

## Team Canada Dragon Boat paddler Dave Hunt is bound for Brandenburg in quest of World Championship gold

After supervising St. Anne's School's inaugural 'Flight Club Classic' track meet and putting the SAC Track and Field squad through its paces on a busy Friday, Team Canada Dragon Boat paddler Dave Hunt rolled into Wicked Eats for our late-afternoon interview to discuss his quest for gold in Brandenburg, Germany.

Hunt, a much-decorated, world-calibre Masters Division paddler who has competed for Team Canada in the USA, Thailand, and Italy during the last three summers, stamped his ticket to the 2025 World Championships and his place in the big boat in July by working his way through an arduous two-week tryout in Florida in March.

He described the boot camp conditions in Tarpon Springs and Tampa: 'We were paddling with the manatees and dolphins in Tarpon Springs and spent one week in a war canoe for time trials.'

'We were on the water twice a day,' he continued. 'It was relentless. Everything you did was an all-out race. This year's tryouts were the toughest I've experienced with twice as many paddlers trying out for the national team. We had paddlers arriving from Quebec, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Victoria, and Vancouver. It was a much bigger reflection of our nationwide power in dragon boating.'

The Aurora resident elaborated on the sheer numbers that he was competing against during Week 2 in Tampa.

'There was so much rigor and competition in Tampa. There were 250 athletes in the 60+ division. It was quite an atmosphere and it was just 'compete, compete, compete' for the entire week. The competition was twice as hard as it's been the last two years, but I kept finding myself at the back of the boat and still on the team. We did time trials of 350M and 150M races in Tampa and, most of the time, we were in the dragon boats with a full crew of 20. I thought it went well in Florida, but I had no idea whether I made the team when I booked my flight back to Canada. It was exciting to find out by email that I had made the team and to make travel arrangements to Germany for July.'

The 61-year-old noted that 'We had such a strong group of paddlers assembled in Florida that it must have been a tough decision for the coaches. We've attracted so many elite athletes since Canada swept all the paddling divisions in Thailand at the 2023 World Championships.'

Although Team Canada captured an array of medals in Florida, Thailand, and Italy in 2022, 2023, and 2024, respectively, Hunt and his teammates cannot rest on their laurels. The veteran paddler acknowledged, 'We'll be competing in the largest world championships ever this year in Germany. There will be intense competition from the hosts as well as Hungary, Australia, and the USA. We'll do five days of training to get prepared for what will be very humid conditions in Germany from July 9 to July 22.'

Given the necklace of medals Hunt has sported from Team Canada's golden accomplishments over the last three summers, it's a certainty that the globetrotting Aurora Master's athlete should allow for heavier luggage for his return flight from Germany.

**By Jim Stewart**