

THE GARVI: THE STORY OF STEPHEN AND MICHAEL GARVIS



Mike and Steve Garvis "gun it" for the finish line
at Bala. (Abbie Endicott Photo)

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STEPHEN and MICHAEL GARVIS

You are no longer two individuals; not even a team of two people, but one unit. If the boat doesn't get there it's both of your faults.

Steve Garvis

You can't think in terms of "I" and "You". It has to always be "We". If you can't do that, you'll have problems dealing with each other.

Mike Garvi

This is an extraordinary tale of teamwork, not just in the boat, but throughout a lifetime. Steve and Mike Garvis, or the "Garvi", as they are called, are the current World Champions in C2, winning at Bala by a comfortable 7 seconds. If teamwork is the essential ingredient in C2, then the career of the Garvi not only typifies it, it is the extreme case of it. In just about all respects, the career of the Garvi was similar to those of the other World Championship medalists from Washington, D.C. -- started paddling and training at a very early age; got lots of big water experience; and trained a lot on whitewater gates for many years. But in one critical area, the Garvi were different: since they are twins, they did it all together. They began training C2 at age 13 and have concentrated on it ever since. Since they lived together, and always led the exact same lives, there were never any scheduling problems. Thus, they could always go to the river whenever they wanted -- just like the singles boats.

Steve and Mike were born October 27, 1959. Steve is the oldest by 6 minutes. They are fraternal, not identical, twins. Steve is 68 inches tall, and weighs 155 pounds, and Mike is 72 1/2 inches tall and weighs 185. They both use 56 1/2 inch paddles.

Advantage of Being Twins

Steve talks about the effect that being twins has had upon his and Mike's paddling career:

It wasn't that we were twins -- and therefore had some sort of inherited affinity for understanding each other. In the first place, we are fraternal twins, not identical twins. But we grew up together, shared the same room, went to the same schools all the way up through the second year of college. It was living together that helped us learn how to deal with each other. Most C2 teams don't have time to

develop a bond of friendship because both partners have separate lives.

Mike adds these thoughts:

We were always really close. We were each other's best friend. This was a big advantage for us. We never had any scheduling problems, and it was easy for us to go paddling on the spur of the moment.

The Garvi then go on to tell about the attitude and temperament that are necessary for paddling C2. Steve:

What I learned in C2 applies directly to my marriage. There are some unspoken rules. You don't use the words "you" and "I" very much, only "we". Even if it's the other guy's fault! The idea is that you are no longer two individuals, not even a team of two people, but one unit. If the boat doesn't get there, it's both of your faults. Even if it's your partner's fault, you find that if you put in a little bit more, the boat will get there. Ninety percent of the time, it's like that.

There's a temperament that's required. You have to stop and think before you speak. You can't fly off the handle. The best way to solve an argument is to find out exactly what your partner wants to do and then give both sides a fair trial.

Mike makes the following observations:

Even if we got upset at each other, we always left it in the boat. We never argued about it later. I think we've been more successful with this than any other team.

Symbolic of these thoughts is the logo that the Garvi always have on the bow deck of their boats:



Steve, the designer, explains its significance:

We started this in 1977. It symbolizes a couple of things. The middle point is the boat; the two on the sides are Mike and I. The leading one is of a different color, thus further reinforcing the theme that it is in the lead. I like having it on the boat, but it's not like a lucky sock or something. It just symbolizes Mike and me.



Steve and Mike Garvis, shown here at Bala in 1981, were the first team to popularize the close-cockpit C2 design when they finished fourth at Spittal in 1977. (Elizabeth Johns Photo)

A Camping Trip

The whole Garvis family got into canoeing in 1971 when their neighbors, the Sesslerers, invited them on an overnight camping trip on the Potomac River. The trip was in open boats and on flatwater. "Dad put Steve in the bow and me in the stern," Mike explains, "and we stayed that way ever since." The trip was fine for the first day, but on the second, it rained hard!

Mike picks up the story of the early days:

In 1972 we were aware of canoe slalom in the Olympics, and later that year we went to watch the Sessler boys who were racing in a local event (the Seneca slalom). That was our first exposure to competition.

Up to that time, the Garvi had paddled only open boats. But at the race, they saw a Lettmann C2 for sale "and bought it on the spot." It was the same boat that I had used in 1972! "That boat was indestructible", Mike recalls, "and we paddled it up 'til 1974."

Merle Garvis, father of the Garvi, also got into canoeing at this time. He bought a C1 and entered some races:

With 5 boys in the family, I wanted an activity we could all do together. Canoeing met that need. Once we were exposed to WHITEWATER, we saw that canoeing could be exciting as well.

Steve remembers his father's influence during the early period:

Dad started paddling about the same time we did so he didn't know any more than we did. But he could figure things out faster than we could. At races he could analyze things better than we could and he'd give us pointers. But generally he believed that you couldn't be a coach and father at the same time.

For a number of years, the three Garvises "were weekend paddlers," just racing and paddling on weekends. Mike paddled some C1 and Steve some kayak, and they would always enter two classes at races. "But on river runs, we usually did C2," Steve remembers. "Races were new and a challenge, but we didn't train on gates. Furthermore, we never raced wildwater then."

C-CATS in 1974

The year 1974 was an important one in the Garvi's paddling career. It was then that they first started associating with the "C-CATS," the Canoe Cruisers Association Training Squad for younger up

and coming boaters. Other members of C-CATS included Cathy and David Hearn, Ron and Jon Luginbill, and Chris McCormick (in K1).

"We started going out to the river during the week then," Steve recalls, "maybe 1-3 times a week." On weekends, they would spend all day with the other C-CATers paddling on the Potomac whitewater.

Steve asserts that "in the early days most of what we learned was how to handle big water. We learned to get a really good roll. Eventually, big water was no problem for us. This was important because we weren't afraid to try new things. If you're afraid, you don't improve as fast."

C-CATS culminated that year with a one month training trip in Colorado, where the Garvi did their first gate training in whitewater. Both Garvi say that Dave Kurtz, a member of the U.S. Team in the 1960s, was a particular help to them then.

During the Colorado trip, the Garvi traveled with Ron and Jon Luginbill and started a friendly rivalry with them. The Garvi recall an amusing anecdote which tells a lot about the approach to boating that the two teams had at that time:

If the river had gates on it, we had trouble and often swam. If it didn't have gates, Jon and Ron often swam. If they had gates to show them the way, they were o.k.

Getting Serious: 1975

"Up to 1975," Steve points out, "we were weekend paddlers."

We did a little paddling during the week, but not much. In 1975, the Luginbills trained hard and we noticed the results in the team trials when they beat us and made the U.S. Team. We saw that we were good in whitewater but we didn't have gate skills. At this point we had to make a big decision: whether to train more. This decision involved Mom especially, because she had to drive us to the river. The family support for our paddling has always been strong.

Early Training

Mike explains the nature of the yearly training in the 1975 period:

We both wrestled in high school. We wouldn't paddle much at all during wrestling season which would end in February. Then, we'd spend about a month in the David

Taylor Model Basin with Jack Brosius as trainer. He was a flatwater paddler who pushed hard work. Steve and I dealt with him the best of the whitewater paddlers, I think, because he was just like our wrestling coach -- all hard work. We also did some running and weight lifting, but most of the training has been in the boat or connected with wrestling.

In talking about the boat training, Mike makes this telling point about training in C2s:

We always worked for quality rather than quantity. In doubles especially, there comes a time when you shouldn't press any longer or you'll just get frustrated with your partner and start to bicker. Consistency is more important than the length of the workout - - maintaining a daily training schedule and sticking to it.

Influence of Wrestling on Paddling

The Garvi did a number of sports as youngsters, but wrestling was the main one beside paddling. Prior to starting to paddle, they both did 3 years of Little League basketball and baseball and some downhill skiing. Mike played football in his freshman and sophomore years in high school. All in all, it was "a good general exposure to sports." Steve started wrestling in 1974, Mike in 1975. They both finished it in 1978. Steve comments on the value of wrestling for paddling:

Wrestling goes hand in hand with paddling. In wrestling, you develop a real feel for where you are and where your opponent is. In paddling, there are similar problems with balance and disorientation -- especially in rolling.

Also, we had a coach who believed in hard work. We found out what it took to be in shape. We were always very strong in the third period in wrestling matches.

Madawaska

Like the Hearn, the Garvi also spent some time at the Madawaska Canoe Camp during the summer of 1975. The camp is run by Hermann Kerckhoff, a member of the 1972 Canadian whitewater Olympic team. Steve recounts the story:

We spent two weeks at Madawaska and had Bernie Heinemann as a coach. (Heinemann was World Champion in C1 wildwater in 1973). He was very good. We were just developing basic techniques then and he helped us with them. This was our second intense experience on gates. He helped us be more efficient with our strokes. For example, one thing he tried to get me to do was take a longer forward stroke. I have a tendency to use a bent arm pull-through and he worked on that. Unfortunately, though, I never felt comfortable with a completely straight arm pull-through and still use a bent arm pretty much. I just couldn't keep up the stroke rate with a straight arm. But when I do distance paddling I flip-flop from one to the other to get a rest.

Another thing we did at Madawaska was work out on gates twice a day. This was quite different from C-CATS in 1974. At C-CATS, we developed basic technique; at Madawaska we refined it.

In the fall of 1975, the Garvi paddled on the gates at Calico, on the Potomac, which other local boaters, including the Hearn and the Luggills, were using. "Mom drove us there." On weekends, the Garvi did 6-7 hours on the river, some on gates, some just paddling. Some of the gate work was done under the stopwatch. "If we had a large group, one person would get out of his/her boat and time the others. Often this was Cathy Hearn."

Learning Early Technique

When the Garvi first started paddling it was in end-hole boats, so the first technique they learned was for that kind of boat. Later on, the Garvi were to be in the forefront of developing the close-cockpit boats, as well as the new techniques for paddling them.

When beginning closed boat paddling, there were two other C2s in Washington that the Garvi tried to copy. One of the other boaters was Carl Gutschick, who in 1981 was to win a bronze medal in the World Championships with the Garvi in the C2 team race. But mainly the Garvi started copying the Washington C1s. Steve:

It was trial and error. We never really had other C2s to train with until 1981. The only people we could compare with were the C1s and K1s. We had to sit down and analyze

where our boat was slowing down and then see what we could learn from them to speed it up. At first, we started copying everything from the C1s, but it didn't always work. For example, there were times when it was faster for us to back down from a reverse to an upstream gate, rather than to spin and punch into the eddy, the way the C1s did.

In C2, more than any other class, you have to keep an open mind about how to get the boat through the gates. This is because you have two people of different strengths. The way Mike and I do a move may not be the same way another C2 does it. For example, the way we would execute a bow sneak would be completely different from a C2M. With the woman in the bow, you can't always sneak the bow as well as we can. Another difference: Mike and I paddle well in reverse, but Jon (Lugbill) and Bobby (Robison) are great at spins, so the two teams start with different strengths.

Turning Point

The Garvi claim that 1976 was the major turning point in their career and that after that they were more committed to slalom training. The next year, they placed fourth in the Spittal World Championships.

They went out west in 1976, first to the National Championships in Kernville, California. According to Mike, "We were sixth or seventh and so disappointed because we knew we could do better." Then they went up to the Wenatchee River in Washington state and beat the Langley brothers who had been second in the Nationals and had even been on the U.S. Team in 1975.

But it wasn't just that the Garvi won at Wenatchee, it was how they did it. The river was very high that year and only the Garvi completed both runs. They proved they could handle very big water and "that was a real confidence builder," their mother recalls.

Merle Garvis says that the 1976 trip was a turning point for the whole family as well:

It was clear that Steve and Mike would make the U.S. Team if they continued to train, but there was bickering in the family because they were spending so much time paddling instead of doing their share of the family chores.

The whole family got together and decided that instead of criticizing, they would support Steve and Mike to the hilt. The fact that Merle promised them all a trip to Europe should the boys make the team may have had something to do with it!

In the fall of 1976, the boys got their driver's licenses, which was a great boost to their training.

Gemini Boat

After the Wenatchee race, the Garvi switched to the revolutionary new close-cockpit C2 design, of which the Gemini series was the first widely used version. This also meant that they had to develop new techniques for paddling the boat, but since the boat was developed in America, the Garvi got a jump on the rest of the world and this was a real stroke of fortune in their careers.

In 1975 John Evans invented the close-cockpit boat and paddled one in the 1975 World Championships at Skopje. He had simply taken a Hartung hull, put a low deck on it and placed the cockpits close together. After that the Lugbills built a close-cockpit boat of their own, "The Flipper."

We saw what the Lugbills' boat could do. In a race against Jon and Bob, we won only because Bob was new to the sport and took a lot of body touches. But we saw that the boat was great.

The Garvi made one of their own close-cockpit boats using a Czech C2 hull (the 1973 version that won the Muota Worlds), and a low deck with very close cockpits. They called it the "Banana" because it had a lot of rocker and the ends turned up a lot. Steve:

That boat, probably more than anything, forced us to paddle together. We were only 8 inches apart -- closer than now -- so every time one of us was out of synch, we'd hit the other.

Then, Steve Chamberlin, a wildwater paddler who was on the U.S. Team in 1973 and 1975, designed a new close-cockpit boat, which he called the "Gemini."

Mike:

The first Geminis were just modified wildwater boats and we didn't like them. We helped design the Gemini III, which was the boat we paddled at Spittal. The III was better right away because we could undercut at the ends. As a result, we started practicing a lot of bow sneaks. In the Banana, we could undercut only in front of the cockpits because the deck was so low, but not at the ends because they were turned up so much.

Changing Techniques

With the radical new approach to C2 being developed in the United States, new techniques were needed to paddle them. So the Garvi had to start over again. Steve:

Once again we tried to copy the Cls, this time with better results. Take the slam-dunk reverse. We saw the Cls do it and it was obviously the fastest way so we adopted that. But there were some things that didn't work. We couldn't do pivot turns the way they could. Also, upstream gates were different. You had to be careful not to cut out of the gate too soon.

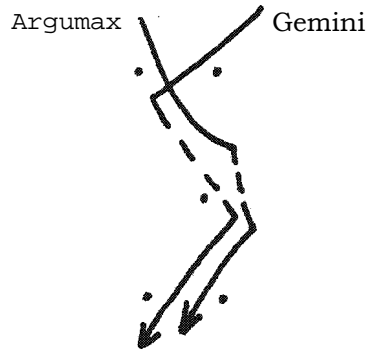
Steve goes on to list the other technical aspects that had to be developed over the next few years:

- * Cross draw: We used pries in the end-hole boats. It took me a long time to get proficient with the cross draw. It still was only so-so by 1977.
- * Spinning: It was much easier to spin the close-cockpit boat than the old end-holers, but this took us time to perfect. Looking back on it, I am amazed at how well those East European C2s could crank the stern of an end-hole boat around. We could never do that. But undercutting at the ends more than offset our inability to spin.
- * Communication: Verbal communication was much easier in the close-cockpit boats. I could even see Mike over my shoulder. At that time, we talked to each other some (not so much now), and being close together facilitated this. Now we talk to each other only when there is a break in the pressure, such as when going between gates, but not in the gates themselves. Nine times out of ten it's to spark memory of something we had agreed to do before the race, or just encouragement.
- * Running rivers: You'd go out to surf a wave with a close-cockpit boat and there would be no weight at the ends. I always thought this was a great advantage for cruisers who were just starting out. The problem with the end-hole boat is that the bowman gets

buried in this situation and the sternman is hanging out the back of the wave,

- * Speed in a straight line: The earlier close-cockpit boats were fast in a straight line, but couldn't spin. As the boat evolved into the Paramax and the Argumax, it became more like a C1 and spun better.

Take a forward gate to a reverse gate combination as an example:



The Gemini could paddle well in reverse, so we did a stern turn in it, but the Paramax and Argumax didn't paddle well in reverse, so later on we had to learn to do this move as a full spin reverse, like a C1.

- * Vertical Stroke: Mike had to get a vertical stroke in the Gemini or else he would hit me. We felt that the vertical stroke was a stronger stroke.
- * Sweeps: We found that pries were ineffective in the Gemini, but that sweeps were great. Thus, a correction stroke became a forward stroke at the same time. Every stroke you take should propel you towards the finish line. You do as little correcting as possible -- something we learned from Bill Endicott. We found that sometimes it is even more efficient to forego a correction stroke and take a wider arc rather than do a whole lot of correction strokes. So after 1975 we were cutting away all the extra strokes. For example, we'd come into a reverse and I would do a cross-bow full spin in the bow, then a reverse stroke, then a bow sweep. It came to the point where

I said to Michael, "If you can come closer to the gate with your back, I can eliminate the reverse stroke here and go from the cross draw into a forward sweep." A lot of getting rid of correction strokes was the laziness factor: "This is too much work; what can we do to make it easier?" For example, on spins, if you are right together, you need fewer strokes than if you are not. If I feel any strain on the spins, I know we are not together.

Preparing for Spittal

The winter of 1976-77 involved training that was similar to past seasons: a lot of wrestling and a little paddling in the Model Basin. Steve recalls, however, that this year the Garvi did some workouts in the Basin at 5 a.m. -- before school.

Because the Garvi really started paddling in February, they had only a short time to prepare for the U.S. Team trials. They felt they could make the third slot on the team, and this is indeed what they did.

But after the team trials, we came to more of Endicott's timed workouts on the Feeder Canal. We did a lot of 60-70 second courses there.

However, as I recall, the really crucial thing the Garvi did before leaving for Spittal was to paddle a lot on real whitewater gates which we had set up on the S-Turn, just below the Great Falls on the Potomac. Here we had class 3-4 water and could do 120+ second courses on recyclable gates. The Garvi used these gates more than anyone else, and I remember many times going out to the S-Turn with just the Garvi alone. We'd go out on some weekday evenings and often twice on weekends. One workout we did consisted of betting money on gates. Every time they hit a gate, they gave me a dime; every clean run they had which was faster than the one before it, they got a quarter. This cleaned them up a lot. By letting the workout go on long enough, I always got my money back!

About a month before leaving for Spittal, we were doing 3 workouts a day, each one lasting between 45 and 60 minutes. Generally, we'd do the S-Turn during the day and the Feeder Canal during the evenings with Endicott.

At that time the Garvi were concentrating on speed more than anything else. Mike:

We improved really fast up at S-Turn. Our speed was moving ahead of our technique, though. We hit a plateau at this level for a while. Then, just before we left for the Worlds, we moved up to another plateau. Those few months were the biggest spurt we ever had in the sport. It was a big surprise to us.

At The Worlds

As Mike puts it, "We had no idea how good we were. We figured that if we placed in the top 20, that would be pretty good."

But at the race site the Garvi encountered something they were not used to: narrow gates. As a result "we hit a lot of poles in practice and this was a bit discouraging."

We spent a lot of time on the course itself without gates. One of the first days we were there we did pop-ups. This shocked the Europeans because we had such a dependable roll.

The Race

According to Steve, "We had no pressure whatsoever because no one expected us to do anything."

At the end of first runs we were in third place -- and stunned. We had 50 penalties but the fastest running time, by 8 seconds. We showed up at the start for second runs and Mike didn't have any shirt on under his life jacket. We didn't know about the rule requiring one. So Mike had to jump out of the boat just before the start and grab one off the back of Don Morin, another U.S. paddler. On the actual run itself, Mike tripped over his paddle about in the middle of the course, broke it, and we swam. I remember sitting down at the bottom of the course after swimming: it wasn't until 4 or 5 boats from the end of the race that someone knocked us into fourth place (the highest placing ever for an American C2, up to that time). After the race, a lot of Europeans wanted to buy our boats -- people who had laughed at them before the race!

Later, in evaluating their performance, the Garvi realized that had they been able to concentrate better on cleaning narrow gates, they could have avoided a lot of the careless touches which cost them a medal. They also felt that had they realized their potential before the race, they probably would have done better.

Steve says they learned the following things about race day preparation at Spittal:

- * Keep the number of people around you to a minimum to avoid undue excitement.
- * Try to keep the same low-key pattern from one race to another, whether it is a Worlds or not. You don't want to get too excited because that takes energy out of you.
- * You need to control your environment. You don't want a whole lot of things thrown at you; no interviews with reporters; no large groups of people.
- * When you're not thinking about the race course, don't think about paddling at all. This can help you relax.
- * Walking the course: We walk the course together twice. Then we talk about it. After that, we don't need to look at it again together. The rest is just general spectating by ourselves. There is a final talk and/or walk-through before the race run.

Mike concludes about Spittal by saying "we really started to train after that." Unfortunately, however, they were to have many problems for the next two years.

1978

After wrestling season that fall, the Garvi started paddling again but shortly thereafter, Mike came down with mononucleosis. Although he appeared to recover after a few months, he admits now that it really took him a year and half to get over it -- after the Jonquiere World Championships.

My strength came back quickly: I could bench 240 once or twice. But I had no endurance, especially in the boat.

Mike was in bed for 5 weeks, just before the U.S. Nationals that spring. He got out of bed 3-4 days before the race in North Carolina and made the long 14 hour drive to it. They placed second.

After Mike's bout with mono, however, training picked up again. The year 1978 saw the North America Cup out west, and the Pre-World Championships in Canada. The Garvi won both. Steve says of the summer:

We spent a lot of time traveling and racing, which gave us more confidence. That, in turn, gave us better results. I was in great shape mentally that year. What we lost from traveling around so much, we more than made up in race experience.

The Garvi were still developing the close-cockpit boat during this period, helping to make new designs, with the general aim of making the boat spin better.

At the Pre-Worlds, the Garvi won by a whopping 44 seconds, thus seeming to signal that they had recovered from the mono problem and should be installed as the favorites for the 1979 Worlds. Steve said about the race:

I never had a race in which I was completely satisfied, but the Pre-Worlds in 1978 was about the closest, especially the speed.

But he also pointed out:

We never thought that just because we won the Pre-Worlds we would automatically win the Worlds. We knew that so much depended upon being sharp on the day of the race itself.

Sternman Pry

An interesting stroke technique originated by Mike Garvis around this time is what we call the "sternman pry," or "midships pry." Essentially, in an upstream gate, Mike horses the C2 around by jamming in a pry amidships as though he were in a C1. He explains how this evolved:

In the Gemini C2 I had to do something to keep the bow down when Steve did a draw. The Gemini had a tendency to sit back and stall out in upstream gates. The pry kept pressure on the boat and forced the bow down. I don't have to use it so much now with the Max C2s, though.

The 1979 season was a bad one for the Garvi. They almost didn't qualify for the U.S. Team and at the Jonquiere Worlds, they came in twelfth. Strangely, their problems seemed to drag down the entire U.S. C2 contingent and even with a poor run the Garvi were still the best American boat.

Besides Mike not being fully recovered from mononucleosis, Steve was encountering problems of his own, problems with school. He and Mike were in their first year of college and Steve had overextended himself by taking calculus and chemistry at the same time in addition to other subjects.

I did two things then, school and paddling -- nothing else. I wasn't doing well at either. I was on academic probation at school. It wasn't really a matter of late nights and not having enough time to practice. There was enough time to train, but I couldn't get the right attitude for it. My heart wasn't in it. I started feeling guilty about paddling when I should have been studying and vice versa.

I learned from this that you have to make sure you're not stretching yourself too thin. You have to keep priorities in your life and make sure they get their due. Be realistic in scheduling your activities.

Mike adds:

We just weren't paddling well that year because of school. It created too much stress and tension. We took two weeks off completely twice during the spring for exams and that really hurt. Also we had scheduling problems as to when we could get to the river together.

Another problem that Mike points out:

We were expected to do well this year. We weren't the underdogs any more. We just couldn't cope with that. We couldn't deal with the pressure.

Looking over the season, I see that the Garvi got further and further behind as the year went on. Before the team trials they had a particularly bad month, getting in little practice time and having poor sessions when they did show up. Only natural ability pulled it

out for them at the team trials, where they made the team on the last run of the last day.

Penalties were a large part of the problem. They just didn't get in enough practice time running clean. I may have exacerbated things by reminding them too often that they were not fast enough to win the worlds. Thus, when they came to practice, perhaps they were thinking more about the speed deficit than anything else.

Mike tells the story of Jonquiere:

At the Worlds, we just started out badly. The first run was awful and we couldn't break out of that rut. It seemed to affect the whole C2 team. I don't know why. One other thing bothered us at Jonquiere. We'd raced there since 1975 and it was hard to get psyched up the way we should have been.

On their best run, the Garvi had the second fastest running time but 4 touches, while the first 4 boats were clean. The winner, West Germany's Dieter Welsink and Peter Czupryna, were 11 seconds faster in running time.

After Jonquiere

The Garvi never ever thought about quitting after Jonquiere. They took 3 weeks off and started to train again. As Mike puts it:

We decided we were going to train like never before for 2 years and that we were going to win at Bala.

Steve:

I took Jonquiere as a good lesson. We realized what we did wrong. We trained harder in the next 2 years than we ever did, consistently, with only short breaks. We constantly built up. Those were the most productive years we've ever had in preparing our minds for racing.

1980

Although the Garvi were still to encounter their share of hardships -- sickness, bad weather, and bad judging in Europe in 1980 -- there were several things that went particularly well for them.

The first of these was the fact that there were 4 C2s in Washington now, all training for the World Championships. Every one of them was to make the U.S. Team. Besides the Garvi, they were Jef Huey

and Paul Grabow (Bronze Medalists individual and team at Bala), Carl Gutschick and Paul Flack (Bronze Medalists in team at Bala) and George Strickland and Ricky Hill. Mike talks about this situation:

Having these other boats helped immeasurably to motivate us. When we didn't feel like paddling, they'd drag us out to race against them or to do team runs. It drove us all hard. We doubled the amount of time we had been spending in the boat.

Steve:

Competition is what makes me go! Those guys (the other C2s) weren't beating us on a regular basis, but every time they improved, I could notice it and it made me work harder. Not only was there the chance to win individual medals, but there was a chance to win a team medal, too.

Paramax

Another important milestone for the Garvi was the development of the Paramax C2, designed by Davey Hearn and based essentially on the Ultramax C1.

The virtue of the Paramax was that it incorporated many of the desirable characteristics of the American C1s. Mike:

The Paramax definitely changed our style. It didn't go in reverse so well, so we had to cut out long reverse paddles, such as on the stern turn. But the Paramax was much smoother in upstreams and faster in a straight line.

Shortly before the Garvi left for Europe, the Paramax was modified so that it had a lower deck right around the cockpit area. The Garvi paddled in this new boat only 4-5 times before departing for the Europa Cup.

Europa Cup

The Garvi went to Europe expecting to win major international races that year. Steve:

Spittal had overtones of "well, it was just the close-cockpit boat." We didn't believe that but other people did. Our performance at Jonquiere reinforced it in their minds. We wanted to prove them wrong.

Mike explains what happened:

We went to Europe expecting to do really well. But the first race at Merano was a disaster, not just for us, but for the whole U.S. Team. We were camping out and Steve and a lot of other Americans got sick the night before the race. To make matters worse, it rained that night. Everyone was up all night throwing up. Steve passed out the next morning. It drizzled all day, which was the final blow.

About the rain, Steve quips:

It was a good thing it rained that night.
Otherwise that campground would have stunk!

Mike picks up the story again:

We stuck Steve up in the bow and made a go of it because we didn't want to get knocked out of the Cup by not competing. On the first run, we hit a lot of gates. On the second, we tore a gash in the boat. We caught up to a Polish boat in front of us and tried to ram it so we could get a re-run, but that didn't work. After that I got sick and slept 14 hours.

Other problems cropped up during the 7 weeks the Garvi stayed in Europe. "That is a heck of a long time to be camping out and trying to train," Steve points out.

The Garvi won at Muota, but there was no real competition there. At Breil in France, the second Cup race, they thought they should have won, but the judges gave them a 50, which pushed them into fourteenth place.

Finally at Seo in Spain they won:

Mike: After Breil, we had a week off. We showed up at Seo the Wednesday before the race. We had a big party that night. It was great -- it got rid of all the anxieties.

Steve: Seo was a great race. The course was more like what we were used to in the U.S.: free-flowing and not as choppy as most European courses. The upstreams were where they should be -- in the eddies, not in the current. Also, we were healthy.

Mike: After winning Seo, we felt we could show our faces again in the U.S. We were the only Americans ever to win a Europa Cup race.

After coming back home, resting and training a while, the Garvi hopped on a plane and returned to Europe for the Pre-World Championships in Bala, where they placed tenth. Mike:

We simply went to see the course and feel out the river. That's what we accomplished. It set us up perfectly for the next year.

Preparing for Bala

When the Garvi returned to the U.S. after the Pre-World Championships, they poured on the training --all the C2s did. Many days they did both a 20 minute flatwater sprint course (on the Chesapeake and Ohio -- C&O -- barge canal, which runs parallel to the Feeder Canal), as well as timed gate workouts on the Feeder. In addition, Mike would often bicycle several miles to and from practice.

During the winter they spent a long time in the Model Basin, for there was no longer any wrestling to interfere. They did timed courses there as well as team runs with the other C2s.

Argumax

The Garvi, Huey-Grabow, and Gutschick-Flack designed a new C2 in the winter of 1980-81 which they eventually called the "Argumax". Mike tells the story:

When Davey Hearn made the Paramax C2, he simply blew up an Ultramax C1. But in fitting the pieces together, there were many places where the natural curves were broken and there were just straight lines instead. We smoothed out all of those. Then we pulled the sides of the hull close together to make the boat narrower in the bow. After that we molded it. It came out well. It didn't affect our technique at all, compared to going from the Gemini to the Paramax. It was a lot faster. We lowered our C&O time by 20 seconds in that boat.

Working on the boat, however, did seriously cut into the training time that the C2s had, and I remember a distinct decline in their

performance during the winter. For 5 weekends in a row, none of the 3 C2s trained on weekends because they were working on the boat. After the boat project was completed, however, training picked up again.

Mental Training

Another factor which really helped the Garvi and other U.S. paddlers in 1981 was a series of motivation training seminars given by Dennis Fox, of the American Salesmasters. He had done some work for Merle Garvis's company and he volunteered to help the whitewater paddlers as well.

Mike: He related very well (to the paddlers) and stressed channeling pre-race jitters into productive activities. He taught us to set goals, then work single-mindedly towards those goals, repeating them often so they were reinforced in the subconscious.

Some of the chapter called "Psychological Principles" in this book is based on the material from Fox's lectures and readings that he recommended.

Steve explains in more detail what he felt his mental needs were:

We needed more experience in knowing what you need to control. We learned to make a race day schedule. The schedule needs to be planned so there can be no surprises; so you get the right food and sleep; so there are few people around you and you can keep calm.

Dennis talked about things we had already done a little bit, things we did intuitively. But we didn't really understand how they worked. What he said helped us to recognize what we could do mentally, so we could build on it and control it.

Ten Percent of the C1s

A few years ago, I had made up some formulas for predicting one boat's score on the basis of another's. I use these sometimes in practice to tell how good a run is. Since our C1s were the most stable performers at the world class level, I usually used them as the base against which to compare everything else. The formula for C2 then was $C2=C1 \times 1.09$. The Garvi modified this to 1.10 so they could easily calculate it themselves in practice.

Mike: We based ourselves at 110% of the C1s. We kept shooting for that. Once in a while we'd get it. That really motivated us. We had the other C2s to go against, but we also wanted to make sure we were close enough to the C1s.

Bala

Mike tells about the training at Bala right before the Worlds:

The two years we had put in had gone well and they paid off at Bala. We had a lot of long course work at Bala. We had a lot of help from Bill Endicott and others. We were relaxed. The Dennis Fox lectures on mental training had really helped. We used them to divert nervous energy towards productive purposes. Also we were the underdogs again, which was great.

Steve describes the practice run:

It was fair. We were fast right off the start. We used to think that a good practice run was a bad sign because then the race runs would be bad. But that didn't happen at Bala.

Steve says, "We learned a lot about how to take practice runs," and goes on to talk about this:

- * Take it at race speed from upstream gate to upstream gate.
- * Don't worry about the gates. Concentrate a great deal on what the water does to you. It's only on the race runs that you concentrate on the gates.
- * On practice runs, if you get a penalty on a gate because you weren't concentrating on the gate, that's o.k. But not if it was caused by the water throwing you where you didn't expect to go. If this happens, you have to change your strategy.
- * Don't take the practice run too seriously, but think about what the water is doing.

First Run

"Going into the race", says Mike, "we thought that we'd win if we had a good run." Steve adds, "We thought only about Welsink-Czupryna (West Germans), and the Caloris (French). We felt that if we could beat them, we would win."

But with 6 touches, the Garvi were in twelfth place after first runs. They also didn't have the fastest running time because they got stuck in the hole between gates 28 and 29. The Caloris were in the lead. Mike:

We went out too fast on the top half of the course. Then we got stuck in the hole for about 20 seconds. We had practiced this move a lot in training sessions and we could do it fine. But in the race we just didn't have the energy to get through it fast. On second runs we went across the back wash and did just fine. After first runs I didn't even notice we were in twelfth place. I just went out on second runs to do the same thing again, only this time a bit slower and cleaner.



Mike (left) and Steve Garvis during their winning run at Bala. (Adams Photo)

Here are excerpts from the Garvi's story of their second run:

Mike

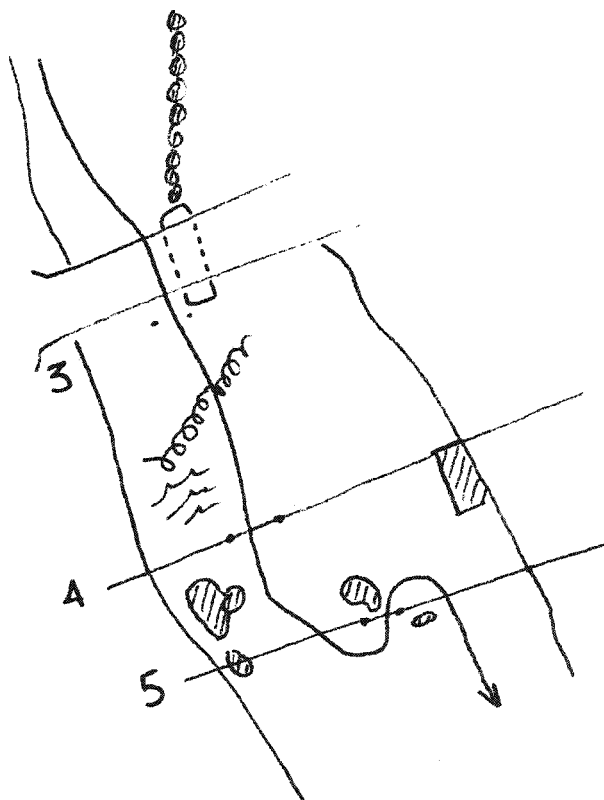
Steve

Gate 3

Gate 3

We had to do a pivot right after clearing gate 2 to help get over for gate 3. We went as close to the bridge pillar as possible just before the gate, and then pointed back to river right so we could hit the exact spot we wanted in the roller. Lean downstream in the hole. Didn't have to worry about getting stuck because C2 has enough weight to blow through it. The roller threw us right over to gate 4.

Tried to come as close to the bridge piling as possible. Just as we were about to come into gate 3, we started over for gate 4 so we would have a slight angle that would help save the stern from banging on the rock ledge.



Mike

Gate 4

Had to do a pivot turn - reverse sweep to keep the boat from crashing into rocks on river left.

Gate 5

Gate 5 was not a normal S-turn. The eddy was so small. We had to turn facing directly upstream and we had to hit it a bit low to get up enough momentum to drive straight up through 5 and turn down only after I had cleared the gate. Very easy to hit. I had to lean forward on the way out.

Steve

Gate 4

Used the wave after gate 4 to slow us to get control so we could hit 5 well.

Gate 5

I did a cross-bow into the eddy, but I couldn't get a real sharp S-turn. We drove up out of the gate and I had to make sure Mike had cleared the gate before I turned downstream. I had to go very high out of the eddy.

Mike
Gates 11-12

After 10, we turned stern to river left which seemed safer to us than turning the other way. We reversed back a ways through the gate, purposefully ramming the rock, so as to get enough angle on 12, heading for 13. On 12 we snuck both the bow and the stern to keep the angle.

Gate 13-14

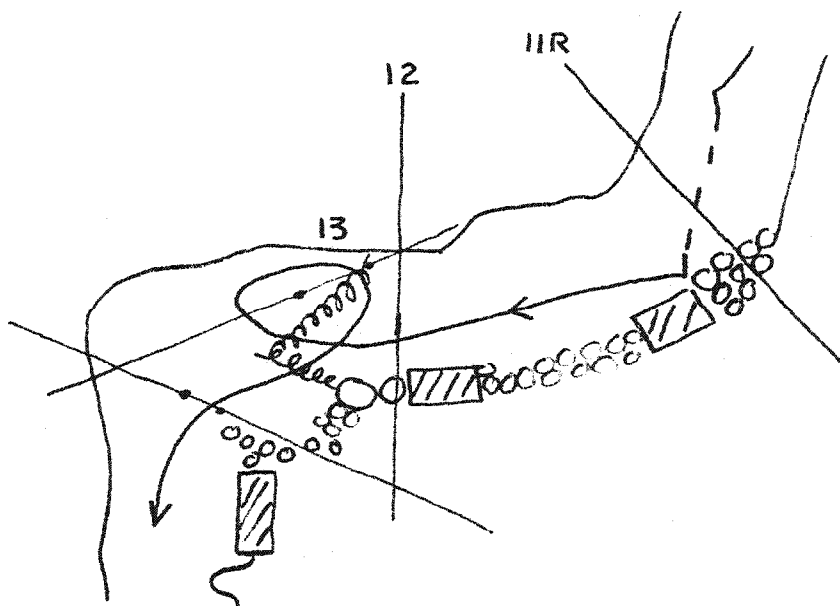
Even so, we ended up low on 13. We blasted up the eddy. Very easy for sternman to hit the pole on 13. We undercut the left pole with the bow and I squirmed around the right pole. After that we drove out into the current and this naturally threw us into 14.

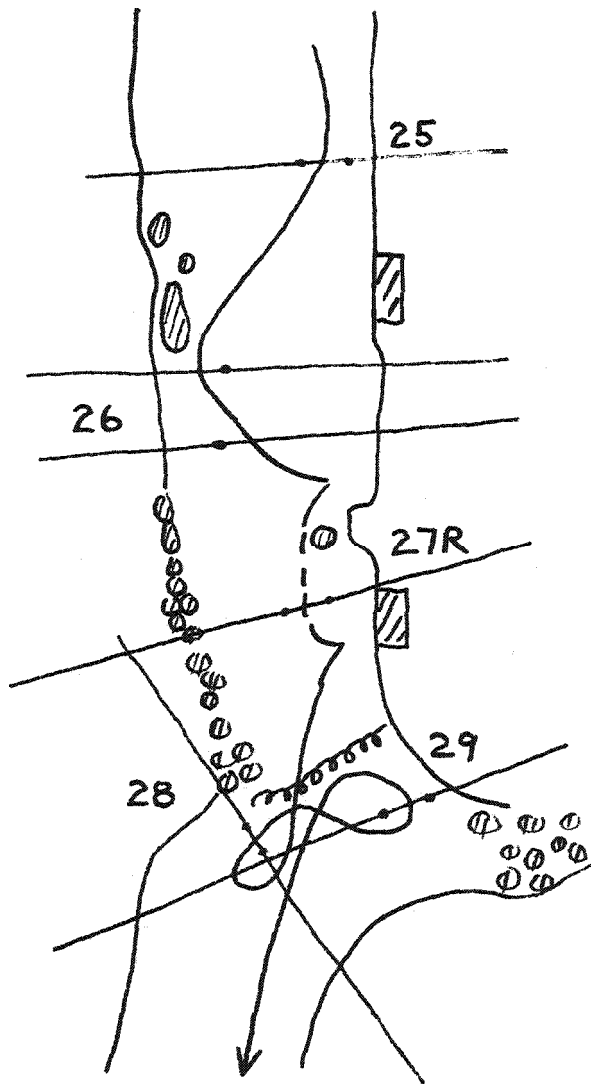
Steve
Gates 11-12

We had to go straight through it to be sure of getting it clean. The waves were high enough so we had to go straight -- no undercutting. We got the stern the as close to shore as possible and then traveled along the shore and undercut the bow to get maximum angle for 13.

Gate 13-14

We undercut the bow on the red. Actually we undercut the tip of the bow while the boat was ferrying from the left side of the gate to the right side. We just got out of the gate without Mike hitting the green pole. Coming out of 13 we rode the curler out right to the end and that put us right in 14. We undercut the bow and stern on 14, in order to get a better angle for 15.





Mike

Gate 25

We kept as close to river left as possible while paddling down to gate 25 so as to be able to get a lot of angle on 25 and thus get set up for gate 26. We went through as sideways as possible, undercutting the bow and stern. This was one of the most crucial moves for us.

Steve

Gate 25

I had to get the boat to change directions from going straight downstream to cutting sharply over to the right bank for gate 26. I did a big draw upstream of the gate (see picture) and leaned back to clear the gate. Then I feathered forwards and took forward strokes.

The big draw did two things. First, it spun the boat so it was headed to the right bank. Secondly, it killed downstream momentum and allowed us to get sideways momentum. I always felt this was one of those desperate moves that always worked!



Getting extreme angle in gate 25 at Bala: "One of those desperate moves that always worked." (Adams Photo)

Mike
Gates 28-29

Steve
Gates 28-29

After 27, we fell over the drop sideways, knowing that the hole was not big enough to hold us. We popped out of the hole very close to 28 upstream. We had to do a little maneuvering or we would have hit it. After coming up through 28 we purposefully

After coming up through 28, we didn't go into the hole. We just didn't have enough energy to do that. So we went on the back side of the hole, staying as high as we could. We came in somewhat low on 29, about 4 feet low which was o.k. because it

stayed out of the hole, and on its backwash instead. We ended up low on 29. We drove up through 29 and I did a reverse sweep very tightly around the pole to avoid as much as possible getting into the hole. Then I started forward strokes as soon as I could.

gave us time to prepare for exiting gate 29. Even though we tried not to get into the hole at all, we wound up sideways in it just a bit. We surfed it right out.

Mike gives his reactions to the second run:

We were very conservative. We were upset with ourselves for the 2 small touches we took on gates 16 and 21R. Down at the bottom of the course I didn't think we'd won, but we had to wait for Welsink-Czupryna and the Caloris to finish.

Steve's reaction was a bit more optimistic:

I thought we had a good chance to win, but it wasn't a great run. We thought that anything more than 10 penalties would be too much. The reason we were scared was because we were very meticulous on our run and had not emphasized speed so we didn't think we'd be fast. Bala was a challenging course and you had to be meticulous. The gates were set at just the angle to make you concentrate. We didn't fully appreciate this until second runs.

The Garvi watched Welsink-Czupryna and then the Caloris go by. The Caloris were leading after first runs. After the race, the Germans explained that since they had been losing to the Caloris all year, they didn't think they would be able to beat them at Bala. But right at the starting line, the Germans heard the announcer screaming that the Garvi had taken over the lead. Realizing that the Caloris were indeed beatable gave the Germans a tremendous psychological boost and they uncorked a run which swept them past the Caloris' first run as well as past Huey-Grabow. But they could not catch the Garvi. The Caloris started after the others so they knew exactly what they had to do to win -- and crumbled. So the order of finish was: Garvis-Garvis, first; Welsink-Czupryna, second; Huey-Grabow, third; and the Caloris, fourth. Although they didn't think they were fast, the Garvi won by 7 seconds -- they could have had another penalty and still won.

"I don't understand, I don't understand, a bewildered Steve Garvis found himself thinking. "We didn't have the ultimate run, and yet we won!"

You train for the perfect run, year after year. But you never can get it. You plan so many things in such great detail that you just can't possibly achieve them all at once in a race.

Looking back on it now, Steve adds poignantly:

Winning gives you the greatest feeling. The confidence it generates has overflowed into every aspect of my life.



Steve Garvis, Mike Garvis (USA); Dieter Welsink, Peter Czupryna (W. Germany); Paul Grabow and Jef Huey (USA); having just won the gold, silver and bronze, respectively (l to r) at Bala. The Garvis brothers have already exchanged helmets with their West German friends. (Abbie Endicott Photo)

Advice

For young C2 teams starting out, Steve and Mike Garvis offer the following advice:

- * You can't think in terms of "I" and "you," but "we." It's a team effort -- never individual. You have to think that way or you'll have problems dealing with each other.
- * Get European race experience. It's so different. There is nothing like it to build confidence.
- * Get big water experience. You feel so much more secure if you can handle it.
- * But also, get big water GATE experience. We spent a lot of time on just the water before Bill Endicott came because we had no organized big water training. By getting that, we learned to cut things really close successfully and consistently.
- * Go wherever you have to go to watch good C2s. it takes too long to figure out everything for yourselves. This is more true in C2 than in any other class.
- * Keep your mind open to new ideas, techniques, boat designs, ways of thinking. Keep an eye on your competition.

- * There is a right way and a wrong way to communicate. In communicating with your partner, the most important thing is the words and tone of voice you choose. Think before you speak, how will your partner react to what you are about to say?
- * Be appreciative of the support your family and friends give you. The support our family and Steve's wife, Trish, have given us over the many years we have been competing, has played a major role in our accomplishments.



"We did it together." Steve (left) and Michael Garvis just after their win at Bala. (Jean Schley Campbell Photo)