky Mountain	366.32
4. s.C.R.A.P.P.E.Rs	Ohio	333.64
5. L.A. Wrecking Crew	California	297.09
6. Cape Shore Workers	New Jersey	289.24
7. Seacoast Sewer Snakes	New England	280.81
8. SRCSD Interceptors	California	276.04

Division 2	Member Association	Points
1. Power SAWS	Texas	457.90
2. Aqua Techs	Texas	450.29
3. Spotsylvania Synergy	Virginia	442.73
4. Orange Crush	Florida	428.14
5. Brown Tide	New York	419.09
6. Aurora's Ascending Aerobes	Rocky Mountain	417.59
7. Wasatch All Stars	Utah	408.86
8. River Rangers	Pacific Northwest	401.90
9. Sludge Hammers	Ontario	400.68
10. DELCORA Loo-Natics	Pennsylvania	400.38
11. Dung Beetles	Ontario	394.95
12. Reno/Sparks Rattlers	Nevada	393.34
13. Lauderdale Knights	Florida	384.89
14. Force Maine	New England	382.73
15. Sludge Cats	North Carolina	376.39

To receive a complete copy of the results, send a request to Steve Harrison at sharrison@wef.org.

▶ The TRA CREWSers from the Water Environment Association of Texas successfully defended their Division I title in at WEFTEC® 06 in Dallas. The CREWSers also took first place in the Safety Event, pictured here.



During their first trip to Operations Challenge at WEFTEC, the San Antonio Power SAsWS from the Water Environment Association of Texas claimed first place in Division II. The team includes Andrew McBride, Gilberto Aguilar, Carl Kruger, Roland Gutierrez, and coach Fred Winter.

Team HRSD, from the Virginia Water Environment Association (WEA) won second place in Division I. The Commode Commandos from the Rocky Mountain WEA placed third.

Clean Training

With the home team advantage, the CReWSers were able to practice right up until the event without worrying about travel. Throughout August, the team scheduled 2-hour practice sessions 3 days per week, Burrow said. The week before the competition was dedicated solely to training and practice.

In the past two competitions, the CReWSers have changed their strategy from running as fast as possible to running with as few penalties as possible.

"This year we're going to go in, just like we did last year, and just try to relax and try to make as clean of a run as we can," Burrow said. He explained

that running too fast leads to penalties that eat away at the team during the event, which can lead to more penalties and slower times.

First Timers

To win the Division II title, the first time competitors, the San Antonio Power SAsWS emulated the CReWSers' penalty-free strategy.

"A clean run that's a little bit slower is better than a fast run with a lot of problems," said team captain Andrew McBride. "With repetition is going to come speed, but if you're full of errors, then you're just going to have problems."

The SAsWS won a first- and third-place finish as well as three sixth-place finishes to reel in the competition overall. "You don't have to win first in everything, but you have to be really consistent," McBride said.

"We're exceptionally pleased [about winning] with this being our first year at nationals," said McBride. The Power SAsWS are McBride, Gilberto Aguilar, Carl Krueger, Roland Gutierrez, and coach Fred Winter.

The national competition was only the second time these four team members have competed together, he said. The team itself was formed just 3 years ago.

"We had a new member come in right before the state competition, right at the beginning of the year," McBride said. "He's really been able to step up and move into the position and fulfill the roles that we needed."

Process Control Event

Event Coordinator: Mike Ross, OMI Inc. (Fayetteville, Ark.)

Division I Winners

1. Seacoast Sewer Snakes – New England WEA
2. s.C.R.A.P.P.E.R.s – Ohio WEA
3. Commode Commandos – Rocky Mountain WEA

Division II Winners

1. Force Maine – New England WEA
2. River Rangers – Pacific Northwest Clean Water Association
3. Aurora's Ascending Aerobes – Rocky Mountain WEA

Trophy contributed by Susan Heir, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Austin, Texas



Collection Systems Event

Event Coordinator: John Trefatter, Accusonic Technologies (West Wareham, Mass.)

Division I Winners

1. L.A. Wrecking Crew – California WEA
2. TRA CReWSers – WEA of Texas
3. s.C.R.A.P.P.E.R.s – Ohio WEA

Division II Winners

1. Dillo XXpress – WEA of Texas
2. Aqua Techs – WEA of Texas
3. Sludge Hammers – WEA of Ontario

Trophy contributed by Joseph Kruzel, Springfield Water and Sewer, Springfield, Mass.



As for training, the team actually did not spend a great number of man-hours practicing together, McBride said. Each of the members studied and prepared on his own until the month before the competition. "In the last month or so, we were able to pick it up and really hit it hard," he said.

McBride added that the San Antonio management and coworkers have been very supportive of the SAWS team. "If you don't have the equipment to practice on and you don't have the time to practice, you're not going to be successful," he said.

The Dallas Aqua Techs placed second in Division II, and Spotsylvania Synergy earned the third place spot.

The Spoils of Competition

Operations Challenge helps all of the competitors grow personally and professionally, said Rhonda Harris, president of Pro-Ops Inc. (Dallas), an operational and management consulting firm. Harris has been involved with every national Operations Challenge since the competition's inception in 1988.

"This is such a great affirmation of the usefulness and the ability of this organization to really provide cross-training and promote operator professionalism and highlight the professionalism of the people who work in the field and in the facilities," Harris said. "To me, that's the highlight of this whole competition."

Water Environment Federation (Alexandria, Va.) President Mohamed Dahab echoed that statement: "We can't really say enough about the value of safety and the value of training, and this is all about doing the job the best way you can and at the same time being as safe about it as you can."



OSCAR EINZIG

The Comrade Commandos from the Rocky Mountain Water Environment Association won third place in Division I at the 19th Annual Operations Challenge in Dallas. The Commandos are Caleb Vannice, Brian Pritekel, Chong Woo, and Stacey Walker (not pictured).

Looking Ahead

Next year, the Power SAWS and Aqua Techs will move up to the Division I competition to join the CReWSers.

McBride said to be competitive in Division I, the Power SAWS will need to ensure that they run clean. "We're going to have to ratchet it up to another level," he said.

"I think it will be very interesting to have three Texas teams in Division I," McBride said.

Safety Event

Event Coordinator: Richard Leger, City of Henderson (Nev.)

Division I Winners

1. TRA CReWSers - WEA of Texas
2. Team HRSD - Virginia WEA
3. SRCSD Interceptors - California WEA

Division II Winners

1. Aqua Techs - WEA of Texas
2. Aurora's Ascending Aerobes - Rocky Mountain WEA
3. Dillo XXpress - WEA of Texas

Trophy provided by Dorcas Hermes, WBE Dorcas, Inc., Cripple Creek, Colo.



Godwin Pump Maintenance Event

Event Coordinator: Ginny Farmer, Autawash (Aurora, Colo.)

Division I Winners

1. TRA CReWSers - WEA of Texas
2. s.C.R.A.P.E.R.s - Ohio WEA
3. SRCSD Interceptors - California WEA

Division II Winners

1. Power SAWS - WEA of Texas
2. Wasatch All Stars - WEA of Utah
3. Spotsylvania Synergy - Virginia WEA

Trophy provided by Bryan Gassler, Godwin Pumps, Bridgeport, N.J.



Teams Embrace New Lab Event

Most Operations Challenge events change a little each year. But the Laboratory Event received a complete overhaul for 2006. Rather than have each team member independently perform one of eight laboratory procedures, team members worked together to perform all steps of a biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) analysis.

Before the competition, Wesley Warren, captain of Team HRSD from the Virginia Water Environment Association (WEA), said his team was confident after training. His only worry was that the competition setup — which the teams didn't see until the morning of the event — would be different from their practice setup. Team HRSD's work paid off: The team placed first in the event for Division I, and took second place overall.

"It's so much better as a team event," Warren said. Team HRSD includes Warren, Eric Washbon, Erin Girardi, and Joel Niemi.

Stacie Metzler, Laboratory Event coordinator, redesigned the event to fit



OSCAR EINZIG

Eric Washbon of Team HRSD from the Virginia Water Environment Association performs a titration in the newly designed Laboratory Event. Team HRSD won first place in the event in Division I.

Laboratory Event

Event coordinator: Stacie Metzler, Hampton Roads Sanitation District (Virginia Beach, Va.)

Division I Winners

1. Team HRSD – Virginia WEA
2. TRA CREWSers – WEA of Texas
3. Cape Shore Workers – New Jersey WEA

Division II Winners

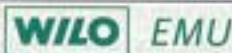
1. Shovelers – Central States WEA
2. Spotsylvania Synergy – Virginia WEA
3. Power SAWS – WEA of Texas

Trophy provided by Wesley Warren, Hampton Roads Sanitation Districts, Virginia Beach, Va.



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in better with the rest of Operations Challenge. Teams had to perform all steps of a BOD analysis, including pH determination, blank and seed correction series preparations, and dissolved oxygen meter calibration.

Metzler said many people helped her get the new event ready. Specifically Metzler mentioned Lora Ann Read from HRSD, who helped Metzler design the event and worked onsite to ensure that things ran smoothly. "I can't do this without her," Metzler said.

Two changes were made to the event at the pre-competition meeting. First, to resolve the issue of the stability of dissolved oxygen meters, the teams were required to leave probes in each bottle for at least 20 seconds. Second, the pH of the samples did not meet method requirements because of the availability of buffer solutions. For the event, a pH 8 buffer was used, and the sample readings had to fall between 7 and 9. These changes were improvements, Metzler said.

The TRA CREWSers were a little uneasy about the lab event after the changes made at the pre-competition meeting, said Dale Burrow, captain of the CREWSers. But after an evening spent reviewing the changes and the event overall, he



OSCAR EINZIG

The Aguas Bonaerenses from Region 3 of the Inter-American Association of Sanitary and Environmental Engineering traveled from Argentina to Dallas to compete.

Remembering the G-man

This year's Operations Challenge was the first without George Gregory. From the first competition in 1988, he was always an integral part of the action. Gregory, who for 17 years coached the teams from Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD; Virginia Beach, Va.) teams, died in April.

Wesley Warren, captain, and a team member of Team HRSD, previously known as G-Force, was on the team for 12 years with Gregory as his coach. "He's definitely been on our minds here," Warren said. Gregory was the "G" behind HRSD G-Force. In tribute, this year the teams' helmets featured a mark to remember Gregory, the G-man.

During his tenure as coach, Gregory spurred his teams to win five national titles and 22 individual events. His teams finished Operations Challenge 12 times in the top three.

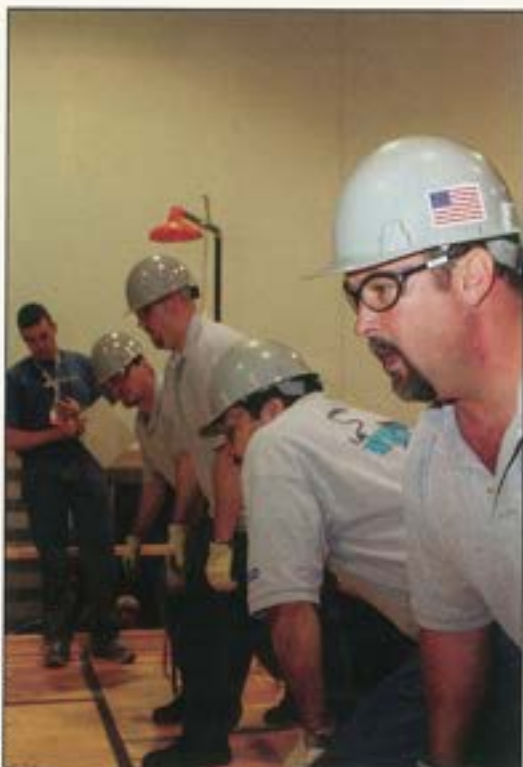
Gregory created the first Operations Challenge team in Virginia after the first national competition in Dallas in 1988.

The next year his first team qualified to compete at the national competition in San Francisco. Not even a major

(continued on p. 76)



OSCAR EINZIG



With 42 teams competing, the 19th annual Operations Challenge was the largest competition yet. Here the L.A. Wrecking Crew, Dale Dollins, Mark McKnight, Jeff Valdes, and Paul Johnson, from the California Water Environment Association wait for the whistle to begin the Safety Event.

said, "We feel pretty good now, so I think we'll do OK." In fact, the CREWSers came in second in Division I.

In Division II, the Central States WEA Shovelers took home the laboratory event trophy. "[The win] just took us completely by surprise," said Wrigley Bynum, a member of the Shovelers.

The Central States WEA encompasses Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Each of its two Operations Challenge teams includes a member from each of the three states. Staff members from state award-winning plants and past team members are eligible for the team.

Because the team members were located all over the three states, they only met twice to practice, Bynum said. The team split up the tasks and practiced them at their home facilities.

The team includes Bynum from Fox Lake, Ill., Charles LaRocco (captain) from Elmhurst, Ill., Linda Mullen from Apple Valley, Minn., and Jeff Smuddle from Green Bay, Wis. Rick Ashling served as the team's coach.

"I obsessed about that one [lab] event, and I think the rest of my teammates did the same thing," Bynum said. "There were no questions, it just came to us."

Many teams said they liked the new design of the lab event.

"I think the event is awesome," said Andrew McBride, captain of the San Antonio Power SAWS. In Division II, the SAWS took third place in the lab event and first place overall. "I think it's a great event. It's a way for everybody to be doing something as a team once again."

Steve Spicer is the editor of Operations Forum.

Remembering the G-man *(continued from p. 75)*

earthquake could dampen Gregory's competitive streak. The same earthquake that rattled the 1989 World Series, knocked out the power in the convention center just as the HRSD team was about to begin its best event, pump maintenance. To give his team the best chance possible at winning, Gregory offered to hold a flashlight so they could compete.

Even though year after year the people on Gregory's teams changed, his teams were some of the most watched. He always spotted talent in teammates and ensured they were prepared mentally and physically. He would come to practice and tell the team that he had been lying in bed at 2 or 3 a.m. thinking up ways to run the events faster or trim a few seconds, Warren said.

On the physical preparedness side, Warren said one year Gregory used a Tae Bo tape to exercise the team. Tae Bo is an aerobic exercise that is a mixture of boxing punches and martial arts kicks.

"It was a sight," Warren said. "We had a few lucky people walk in on us while we were doing it and they would quickly turn and leave. I'm sure it was to keep from laughing in front of us."

Gregory worked at HRSD for 42 years. He retired in 1995 as the superintendent of the Chesapeake-Elizabeth Wastewater Treatment Plant in Virginia Beach, Va., but continued to coach the Operations Challenge team until 2005.