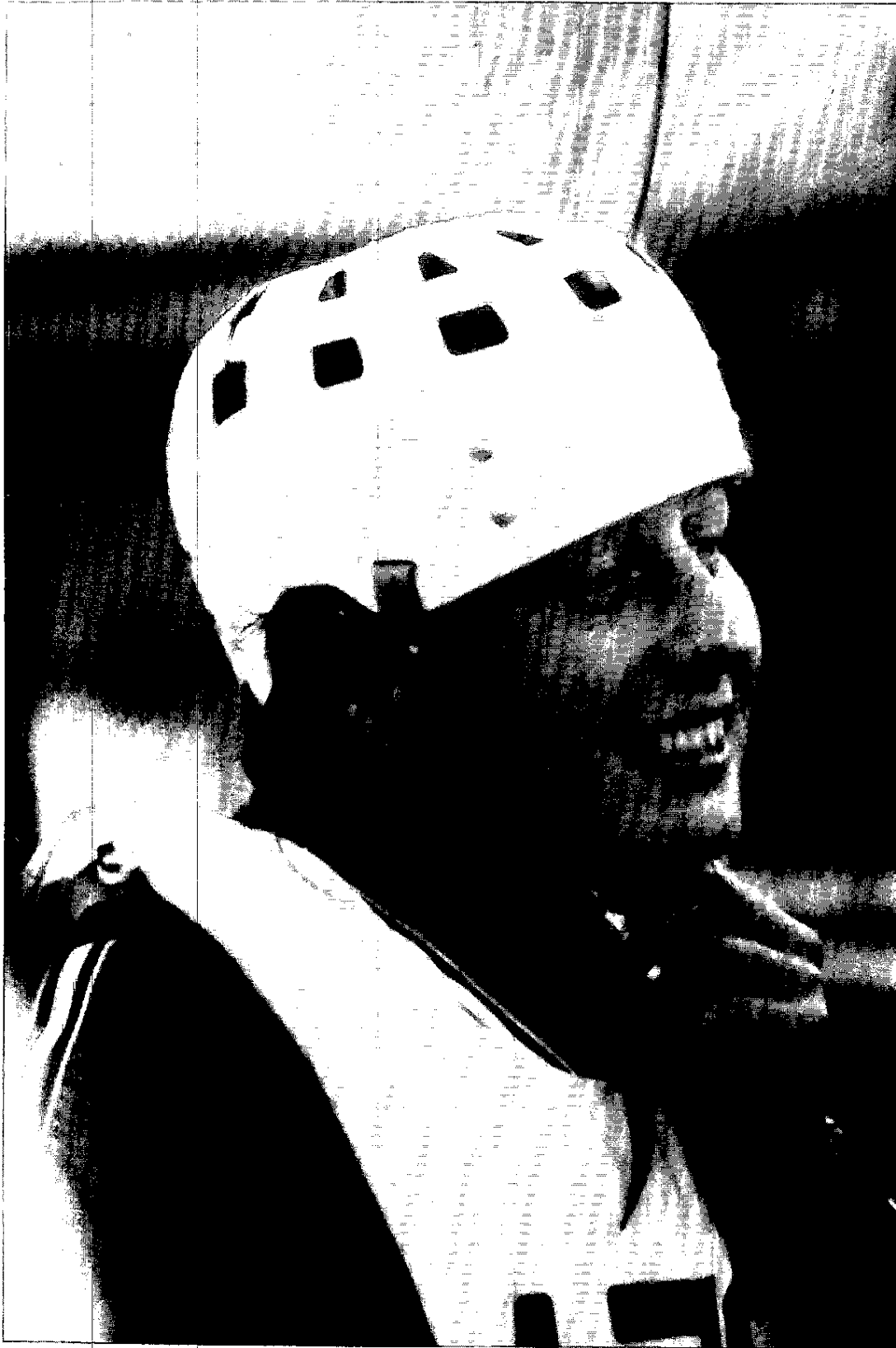


THE OLD VERSUS THE NEW:
Volume Versus Intensity In K1W

The 2 top K1ws in recent years have been Germany's Gisela Grothaus and France's Dominique Gardette. Grothaus has the best record of anyone in downriver, having won the World Championships 3 consecutive times and having been second 3 consecutive times. Her total of 8 gold medals, including team races, is tied with slalomist Manfred Merkel of East Germany as the best record in either slalom or downriver. So far in her downriver career she has entered 106 races (individual competitions only), won 82 of them (77%) and finished second 15 times. On top of this she won a silver medal in slalom at the 1972 Olympic Games. Gardette has one 3rd place finish in the World Championships and two consecutive wins over Grothaus before retiring.

Grothaus and Gardette represent two extremely different ways of training. Grothaus arrived at a set way of training almost 14 years ago and has changed it very little since. She spends a lot of time — about 5 months of the year — out of the boat. This is in large measure due to the cold winter weather in Berlin where she lives. Another reason, she says, is to avoid boredom; she likes to get out of the boat for variety. Finally, Grothaus does more hours of work than Gardette did, but at a lower intensity.

Gardette's international career was much shorter than Grothaus': only 5 years compared to 13 for Grothaus and Gisela is still going. Grothaus started very early in the sport, Gardette quite late. Gardette felt constrained by family commitments, school, and other reasons to limit workout time to the minimum. Thus, in order to be efficient with her time, she did considerably less out-of-the-boat work than Grothaus and more time in the boat at a high intensity, often racing against someone else in practice or at least timing her runs.



Gisela Grothaus, with 8 gold medals, is tied for the best record in slalom or downriver. (Bruno Grange Photo)

GISELA GROTHAUS

I think one reason I was able to go on so long was that I trained on flatwater all the time and really looked forward to races on whitewater.

— Gisela Grothaus

Gisela Grothaus was married during the fall of 1984 and her new name is Steigerwald. However, since all of the events related here were done under her old name, I have used that in this book instead.

Gisela was born in Berlin, February 20, 1955 and lived there all her life except for a period in Augsburg at the time of the 1972 Olympics. She is 1.66 meters tall, weighs 56 kilos, and has a resting pulse of 46-48. Her paddle length has varied over the years:

1973: 213 cms.
1975: 213 "
1977: 214 "
1979: 212 "
1981: 212 "
1983: 210 "

Her father (now retired) was a city administrator in Berlin, and she has one older brother. The entire family has been very active in canoeing. Both of Gisela's parents were canoe tourists: for 10 years they competed against others to see how many kilometers they could do on unknown rivers. Gisela's brother started as a downriver racer, but later went to longer distances and was first in the first Arctic river race a few years ago — 560 kilometers in 1 week.

As a youngster, Gisela participated in school sports "but didn't do anything important." She did, however, discover that she was very good in the 800 meter run, the longest event the school had. Because of her family's involvement with water sports, she "played in the water all the time when I was young, so I had no fear of it."

Began Canoeing

Gisela started canoeing at age 13 in the winter of 1968-69 when she joined the Paddelklub Wiking and learned how to roll in a swimming pool. She is still a member of that club. One of her earliest recollections of her canoeing career is learning to roll. She was watching others try it and then started to make fun of them.

After a while they said, "OK, let's see YOU do it." I said, "Sure, just explain what I'm supposed to do." They did and I succeeded on the very first try. After that they said we need you for the first competition of the year, a downriver race.

That race was on the Alme, near Paderborn and Gisela came in 3rd out of 4 entrants. She did 2 other downriver races that year and also some slaloms.

Our club had no gates so I just paddled around in front of the clubhouse. I learned from watching the others and my parents helped some. But I wasn't involved in the training group; I was too small. It wasn't until several years later that I started to train more and really learned technique.

Ritter-Ritter and Horst Werkmeister

Three people, Armin and Sigrit Ritter and Horst Werkmeister, had very significant impacts upon Grothaus' early career.

In the winter of 1969-70, Gisela started to train regularly. Armin Ritter (of Ritter-Ritter, a C2M downriver team which was Gold Medalist in the team race at the 1973 World Championships and Silver Medalist in individual competition) was in charge of whitewater training in the Berlin area. He had organized sessions once a week.

But I thought this might not be enough; I knew that Ritter-Ritter themselves trained 6 times a week and I asked them if I could join them. Since I was so young I had to get permission from Horst Werkmeister, the flatwater canoe coach who also trained the Ritters.

Influence of the Ritters

Armin and Sigrit Ritter were former flatwater K1 paddlers who had reached a high level in Germany. "They once told me that they had taken up whitewater in order to relax from the flatwater training," Gisela remembers, "but then worked harder than ever!"

They treated me like a daughter. They taught me how to train myself, that if I really wanted to do something, I could do it. Here is an example: At this time we trained on a 3 kilometer flatwater course, with a bridge half way up the course. One workout, when I was neck and neck with the Ritters and we came to the bridge, I thought I was never going to make it. Sigrit yelled at me to get going, and from that day on I never thought about giving up again.

The Ritters also motivated me on whitewater. For example, in slalom training, they kept telling me to do higher eddy turns.

Influence of Werkmeister

Horst Werkmeister now works for the German Canoe Federation (DKV) which has its offices in Duisburg, West Germany. In the late 1960's, he was a flatwater coach in Berlin.

Werkmeister was able to tell whether you were really tired or whether you should do some more. Sometimes we would run at night and he would suddenly jump out of the bushes and urge us to go harder. He was very sensitive, though; he did not ask us to do too much.

He also critiqued our paddling technique. Every Sunday we trained on a rowing course with each 500 meters measured off. We did 5 x 1000 meters; 5 x 500 meters; and 1 x 3000 meters. Werkmeister would sit in the finish tower and watch us with binoculars. Then he would talk to us via a radio receiver he taped to the back deck of our boats.

Setting the Pattern of Training

At this time — the late 1960s — Grothaus established a type of yearly training that has stayed pretty much the same for the rest of her life. There were only 3 changes; after 1973 she cut back severely on her slalom training; she steadily increased the volume of what she had been doing; and she added cross-country skiing and biking to her repertoire. Gisela explains:

I think it's very important that the body be very used to the training so that it can continue to respond well to it. If you keep changing the type of stimulus, I feel the body does not respond as well.

Here is Gisela's yearly schedule for 1969-70:

WINTER. 7 Workouts a week, with Friday completely off.

2 x weights (with Horst Werkmeister)

3 x run, after which on 2 occasions do a weight circuit (with Werkmeister)

1 x gym, basketball or other games (with Armin Ritter)

1 x on her own

SUMMER. Gisela travelled with the German National Team

Gisela recalls how that first year went:

This was a cold winter and we couldn't get into the boat very much. But we were able to transfer from out-of-the-boat training to boat training fairly well. We were late getting into the boat but we had a good physical base.

Gisela won her first race that year, in the junior class, at Monschau in May, which was a "big surprise." Thereafter she placed second in a race and because of these results was appointed to the senior German team, there being no formal team selection method that year.

Before departing with the team, however, she mildly dislocated her right shoulder during a river run. While she recovered from this in time to go with the team, there were lasting consequences because this was the same shoulder she was to dislocate in 1972 shortly before the Olympics.

During her entire competitive career Gisela went to school during the day and trained around that. In the early years that meant she could train only in the afternoon after school. She still follows this pattern today since she is finishing up University where she has been studying French literature and physical education. "Training and going to school at the same time has been good for me," Gisela says, "because it makes me budget my time well." In 1970 she was able to get permission to skip 3-4 weeks of school to be with the team. "My teacher was very understanding; it was a close cooperation between teacher, me, and my parents."

In the first race, Merano, Gisela did not finish. She got caught under a bridge in a life-threatening position and had to be pulled out. "After Merano they asked me whether I was scared of whitewater," Gisela recalls. "I realized that if I said 'yes,' I'd have to go back to school, so I said 'no.'"

In the next race, at Muota, she placed 6th.

"In this first year," Gisela explains, "I learned river technique by following people down the river. I learned from Max Wiegand and Sigi Gunzenberger not to go through the waves, but just to the side of them."

Slalom

After the downriver season was over, around July, Gisela started paddling slalom. She went to Augsburg to train for the German Championships. This was on the old Augsburg course, the new Olympic course not yet having been built.

It was good roll practice for me. I rolled everywhere and from every position. At first I was not allowed to be in the German Championships because normally you had to qualify. But this requirement was waived and I was allowed to compete in the junior class. Magda Wunderlich was ahead after first runs but I won on the second run.

1970-71

1971 was a World Championship year, at Merano, Italy. Gisela kept a training log for that year but it was the last one she ever kept. She explains why: "For many years Armin Ritter set the training plan and helped organize my training. Since he kept records I saw no need to do so myself." Unfortunately, those records have since been thrown away.

Gisela started training in October. She worked out only once a day for the whole year except during summer training camps when it was twice a day. From October to February, she did 4-7 workouts a week, consisting of the following:

- * 4-15 kilometer paddle if weather permitted
- * 2 x running: 40 mins. non-stop
30 mins. on hills
- * 1 x gymnastics: rope climb; parallel bars; and a series of special exercises for fast reactions. Each exercise was given the name of a color and whenever the coach yelled that color, the athletes immediately had to switch to that exercise. Gisela and the group she trained with felt compelled to use the gym way into March — when they should have been outdoors — "because if we didn't, we were afraid people would say we didn't really need it at all and never let us use it, even during the winter."
- * 1 x basketball
- * 1 x weight circuit. This consisted of 24 mins. of work using light weights done as 2 series of 2 mins. at each of 12 work stations. The exercises included:
 - One arm bench press
 - Flies
 - Sit-ups
 - 2 arm bench press
 - Curls
 - Pulling on pulleys
 - Pushing on pulleys
 - "Armkreisen", i.e. moving the arms in a circular motion
 - Back-ups

"This was very good," Gisela says. "I did these with Werkmeister. He put me near a mirror where I could see myself and work on technique. On the Armkreisen, for example, it was important not to cross the hands over the body too much — the same as in paddling. Werkmeister would walk around the room and observe us."

* 1 x heavy weights for strength. She did 5-10 repetitions of:

Pushing
Pulling
Back-ups with weights
Pull-ups
Sit-ups with a sack of sand

Gisela didn't like this workout very much. "In the first place, I didn't think the heavy weights were good. Secondly, I didn't like the group of people I was with; they were always trying to avoid work. So after a while I left them."

Regarding weight training in general, Gisela has these observations:

If you can paddle outdoors all year it's better than lifting. But in Berlin I can't do this; it's too cold. Also, for me there's a boredom factor from being in the boat too much. For the year before Bala I was in France for the winter and paddled all year, but I got bored.

For downriver, I think it's important to work on long distance training. But if it's cold, it's not good to be in the boat for hours and hours. Swimming in a pool is a good substitute, but I didn't like the water in my eyes, so eventually I took up cross-country skiing.

Starting at the end of February, Grothaus paddled outdoors once a week — "for about 75 minutes, just to get used to the boat again." During the first week in March she started paddling twice a week in the boat. For all of March she and her group had the use of an indoor swimming pool to practice slalom in.

Gisela spent the first and second week of April in France with the German squad, "which was very good because we had warm weather and a change of environment."

For the third week in April, Gisela started more boat training. During the week she did:

* 90 mins. paddling in downriver boat for technique at a pulse rate of 150-160

- * Intervals in gates for 70 mins. at the same pulse rate
- * 30 mins., endurance in downriver boat with 4 min. pieces at maximum effort (2 x 4 mins.)

Gisela competed in 10 races that spring. "But in later years I cut down on the number because I felt I wasn't recovering sufficiently from them."

The team selection trials were during the third week in May, on the Loisach. Here Gisela placed 1st, 4th and 3rd in the 3 races and thereby qualified for the German team. She did not compete in the slalom trials, preferring instead to concentrate on downriver for the World Championships.

After the team trials, Gisela came back to Berlin where "I had a problem not being on whitewater any more. Also I had less time for training." Another interruption in her downriver training came when she attended an international slalom in Austria. But shortly thereafter there was an international downriver race in Muotathal, Switzerland, which she won, so just before the World Championships, things appeared to be going very well for her.

Merano 1971

Gisela was in Merano for 3 weeks prior to the World Championships. When she got there she trained twice a day for 13 days straight, took one day off and then trained twice a day for another week before the race. Understandably, she was tired on race day.

Furthermore, Gisela's race boat, a new Prijon Phantom Sprint, did not arrive on time for her to outfit it properly before the race. "The same thing happened to Burny," she says. "I had problems with the boat; every time I was in waves I had a lot of difficulty controlling it and lost time.

On the first splits, I heard I was behind by 1 second. Even though that was not very much, I let it bother me excessively, to the extent that I didn't concentrate on the course properly.

Gisela finished in 5th place, the last of the German girls, and as a result wasn't in the team race.

Training Slalom

Gisela explains how she turned to slalom in the wake of a disappointing downriver finish:

After the Worlds I was really upset with my performance; I had been first in the team trials and last of the Germans at Merano. Karl Heinz Englet (Silver Medalist in R1 in the 1963 Worlds) said, "Why don't you come to Augsburg and train slalom for the Olympics? You can stay with my parents."

Grothaus did this. During a 6-week school holiday, she lived in Augsburg and trained on the new Olympic course twice a day. There wasn't much organization to the training; "every time I could, I paddled on the canal in gates."

I rolled a lot and this impressed the men. Even they didn't roll all that well back then. I probably swam only 3 times the entire 6 weeks I was there. From the start of the course to the finish, it took me a lot of rolls. The first one usually came in the very first eddy on river left. I was using a Hahn at that time which was pretty unstable. Later on I switched to a Lettmann which was a lot better. In training with the men they wanted me to do easier gates than they did, but I never did that, with the result that I flipped a lot.

Gisela did manage to learn some slalom technique in the midst of all this rolling, however, because in the evening Helmut Handschuh was there to coach her. "He gave me elementary slalom training," Gisela recalls; "how to do upstreams and so on. He even told me when to rest!"

Originally the West German Olympic Team was to be chosen in the fall of 1971. But this was later changed to a two-part selection method, with the first round coming in the fall and the last round in the spring. Gisela came in 4th in the first round, good enough to make the top 6 which advanced to the final selection. "I rolled on both my runs but many favorites swam," she says.

After this she returned to Berlin. She did the German championships in downriver on the Rissbach river in Austria and came in 4th. Then she started winter training, the same as in previous years, all out of the boat with Ritter and Werkmeister.

In February and March, however, Gisela was in Courcheval, France with the national training squad to do some conditioning training. "It was here that I also learned to do downhill skiing," Gisela adds, "and every year thereafter I managed to escape from Berlin to do downhill skiing and later on, cross-country skiing."

Training in Augsburg Again

In the middle of April she returned to Augsburg where she joined the Schwaben-Augsburg club. She lived there until the Olympics were over 5 months later. Gunther Brummer, for many years the German team coach, was at Augsburg then and worked with Gisela, and many other German Olympic team hopefuls, including: Alfred Baum (5th in the Olympics in K1); Uli Peters (4th in the Olympics in K1); Wolfgang Peters (5th in the Olympics in C1); and Magda Wunderlich (3rd in the Olympics in K1W). Gisela tells what it was like:

Normally we were on the Icecanal course or one of the other canals twice a day. In addition to this I did some running:

10-15 minutes, including some sprints, twice a week. Werkmeister told me this was the fastest way to get conditioning. I also did some medicine ball training with Brummer. I worked very well with Brummer. He was very cooperative. He motivated me when I failed to make certain combinations on the course. I could go to him if I had any questions.

At the final team selection trials in May, Gisela was 1st. In order to make the team one had to win one of 3 races. Gisela won the first, Magda Wunderlich won the 2nd, and Ulrike Deppe won the 3rd.

After the trials there was a race in Landech where Gisela did poorly --6th or 7th:

It wasn't the Icecanal! Other people had a lot more experience than I did on flatwater or easily moving water. For example, I always tried to keep paddling in the gates, which worked well at Augsburg. Others, like Ulrike Deppe tried to lead the boat through the gates with duffek strokes and while this worked well on normal rivers, it didn't work well at Augsburg.

From this point on much of the training at Augsburg consisted of full length runs on the course — Helmut Handschuh's idea. "This was very good for me because I saw the places where I would mess up — never the same place."

Shoulder Dislocation

Ten days before the Olympics, Grothaus had another dislocation of her right shoulder. "It happened because I was too tired," she explains.

I was trying to avoid rolling so much and one time when I did a low brace to avoid capsizing, I pushed and pushed and out came the shoulder. I swam. I had the shoulder relocated on the bank. At first they told me I had a fracture and I thought the Olympics were over for me. But later x-rays showed it wasn't a fracture. They strapped the shoulder down, but I had to keep moving it a little so there wouldn't be loss of muscle tone. So I played Ping-Pong and could beat everyone at it. I was out of the boat for 10 days. I had electrotherapy to exercise the muscles. Also I did a special type of gymnastics for dislocated shoulders: I moved the arm until the point that it started to hurt and then stopped. I did no other training at all.

The Olympics

Gisela was 21st after first runs, with Magda Wunderlich in 1st.

In between first and second runs, my helmet disappeared. After the race it reappeared in the room where the boats were being stored. I think now that someone was trying to break my concentration by hiding it. At the start I heard one of the East Germans say one of their girls, Angelika Bahmann, had just gone ahead of Magda. I concentrated very hard. On the upper part of the course I had no penalties and the fastest split of anyone. When the crowd heard this they roared — something I wasn't used to! I hit the next 3 gates in succession, both poles on each — 60 penalties, the same as Magda and Bahmann. But Bahmann had picked up 30 seconds on me on the bottom part of the course because she had a boat that could sneak all the gates. She won. I couldn't believe that I was second with that many penalties.



Grothaus won a silver medal in the 1972 Olympic Games. (Sainer/NOP Photo)

After the Olympics

After the Games, Gisela had to return to school in Berlin. She had had to miss a lot of school because of the Olympics and had to repeat half a year. Slalom training in Berlin was poor, "but I decided to do both slalom and downriver because my training was the same for both anyway."

Training was similar to what it had been in past winters, except that Grothaus did no running this year because of a knee injury. Instead she did interval training on a bicycle: 2 minutes on, 2 minutes off for 40 minutes. At the end of February she started paddling outdoors, "at first once a week, then twice a week, so there is a good transition between winter and spring training." Grothaus won the team selection trials for the Muotathal World Championships by 40 seconds. Two days later she was 3rd in the slalom trials.

The Muotathal Downriver World Championships

Downriver training at Muota was quite simple; the only thing Grothaus did was full length runs, 2 in the morning and 1 in the afternoon. Before the race she did 1 time trial. Gisela felt the German team worked well together.

Here is Gisela's account of what happened:

It was a rather easy course — big waves, but not very technical. It was easy to find the ideal line. On race day it was very cold. I had some trouble with my arms at the start because of this. After a while, though, there was no problem. On the first split, I was 6 seconds behind Elsbeth Kaeser (of Switzerland), who was an unknown to me then. But in the slalom course I heard I was even with her. Finally I won by about 8 seconds (over teammate Ulrike Deppe in second and Kaeser in third).

The team of Grothaus, Deppe and Wunderlich won the team race by 27 seconds over the Americans. This completed a sweep of all 5 team races for the German team.

Slalom World Championships

It rained during the slalom World Championships and the water level rose dramatically. Gisela had great problems with the course, especially the upstreams. She rolled on each run and came in 17th. "All those who participated in both downriver and slalom didn't do well in the slalom," Gisela adds.

Things did not go well in the slalom team race either, with Gisela's team coming in 5th.

Ulrike was sick and couldn't race. We had to use our fourth girl and she didn't know the course well. If Ulrike had paddled we

would have done well I think: even the East Germans were impressed by our team training.

Influence of Slalom

Unlike other paddlers interviewed for this book, Grothaus does not feel that her slalom training and racing had much of an effect on her downriver racing. "Other than downriver conditioning being good for slalom and the familiarity with rolling that I got through slalom, I can't say that there was much relationship at all." She did not think that the ability to reaccelerate the slalom boat helped at all in downriver:

In downriver, I think it's better to keep a constant rate in the waves. I think that 1 minute is as short a period as you need to accelerate for in downriver. If you accelerate for 10 seconds at maximum, you run the risk of developing too much lactic acid and making a mistake. I'm much more concerned about maintaining a maximum speed over the whole course than I am about reaccelerating the boat.

After winning the German Championships in slalom in 1973, Gisela stopped training for slalom altogether, although she did continue to race from time to time and even won the German Championships again in 1975 and 1977.

1974 Season

Gisela enjoyed a mild winter in Berlin and thus was able to get on the water sooner than usual. She trained often with two other people (who were not on the German team). She lengthened the duration of the paddling sessions because she knew that the length of the race courses was to be longer this year. Gisela won the Europa Cup by coming in first at Lesse, Belgium; second at Merano; and first at Garmisch.

After the downriver season was over, Gisela raced flatwater. She had first paddled K2 in 1972 with Renate Breuer, who had been Olympic Champion in K1W, but now she trained seriously in the discipline.

As a result, Gisela had the following placings in the German Championships in 1974:

3rd in slalom
3rd in K2 flatwater
1st in downriver

But Gisela recalls that it was too much work: "I think this was too many things. The other 2 did not help my downriver. Ritter didn't like this, either."

1975

Training for the 1975 World Championships was the same as in the past. In May, however, Gisela was in a race in Dusseldorf where she came in 3rd to Britain's Hillary Peacock (now Boshier) and Pauline Squires-Goodwin.

I kept hearing that I was behind in the splits. Finally I lost by 47 seconds. I couldn't believe it. As a result, I started training much harder — 2 times a day for a month and a half. Without this, I would not have won the Worlds at Skopje. At Dusseldorf, I learned that I wasn't training with enough intensity. I was doing the same things as in the past, but I wasn't going hard enough. This taught me not to be complacent about my training even though I was winning.

Gisela remembers Skopje:

The ladies' course on the Radika was very short (13 minutes) so there was no time to make a mistake. The food was bad and I lost weight — which was good for the shallow water course. I was behind at the start. When I caught up, though, I broke my concentration and hit a rock. Still I won by 6 seconds (over Squires-Goodwin and Peacock).

In July and August of 1975, Gisela was at the Madawaska Canoe Camp in Canada. There she instructed slalomists Cathy (triple World Champion in 1979) and David Hearn (3 times Silver Medalist in C1). "Playing in the warm water was great," Gisela recalls, "I had a good experience teaching canoeing and practicing my English."

1976

Training in 1976 followed the same pattern as before except that now she added more Alpine skiing in Switzerland during the Christmas holidays. Gisela won all 3 Europa Cup races (and thus the Cup) again that year, but was second in the Pre-World Championships at Spittal.

One week before the race, I was skiing in the Alps. Then, I went paddling at altitude. After that, at Spittal, I played tennis as well as trained in the boat. It was too much and I was really tired for the race. I learned not to do that again.

In September, she did her first canoe marathon race — 42 kilometers. She won by 3 minutes with a time of 3 hours and 45 minutes. To train for this she did 25 kilometers a day 4 times a week — "I learned from this that it was really important to keep good technique, otherwise it gets too hard."

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1977

In 1977, Gisela added cross-country skiing to her training. This year she did about 3 weeks of it, "about 1-2 hours every afternoon." She learned about it not from someone in Berlin, but during those 3 weeks she was with Elsbeth Kaeser in Switzerland. Every winter after this, Gisela did a lot of cross-country skiing, including competitions at distances from 5-90 kilometers. In 1978, she started roller-skiing: "this is better than being in the boat if it's really cold out." In 1981, she participated in the German national championships in cross-country skiing and came in 10th. She even passed examinations to become an instructor in the sport. Gisela discusses the psychological influence of cross-country skiing:

For me it's important to have a new source of motivation, some variety. But cross-country uses nearly the same muscles as you use in downriver, which is good. Some people feel it's better to be in the boat all the time, but I need the break. Also, I did a few competitions in cross-country skiing, and it was important for me to see that even if I was the best in downriver, I was not the best in cross-country. When the winter was over I felt motivated to be in the boat again.

More on the values of cross-country skiing:

There are a lot of ways to ski cross-country. You can do it only with the arms if you want to, or mostly with the legs. I feel skiing cross-country up hills is better than running because you use your arms so much. Also there is no shock in cross-country skiing — unlike running.

In the boat, Gisela used longer distances than before because it hadn't been decided what the length of the World Championship course would be. But on the whole, she trained no differently for the Lieser, a big river, than she did for the Radika, a shallow one.

I was upset that in recent years they had often switched to a shorter course for the ladies at the last minute. It was hard to know what distance to train for during the year. If you are going to race 14 minutes, in training you pay more attention to a high stroke rate and higher intensity than if you are going to race 24 minutes.

At Spittal, the German team did not train all together and Gisela often ran the river alone. The team did do some of the river in sections, however, because it still hadn't been decided whether the ladies would run the whole course or not.

To learn which was the fastest route, Gisela sometimes drifted sections with someone else. She and her partner did one passage twice, then switched passages

and repeated the experiment. Gisela continues the explanation of the training at Spittal:

Normally we did 4 runs a day, 2 in the morning and 2 in the afternoon. Sometimes we went to the lake for recovery workouts — 30-50 mins. We had planned to do some sprints on the lake, but I had a small problem with my tonsils and was scared I might get a temperature so I never did them. I had some boat problems at Spittal. I thought I was faster in the old (Prijon) Hai, but the watch said I was faster in the new Hai, so that's what I used in the race.

The Race

It was finally decided that the ladies would run the short course in the World Championships because the water had risen and the long course was deemed too hard for them. Here is what Gisela remembers about the race:

I felt it was important to be ahead on the first split. In the past, I had always been behind. This time I was ahead right from the beginning. In the middle of the course there was a hard part where it was important not to touch; I didn't. Near the finish there was a passage where many routes were possible. It wasn't easy to see the best one, but I got it. I won by 10 seconds (over Kaeser).

The next day, Gisela and the German team also won the team race.

1978

In the winter Grothaus continued to increase the amount of cross-country skiing she did. It is interesting to note that it was 1978 when Gisela first told Claude Benezit about cross-country skiing. As we have seen in the Benezit chapter, he was to do a lot of cross-country skiing, and for 1983, probably too much.

In the spring for the first time Gisela did a 2-week flatwater clinic in Castel Gandolfo outside of Rome, Italy with flatwater paddlers. It was possible to live right there.

The idea was to be able to paddle outdoors easily and do long distances. I probably did too much — probably 30-40 kilometers a day in 2-3 sessions a day, plus running a half hour 3 times a week in the evening.

Nevertheless, Gisela won the Europa Cup for the third time, once again winning all 3 races: at Spindleruv Mlyn, Czechoslovakia; Bala, Wales; Bourg St. Maurice, France. She also won the Pre-World Championships at Des Biens, Canada.

1979 Season

Gisela encountered a number of problems, both physical and psychological, in the year leading up to the Jonquiere World Championships. There she came in second to France's Dominique Gardette.

During the winter of 1978-79, Gisela read about Dr. Ernst Van Aaken (1910-1983) for a school assignment. Developing his theories in the late 1940s, Van Aaken was probably the earliest proponent of long distance running as the best way to achieve physical fitness. He was one of those responsible for the long distance jogging boom that has swept the world in the last decade.

I was impressed by his theory about very long distances at heart beats of 130 a minute as being the best way to get fit. As a result I started to cut down the intensity of my training — but I didn't increase the distance. At the same time in Germany there was a lot of discussion in the universities about too much stress growing out of athletic competition, and that as a result athletes were having trouble fitting into society well.

Because of these two items, Gisela probably did not work out as hard as she should have.

Another error was attempting to increase her stroke rate:

I was advised to cut my paddle down to increase my stroke rate. We had seen in tests that I had a very long stroke and a low stroke rate. But in retrospect I think this effort to change my rate was a mistake: A faster rate is just not efficient for me.

A third problem centered around boats:

I should have used the Hai again, but instead I switched to the Mendesta. At the German championships in May on the Loisach I was not comfortable in the Mendesta and made mistakes I never made before. I tried to get a French boat (the Mag 2) because it had less volume but the French said they wouldn't sell me one.

Finally, the German selection races weren't long enough. The 3 selection races were 19, 18, and 12 minutes long respectively, whereas the World Championship race was 24 minutes.

In the spring before the World Championships, Gisela went to France for a weekend and, in a borrowed boat, lost to Dominique Gardette for the first time.

At Jonquiere

The training camp at Des Biens did not go well, either:

The girls didn't get along together. We said hello in the morning and then everyone went her own way. I felt isolated. This time we did the river in sections in training to figure out what was the fastest route. We were there about 10 days. I had trouble remembering the landmarks on the river. The coaches weren't very helpful. I wasn't motivated to race.

The Race

When I heard the first split, I was 5 seconds behind Gardette. I didn't even react; it was as though there was someone else in the boat, not me. I rolled in an easy place where normally I wouldn't flip. I had no concentration. I thought maybe this would be my last World Championships.

Gisela wound up in second, 19:47.68 to 19:38.67. She came away from the experience with some rather negative feelings: "I was really fed up with the German Federation; I thought maybe I should stop canoeing." That winter she started competitive bicycle riding and increased the amount of cross-country skiing she did.

1980

In 1980, Gisela had a resurgence of interest in paddling and once again won all 3 Europa Cup races:

1980 was a very good year for us. At Easter we had a good training camp at Garmisch. We felt we could beat the other nations only when we worked together. We did a lot on our own initiative — didn't wait for coaches to help. We had a great team spirit and I think that is why I won. I felt that even if Gardette had been there I would have won.

1981

Training this year was quite different than in the past because from October to March, Gisela was in Toulouse, France, studying. Here she could paddle outside all year long.

But this wasn't good for me because I got bored with boating. I wasn't used to being in the boat so much. I didn't do much cross-country skiing; no weight lifting; and very little gymnastics. But I did do a lot of long distance running. When I returned to Berlin at the end of March, I tried to go back to my old training.

Grothaus was 1st, 1st, and 2nd in the German team selection trials. Once again, the course was not of the same length as the upcoming World Championship course; 24 minutes compared to 29 for Bala.

Six weeks before the World Championships, Grothaus went to Wales to paddle on the Tryweryn. There she had some bad luck. She hit a rock, slipped in the boat and cut a muscle on her shin. She had to take some time off from training. But instead of leading to a depression, Grothaus experienced just the opposite feeling: "Being on crutches made me stronger! I had a little time to rest. I felt I could win."

The Race

At Bala, Grothaus did 4 runs a day, 2 in the morning and 2 in the afternoon. She tapered to 1 run a day right at the end.

The race did not go well, however:

I had a good split initially, but it got worse as the race went on. At one point I thought they were telling me "down 10 seconds," when in reality they were saying "down 1 second." I can't explain why I thought that. But at this point I really fell apart; I lost even more time. I began to think, "Well, maybe I trained wrong this year." At the beginning of the last flat section, Burny was there, saying "Go, go, go!" — he was so excited, I thought he was going to jump on my boat. I really hurried up and picked up a lot — but not quite enough.

Gisela fell short to Gardette once again, 29:00.87 to 28:58.82. She was, however, on the winning team for the team race.

A fortnight later, though, on the Ubaye I beat her. At first everyone pretended not to take the race seriously. But after seeing Gardette warm up I realized she was taking it very seriously, so I did, too.

1982

In the winter of 1981-82 Gisela did a lot of cross-country racing, including some training at high altitude. Once again, there was the problem of not knowing what downriver distance to train for: the Pre-Worlds' course in Merano was only 11 minutes long and the Europa Cup courses varied from 19 to 26 minutes. Gisela was sick at the first Europa Cup race, Treignac, France, and placed 3rd there. But she won the other two — Simme, and Lofer — and for the fifth consecutive time, she won the Europa Cup. She also won the Pre-Worlds at Merano.

In July, Gisela started doing more bicycling. She also trained for flatwater, the K1W 500 and 6000 meters. In the German championships she had her best time ever in the 500 heats — a 2:01 — but was then taken to the hospital because of an appendicitis scare. The appendicitis was not removed until the following year, after the World Championships. "Sometimes during the year it hurt," Gisela says, "and when it did I went to the doctor, but it wasn't acute pain."

That autumn she did a lot of roller-skiing and bicycling up mountains. Preparation for Merano was the same as in previous years.

Training at Merano

Gisela went to Merano 10 days before the World Championships. Sometimes she ran the course in sections. "Again no one was sure of the length of the ladies' course," complains Gisela.

Here we were right before the World Championships and we still didn't know how long the course would be. I said we ought to boycott the race! Then I saw one of our coaches getting ready for a long drive: He was going to get the team alternate and replace me!

There were other problems with the coaches, too. Gisela's fiance, Rainer, offered to help by taking videos of training sessions showing the ladies running difficult passages. His offer was refused.



Grothaus during her second place run at the Merano World Championships in 1983. (Will Summers Photo)

In the race itself, Gisela started out behind on the splits, as she had planned to do. During the race, she caught up and passed another girl. But this girl didn't get out of the way immediately and Gisela wound up second to teammate Dagmar Stupp 23:54.81 to 23:53.36. The next day the German team won the team race handily.

After Merano, Grothaus took a year off, to finish up university. In the fall of 1963 she married Rainer Steigerwald, a former track athlete who is now a physician. In commenting on Gisela's athletic ability, he told me:

She knows exactly what she needs to do. She knows precisely what training load to do and can train to a peak at exactly the right time.

Gisela is now training for the Garmisch World Championships.

Looking Back

In reviewing an extremely long and successful career, Gisela has the following thoughts:

- * If I had it to do over again, I would do sports, but maybe not canoeing. The administration of paddling in Germany is so bad that I wouldn't want to do canoeing again even though I like the sport.
- * Don't blindly follow the program of a coach; learn the basic principles of training and then think for yourself.
- * In working out methods of choosing the fastest route, use something really simple so you won't have to depend on anyone else.
- * Don't neglect the rest of your life; you probably won't be able to live off sports.
- * Be careful when you are under mental stress not to try to do the same amount of training you'd normally do. It's been proven that if you do, you'll get an overtraining effect.
- * I think one reason I was able to go on so long was that I trained on flatwater all the time and really looked forward to races on whitewater.

DOMINIQUE GARDETTE

"I feel that a workout at low intensity is a waste."

— Dominique Gardette

Dominique Gardette is the only woman ever to win the K1W World Championships for France. But next to Gisela Grothaus, she is probably the greatest woman downriver paddler ever. Gardette was third in 1977 and won in 1979 and 1981, beating Grothaus both of the last two times.

It wasn't exactly easy for Gardette: She started late in the sport and had to overcome appendicitis and childbirth to win.



Dominique Gardette on her way to a gold medal at Bala in 1981. (Kevin Clifford Photo)

Start

Dominique Gardette was born June 10, 1954 in Privas, in the Ardeche region of France. Her maiden name was Berrigaud, and it was under this name that she won third place in the Spittal World Championships. Her race height and weight were 1.64 meters and 57 kilos respectively, and she used a 212 centimeter paddle at Bala — "a little bit longer than the Jonquiere paddle."

Dominique lived in Privas until she was 18 years old at which time she went away to study at the University of Genoble. Her father worked in the Social Security department. Dominique has one older sister. None of the family was active in sports.

Sports, however, have always had an attraction for Dominique (she is now a physical education instructor) and she engaged in the following sports before taking up canoeing:

- * Basketball: 4-5 years.
- * Running: cross-country in the winter. She was "good at the regional level only."
- * Race walking: she did 3 years of this and in 1971 was third in the French Junior National Championships. She raced distances of 3-5 kilometers.
- * Judo: Dominique did judo for 3-4 years and attained the level of blue belt.

In retrospect, she feels that this involvement in other sports helped her canoeing by giving her basic endurance, the knowledge of how to train, and judo gave her suppleness and balance.

Thus, although Dominique started downriver training late in life, she had done a lot of other sports before that and there never was a period in which she did not engage in some sort of physical exercise.

Beginning Canoeing

Dominique started a physical education course at the University of Grenoble in the fall of 1972 and during the first year she did a lot of different sports. That September, at age 19, she started canoeing. Her girl friend, Denise Regnier, who was on the French downriver team in the 1973 (and 1975) World Championships, got her interested in it. Dominique went to her first training camp, for beginners, in a slalom boat. She talks about her thoughts of that time:

I think downriver training can be very tiring and if people start it too young, they tend to give it up too early, before they reach their physical peak. So you don't want to start too early.

It's usual to start out in slalom. There are a lot of women who are afraid to do downriver because they are alone on the river. So they prefer slalom. But it's a lot easier logistically to train for downriver.

After the first training camp in slalom boats, I had the opportunity to continue. I was in the Ardeche region where Claude Peschier (1969 World Champion in K1 slalom) lived. He taught me slalom. At this time I did only slalom.

In the spring of 1974, Dominique learned slalom techniques, including how to make eddy turns, and how to ferry in waves. She paddled only on weekends, however, and didn't actually train at this time. She tried — and failed — to qualify for the French Championships in slalom that year. That summer she paddled a little bit but not very much.

1975

The next year, however, Dominique succeeded in qualifying for the French Championships:

I made it, but with difficulty. I tipped over a lot. I still didn't really train at this time, however. Around May I started paddling once a week. At the French Championships I swam in the downriver race, but was second to Joceline Roupioz in slalom.

1976

It was only in June of 1976 that Dominique started serious training. She was now 22 years old.

For school we had to choose a sport, so I chose canoeing. I chose downriver over slalom because I didn't like the idea of a penalty for a little touch of the pole. At that time my race results were about the same in slalom and downriver. There were plenty of good rivers in France so it was a lot of fun to train downriver.

For my physical education course it was necessary to have a good result in a sport and I thought I could probably get a better one in downriver than in slalom. I did all right in slalom, but I was always way off Joceline Roupioz. In downriver, however, I was always at or near the top.

I suppose the final reason I chose downriver over slalom was because my boy friend (and later husband), Jean-Paul, did not like slalom.

I trained 3 times a week now, mostly downriver training on flat water. But I still did some slalom, too. Usually, I trained alone.

I still had a lot of problems in downriver, though. I did only 2 courses correctly in 1976. I did a good course at the Pre-World Championships at Spittal and was 18th, the best French girl.

In talking about the Pre-Worlds, Dominique recalls a real boost in her drive to win:

Most of the French team had had very good results at the Pre-Worlds. The only category that didn't was my class. I was more than 1 minute off Grothaus. I resolved to get 1 minute faster. I was really motivated to be selected for the World Championships and to do well there. In September, after the Pre-Worlds, I started training with more intensity.

Training for the Spittal World Championships

Dominique Gardette does not keep a training log — "many times I tried to keep one but I wasn't able to do it" — so one has to rely on her memory of what she did. Her training for the 1977 World Championships consisted of the following:

- * 3 times a week in the boat.
- * Running once a week.
- * Cross-country skiing: once during the week, and on Saturday and Sunday.
- * River runs in the fall and the spring.

Boat Training

Dominique's boat training at this time consisted of a lot of continuous paddling. "I tried to go as fast as possible for time over a 45-minute course of flatwater." She did this on the Isere river at Grenoble, this being her last year as a student there.

She also did time trials on an artificial lake near a highway. The course there was about 14 minutes long.

From time to time, she also did the Grand Tour de Piles (see Doux-Bunichon chapter) in Lyon, where her boy friend, Jean-Paul lived.

In March, Dominique started doing the following training:

- a. 30 secs. hard, 30 secs. easy.
60 " " 60 " "
90 " " 90 " "
120 " " 120 " "
150 " " 120 " "
180 " " 120 " "

Then go back down.

OR

- b. 10 secs. hard, 10 secs. easy.
20 " " 20 " "
30 " " 30 " "
40 " " 40 " "
50 " " 50 " "
60 " " 60 " "

Then go back down, but with
10 secs. less rest than when
coming up; eg:

50 secs. hard, 40 secs. easy.

River Running

Dominique reckons that she made tremendous progress in her river running ability between 1976 and 1978. She ran a lot of rivers with Jean-Paul, who has this to say about her development:

She learned a lot faster than other girls, albeit slower than a man. I think girls had to break a psychological block at that time. They were scared to run the river alone and always wanted to follow someone else down. This gave them a greater sense of security. But after awhile Dominique would pass me and take the lead. Also, Michel Doux coached us on the water from a downriver boat, something we had never had before. This helped us get used to the idea of running the river alone.

Dominique talks further about the river running they did:

We really did a lot of whitewater that year. There were a lot of rivers in flood in the autumn so we got a great deal of whitewater experience. We did river runs on weekends, and on vacations during the fall. During one vacation, we did 5 days without having to rerun the same stretch twice — and without ever hitting a rock! In the spring we also had good river running possibilities.

From this river running experience, Dominique learned the following things:

- * Not to let the boat fishtail when doing turns.
- * Stay straight as long as possible.
- * Anticipate what is coming next.
- * Avoid back strokes.
- * Control the lean of the boat.

"These were all things that I had been working on before," Dominique summarizes, "but now it all started to gell."

1977 was Dominique's last year in university and since she was working hard to graduate, she did not have time to compete in any international races before the World Championships. Thus, going into the Worlds she had little idea of how she compared to the other boaters. There were worse complications to come, however.

Appendicitis

Three weeks before the World Championships, Dominique learned that she had appendicitis:

I had to be on a very strict diet to keep my appendix from erupting. It consisted of carrots and water, beans and water. I couldn't eat potatoes, or anything cooked in fat. I could eat broiled meat, but not meat cooked in fat. A little bread was all right. So was milk. The idea was to avoid things that might stay in the appendix.

I lost 5 kilos. But at that time I weighed a lot more than 57 kilos (race weight at Jonquiere and Bala) so the diet forced me down to what I am now and although I went up a little bit, I more or less stayed where the diet left me.

Even with the appendicitis problem, I did the 10-day training camp at Spittal. But I paddled less intensely than usual because I was not in form.

The Race

I started out wanting to do well. I had a good run. I had a lot of support. A lot of French rode bicycles along the road beside me yelling, 'op, op, op!'

When I finished I was in first for a long time. There was a lot of suspense. I was surprised at my finish.

Dominique had a time of 14:45.61. But two other girls were faster: Gisela Grothaus of West Germany won the race with 14:18.82 and Switzerland's Elizabeth Kaeser was second in 14:28.57. Later, in the team race, Dominique got another bronze medal, missing out on the silver by .16 seconds.

The whole experience left a lasting impression on Dominique for it was here that she realized she could win, or, as she put it, "I saw at last that the podium was possible."

Ten days after the World Championships, she had her appendix removed. One month after that she married Jean-Paul.

Moved to Lyon

In September, 1977 Dominique moved to Lyon and started work as a teacher of physical education at a school there. She chose Lyon because her husband lived there. She didn't live close to the Rhone river at that time but worked near it so she trained after work hours. She trained out of the La Mulatiere boathouse, set up by Michel Doux.

Training for 1978

Dominique "slowed down" her training a bit after the World Championships, but did the following things:

- * Trained with Michel Doux and Patrick Bunichon starting in the fall. She was in the boat twice during the week and on Saturday and Sunday.
- * During the winter, she did cross-country skiing most of the time, but if it got warmer she went out in the boat.
- * In the spring, she did nothing except boating, 3 times a week plus Saturday and Sunday. She trained with her husband, sometimes doing the "tour de piles" with him.

"Joel Doux (son of Michel) was about my speed so I trained with him once in a while," Dominique explains. "I always tried to train with someone else to avoid boredom."

In the 1978 race season, Dominique was always second to Gisela Grothaus, "my 'bete noir,'" as she puts it.

I just couldn't beat her. In the first race I lost by 12 seconds, but then it got worse and worse. In the last race, I was second again, but I was one second out of third. I didn't think I could beat Gisela — and that's how I finished the season, thinking I'd be second in the next World Championships, too. But in the Jonqui-ere Pre-Worlds I was third, behind Grothaus and Leslie Klein (USA). Losing to Klein really bothered me.

Changes for 1979

After the conclusion of the 1978 season, Dominique made a number of important changes in her training, equipment and attitude, including:

- * Switching from the Match 4 kayak to the Mag 2. "Up to this time the French women used the stable Match 4, but at the end of the 1978 season, I resolved to try a tippier but faster boat."
- * In August, she and her husband moved closer to the boat house.
- * She accepted Michel Doux's suggestion that she race Doux-Bunichon in practice sessions. "Many times Michel Doux told me I could beat Grothaus, but I didn't believe it. Doux is always optimistic. He encourages all the time. Doux-Bunichon were about the same speed as I was then and it was very important to have them to race against in practice. We raced all the time.

At that time Doux-Bunichon were a little bit slower than I was, which was good because if I ever got behind them, their wake made it impossible to catch up. That's why I stopped training with them when they got faster.

But even if we didn't train together, we'd do the same workout. I'd be there during the day and do a workout. Then I'd write down my time on the board and when they came out they'd try to beat it."

- * She moved to longer training courses. "We had the times for the different segments of the course at Jonquiere. I saw that Grothaus clobbered me on the flat section at the end. I had

not prepared for a long enough course. The women's courses up to that time were between 12-15 minutes long, but Jonquiere was 21 minutes. When I started out on the grand tour de piles, my time was about 19 minutes, but by the time I went to the Pre-Worlds, it was down to 17 minutes — too short."

- * She trained in shallow water more. "I practiced accelerating the stroke rate a lot. In the training camp 10 days before the World Championships, I cut my paddle down even more to get the stroke rate up. It's better to have too small a paddle than too big a one. When you paddle in shallow water, there is a shock wave that the boat creates which bounces off the river bottom and comes up to hit the boat again, and slow the boat down. You want to get this wave to come up a little further back behind the boat and thus move the boat forward. To do this you have to be going fast. Therefore, when you approach a flat, shallow section, you have to already be going fast — start accelerating just before you come into the flat section.

Training for Jonquiere

Dominique did the following training for the 1979 season:

FALL AND WINTER

- a. 3 times a week in the boat:
 - i. One time trial on one grand tour de piles and one petit tour, adding up to 21 minutes.
 - ii. Continuous paddling on 3 grand tours. "When doing the long paddles, I usually did some accelerations of 10 seconds to get a high stroke rate feeling."
 - iii. Interval training: 6 petit tours, a tour every 5 minutes. A tour was 3.5 minutes long.
 - iv. Sections of the grand tour de piles (See Doux-Bunichon chapter).
- b. Once a week in the gym, doing a warm-up and exercises with a medicine ball.
- c. Once a week swimming: Dominique did continuous laps in a pool, totaling 1,000 meters.
- d. Once a week she did a 45-60 minute non-stop foot run.

- e. River runs on weekends.
- f. Cross-country skiing. "We'd do 30 kilometers a day at a fast pace, but not in a structured workout."

SPRING

- a. One boat workout a day. 4 times during the week on flatwater, 2 river sessions on the weekends. "I had no planned day out of the boat, but often we went away for the weekend and it would mean that I could not paddle."

She would do paddling workouts similar to the ones in the fall and winter, including 1 time trial a week. But now she increased the interval training. Whereas in the fall and winter she did a petit tour in 3:30 every 5 minutes, now she did the tour in 3:07-3:10, every 4 minutes.

"Dr. Eclache (the team doctor) didn't like this because he thought it was too anaerobic. He wanted us to work more aerobically. But I found that my workouts enabled me to get more power. I wanted to keep working with an incomplete recovery, because I felt that was appropriate for a downriver race. I chose this method because of what I had studied in physical education. It made sense to me based on the requirements of a downriver race. Incomplete recovery did not allow complete restoration of ATP in the muscles. I never did very short accelerations with long recovery because I felt that's just not like a downriver race."

- b. Once a month, Dominique would do one easy week for recovery: 2 times in the boat, easy; and some other work in the gym.

ONE MONTH BEFORE THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

- a. 2 boat workouts a day for Monday through Thursday; take Friday off completely. These sessions did not last more than 45 minutes each. The morning one was harder than the afternoon one. They consisted of continuous paddling, interval training or fartlek.
- b. One foot run a week.
- c. River runs on weekends.
- d. She went with Doux-Bunichon to the Azergue river to train on the flat sections and simulate the Metabechouan river.

The Jonquiere Race

One can consult the Verger, Zok and Doux-Bunichon chapters for details on the training done in the Jonquiere training camp.

Here are Dominique's recollections of the race itself:

One of our trainers got Gisela's time from a time trial in practice and I knew I could beat it. This was the first Worlds I went into to win. I think if you are going to win, you have to have a very specific objective. You're not going to win by chance. If you have a team of people who are winning like we did in France, you start to want to win, too. There were 2 other reasons I thought about winning: Other people tried to convince me I could beat Gisela and I didn't want to be second again!

The very first rapid had been a problem for me in training; once I got past this, the river was easy. I had a very good run. Everything went well. I think I hit only 1 rock. I was able to go hard, but my arms didn't hurt.

Gardette beat Grothaus 19:38.67 to 19:47.68.

Had a Baby

After the Jonquiere World Championships, Dominique stopped training for a year and had a baby boy, Laurent, in March, 1980. Until that time she did a little paddling and some cross-country skiing.

She started to train again at the end of June, 1980. Three weeks later she raced in the French Championships and placed second, 3 seconds behind the winner. A week later, however, she won a race.

The first training sessions were very hard. I did the tour de piles in 21 minutes; 17:30 was my record. But in 8 days I picked up a minute. The next week I got another minute. In 2 months I had recovered to where I was just before the Jonquiere Worlds. But I did too much right before the French Championships and arrived there tired.

I don't think I lost a lot having a child. Everything came back really quickly. I think when someone has done a lot of training in the past, it's not that difficult to get back in form. I've heard it said that when you have a child to nourish, your body makes more red blood cells and this helps your endurance.

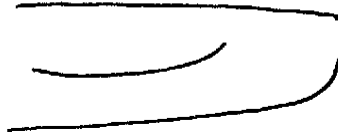
I didn't train really hard for the Pre-World Championships, but I got third there (even after capsizing and swimming!).

Training For The Bala Worlds

During the Pre-World Championships, Dominique noted the following things that she used to modify her approach to Bala:

- * I saw that the course was very long — 31 minutes — and that there was not very much water in the river. Also the river was not very difficult. So we needed a very fast boat. We got the "Speedy". It didn't turn very well, and I had to get used to it. But it was a lot faster. Before going to Canada, my record for the Grand Tour de Piles was 17:12; before leaving for Bala, 16:30.

The Speedy had a very narrow bow and raised area on the side, called "the mustache":

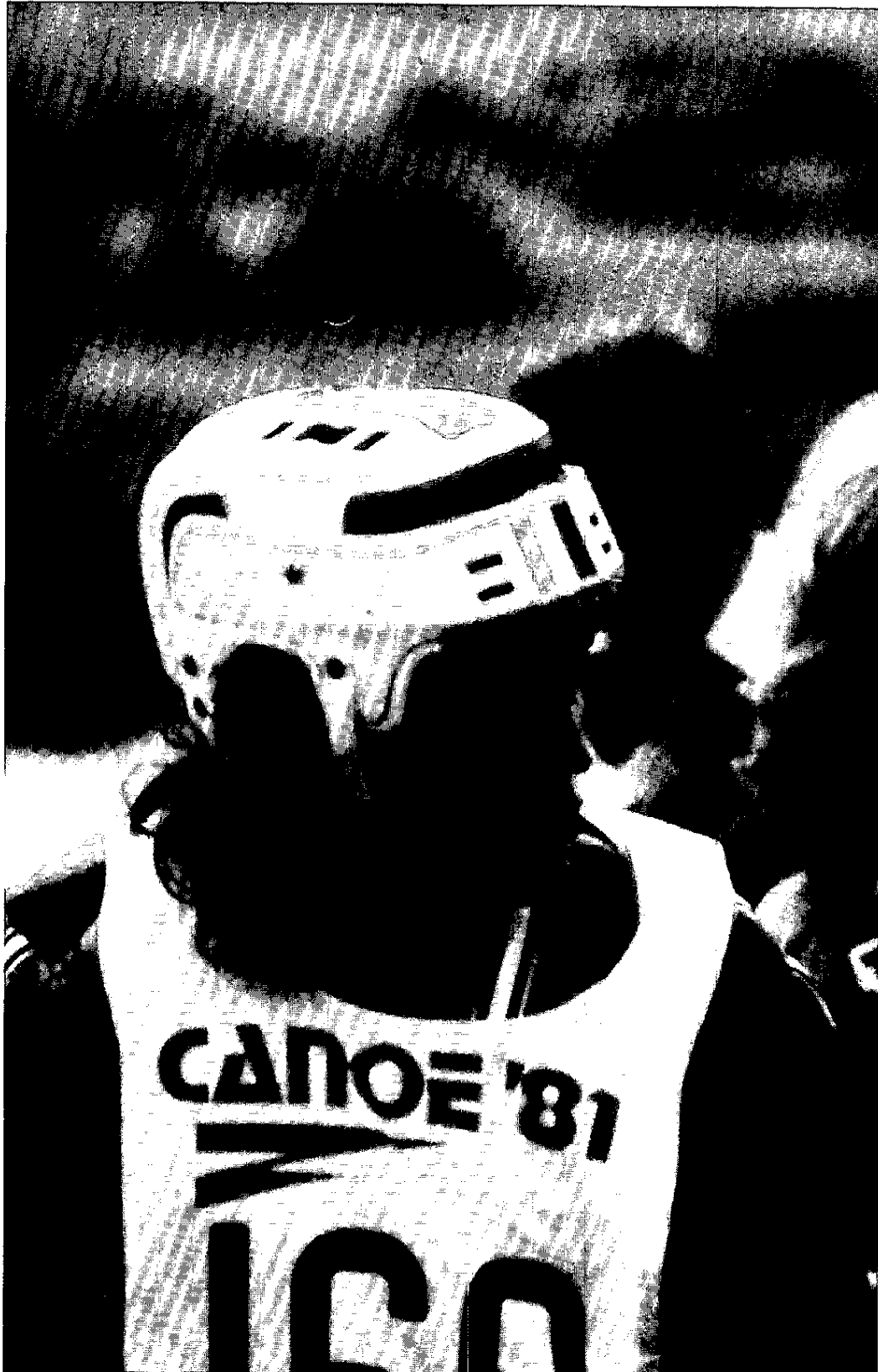


This caused the bow to rise up a bit, which turned out to be a mistake, because much of the time you wanted to keep the bow down at Bala. So a lot of people moved the seats forward to compensate.

I had 2 Speedies at Bala. The first one was a carbon/kevlar one donated by the manufacturer, Gil. The second one was all kevlar and weighed 7 kilos. I raced this one. The first one was even lighter when it was new, but I couldn't afford another one like it and had to use a heavier one.

- * I switched from the Azali paddle I used at Jonquiere to one made by de la Boissiere because he gave it to me. The new paddle was longer (212): I had gained strength in my arms and could use a longer paddle. But even so I think my paddle blades were smaller (18.5 centimeters wide) than those used by the other girls.
- * I was too hot during the Pre-Worlds, so I wore lighter clothing and a short sleeve spray shirt during the World Championships, even though it was a cold day.

Her training for Bala was very similar to what she did for Jonquiere except that she added some extra length to the workouts.



Gardette just after she won her second consecutive World Championships, at Bala in 1981. (Bruno Grange Photo)

For example, instead of doing a time trial on 1 grand tour and 1 petit tour, I now did it on 1 grand tour and 3 petit tours. When I did the petit tours, I tried to do them at a regular speed, not one faster than the other. I knew that my weakness was the last part of the course so I really worked on that.

In December, Dominique found that her son, Laurent, suffered from cerebral palsy and that he would have to undergo special education. Besides the obvious emotional strain on her, this also meant that she had to cut back on her whitewater training so she could take the boy to the special sessions.

Gardette figures she ran the Tryweryn a total of 29 times before the World Championships. Seven of these were just before the Pre-Worlds, 6 on a May weekend, and 16 in the training camp just before the Worlds.

The Bala Race

I didn't feel as ready for Bala as I did for Jonquiere. I hadn't been in whitewater enough and as a result I made mistakes on the river. I didn't have the feeling of being on top of the river in a technical sense.

I did not have a good run. Grothaus started after me, so I waited a couple of seconds after my start buzzer went off, so as to confuse her splits off me. At one point in the course she was told she was dead even with me but in reality she was 2 seconds behind. I think the idea to do this came from a discussion I had with Doux-Bunichon before Jonquiere. But I didn't dare do it there!

At the end of the race, the organizers didn't make the correction right away (i.e. they assumed Dominique started when the buzzer said go, not when she broke the electric start eye) and said I'd won by .2 seconds. But during the night they corrected it and I won by 2 seconds.

After Bala, Dominique never raced in the World Championships again.

Advice

Dominique Gardette used the following principles in her training and recommends them to someone else wanting to get good at downriver:

- * Start training around September 10-15.
- * Work on technique in the fall when the intensity of the training is less. But even when I am going at high intensity, I think about lengthening my stroke.

- * Up to February, do only continuous paddles. But intensity is always a question because if you do a lot of low intensity paddling, you get locked into a slow rhythm. In downriver, you have to be able to reaccelerate the boat all the time. So usually I try to keep the intensity pretty high. Once in a great while I do very long workouts. But I usually feel that a workout at low intensity is a waste. I don't think my hours of training are all that great; I always had something else to do so I tried to make the best use of my time.
- * After February, I like to start fartlek training because even though it's continuous, you get to work at a higher intensity level. Try to make the hard parts of the fartlek training add up to the length of the race course you are training for.
- * From time to time, try to reach maximum intensity over a known training course.
- * August is a month of rest.

Dominique also has the following thoughts:

- * When running a river in practice, run fast because the boat handles differently at speed than it does going slowly.
- * Don't try to learn a river by following someone else all the time. During the race you are alone and you have to get used to this. If you always follow someone else, you get used to looking at his/her boat and not looking for landmarks on the shore. Also the boat ahead of you hides water traits because of disturbing the water before you get to it. Finally, there is less effort when you follow someone else, you don't try as hard to learn the river.
- * Learn how to roll really well. I always had problems with this.
- * I think training is not much good unless it is intense. You have to find ways to make it intense. Train with the stopwatch and other people. Even if the other people are slower or faster, you can do big loops on flatwater and turn earlier or later than they do and stay with them as long as possible.
- * Sessions shouldn't last more than 1 hour because intensity drops.
- * You have to have very precise long term goals and very precise intermediate goals, too.

- * Sometimes try to run rivers with other classes — C1s and C2s, for example — and see where they go. They sit higher off the river and have a better view. It's also good to try some runs with K1s.
- * Dare to take a rest. When you are tired, it's not wasting time to take a rest.
- * Just before the Worlds, make sure you have little things to do so you won't worry during the last few days before the race.
- * It was worth doing something really well; I'd do it all again if I had my life to live over.