

# Olympians Among Us

Two Bishop's athletes share the stories of their kayaking success

Sarah Arnell

"It's in my blood. I've been paddling since the age of 2 months," said Sean Barlow ('13), a USA medalist and a member of the USA Canoe Kayak (USACK) Junior National Team. But starting young isn't the only path to success in kayaking. "I started 11 months ago," said J. L. Guinchard ('11), also a medalist on USACK.

Sean's father, Chris Barlow, kayaked in the 1992 Olympics and started the San Diego Canoe and Kayak Team in 1997. You'd think there would be pressure and expectations when your dad is the creator and coach of your club team, but Sean said, "My dad doesn't give me pressure. His motto is: I don't care about the wins, I don't care about the loss. I only care about the effort." Sean started kayaking competitively at age 9 and hopes to follow in the Olympic footsteps of his father. Unlike Sean, J. L. was not introduced to kayaking through family success. Instead he discovered it when he "did a summer white water kayaking trip for three weeks. [I] found it fun and wanted to know how different flat water was."

Many Bishopians have trouble balancing homework and extra-curriculars. Try throwing in a national title as well. J. L. said, "It's rough to

manage work. Free periods really are just for finishing up homework." A social life, on the other hand, isn't as hard to maintain for the two boys, but it's still tough. "It's harder now because I'm invited to the USA development camp, so I'm having to miss hanging out with friends on weekends a lot more," said Sean. But with medals around their necks, a social life is the least of their worries.

Both pre-Olympians do competitive distance and time trials. Sean's longest distance is an astounding 12 miles, a trip that takes over two hours to complete. His fastest times are: 4:09 for the 1000 m, 1:52 for the 500 m, and 48 seconds for the 200 m. J. L. said, "Distance isn't my specialty. My favorite race is the 200 m and my fastest time is 38.5 seconds."

Both have had tremendous success within the past six months. In the 2010 National Championships, Sean placed first in the k-2 (two-man kayak) 1000 m, k-4 1000 m, and

the k-1 1000 m. Over the summer, J. L. competed in the Lake Placid International Regatta and received silver and bronze medals. "At the beginning of August there were the Sprint National Championships held in Oklahoma, where I received a

Gold Medal in Senior k-4, winning it with my coach; two silver medals, one in k-1 200m, which qualified me for Pan American Championships; and a bronze with my good mate, Sean Barlow. Finally, I competed in the Pan American Championships and received fourth place in k-2 and sixth in k-1," said J. L.

At this level of 'paddle' the competition is high. "For Junior Worlds Competition I have a seat in the k-4, but I have to try and keep that seat. I have competition all over the place," said Sean. The stakes only rise higher at international events. "The hardest competition is on an international level. You get really nervous when you realize you're representing the U. S.," J. L. said.

Unfortunately, kayaking hasn't quite become popular among colleges. "Even though kayaking was invented in the United States, people don't really know much about it. They know more about rowing, which was invented in Europe," said Sean. He is unsure if he will kayak in college. J. L. on the other hand is very interested in kayaking in college. He said, "My whole college application process is oriented around kayaking. I'm trying to stay relatively close [to San Diego] so I can train with my coach for the 2012 and 2016 Olympics." Regardless of their kayaking futures, the Olympics will do. For now.

The two athletes have very different kayaking backgrounds, but both are equally talented and excited about what's to come. We have the honor of watching them climb to success as they represent us, our school, and now our country.

