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Challenge the mighty Hudson
Racers gearing up for white water competitions

When snow melts in the Adirondack Mountains it follows a meandering path through pristine woods, rock crevices and babbling brooks before making its way to the Hudson River Valley and beyond.



Saratoga's Johnny Miller is a three-time Upper Hudson River Derby winner.

The scene and opportunities created along the way are not to be missed.

And one of the best ways to enjoy the rivers, lakes and streams that rise during this time of year is to get out and ride them – quite literally.

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White Water Derby

The Upper Hudson River 49th Annual White Water Derby runs the weekend of May 6th and 7th down one of the most exciting stretches of the famous river in towns like North Creek, North River and Riparius.

Upwards of 3,000 spectators have packed these small North Country hamlets for decades during race weekend and this longstanding white water tradition continues to be a classic Adirondack attraction.

"There's basically any class of human powered boat," said Race Chairman Pete Burns.

While spectators can find access to the race on Saturday along Route 28 in North River, Sunday's downriver action can be seen anywhere along the seven-mile stretch between North River and Riparius.

But Burns suggests folks gather at the Route 8 Bridge in Riparius if they want to catch the best set of rapids along the course.

There racers will be "flipping, sinking, swamping, swimming" and just about anything else that could go wrong in a boat, Burns said, assuring plenty of safety personnel will be on hand, both in the river and out.

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“The last set of rapids is the best set of rapids and that’s where the most calamities occur,” he said.

In 1967, Bobby and Ethel Kennedy made the trip upstate to compete in the race, less than a year before he would announce a run for the presidency his brother once held. The race attracts about 150 contestants every year.

Racing starts at 11 a.m. Saturday, but racers should sign up at 8 a.m. at the Alexander Funeral Home on Route 28 in North Creek. Saturday will see two heats of the Wildwater Boat Sprint, as well as the Novice Slalom and the Giant Slalom.

Sunday is the downriver race, traveling about 7½ miles along the Hudson. Usually racers take about an hour to complete the course, depending on water levels.

In the past, camping has been allowed at the North Creek Ski Bowl, but for the first time this year it will not be permitted. However, state land is available in the area for camping and plenty of accommodations are scattered throughout the racing communities.

For more information, detailed directions or to enter the race, check out www.whitewaterderby.com, call Burns at 518-251-3394 or call Penny Goodspeed at 518-251-2612.

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Kayak Symposium

If you are looking to jump into a kayak, but just don’t know how to get started or if you already have the gear and want to fine tune your skills, don’t miss the Second Annual Hudson Valley Kayak Symposium.

The symposium, May 19-21, is organized and headed by one of our tri-county region’s best instructors.

Saratoga’s very own kayaking expert and three-time winner of the upper Hudson River Derby, Johnny Miller, will work closely with kayakers in the calm waters of Beaver Lake on the Sharpe Reservation in Fishkill.

Introductory classes are offset by intermediate and advanced paddling sessions for more experienced paddlers. Professional instructors keep the student in mind and will always keep a one-to-six instructor to student ratio to ensure each student receives proper attention.

Paddlers will start by learning how to gear up. Instructors will recommend what type of kayak, paddles, life jackets and overall gear each student needs, depending on what type of kayaking the student is interested in.

Students will learn how to launch their kayak from various types of shorelines, and learn the fine art of “aquamotion,” or “how to get from point A to point B,” Miller said.

Cabins and campfire socials will round out the day’s activities. Yoga, stretching and presentations from

professional kayakers who have traveled the world are also planned.

The all inclusive package costs \$445 and includes meals throughout the weekend. One and two day packages are available. Space is limited. For more information or to sign up for the symposium check out www.hudsonvalleykayaksymposium.com or call Miller at 518-424-3986.

Miller also offers tours and various other kayak-related activities on Lake George and surrounding waters during the summer. For more information on Miller check out www.johnnymilleradventures.com.

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National Regatta

The 11th Annual New York State Scholastic Rowing Championship May 13th and 14th and the 2006 Scholastic Nationals May 26th and 27th, both on Fish Creek in Saratoga Springs, offer an exciting take on river racing.



The Saratoga Rowers are eyeing this month's state and national championships.

Teams from 59 high schools across New York will compete in the two-day state championship, testing the boundaries of team strength and endurance. About 4,000 high school participants rolled into Fish Creek last year for the competition, not to mention the 9,000 fans.

For the first time ever the National Championships will make their way to Saratoga. Event organizers are expecting 4,000 participants and as many as 12,000 spectators at the Scholastic Nationals, making for two intense weekends of rowing competition sure to provide plenty of thrills and bow-to-bow finish lines.

The Saratoga Rowing Association is hosting both competitions. For more information call 518-587-6697 or check out www.saratogarowing.com.

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