

Kayak

OLYMPIC DEBUT: 1936

Though flatwater canoe and kayak events started at the Berlin Games, whitewater events didn't start until 1972 in Munich.

ALL-TIME EVENT MEDALS

HUNGARY	17	26	24	67
GERMANY	26	17	15	58
USSR	30	14	9	53
ROMANIA	10	10	14	34



The Oregonian MONDAY, AUG. 11, 2008 | FOURTH OF 17

TODAY'S TV HIGHLIGHTS

+> 8 a.m.:

Diving: women's synchronized 3m; beach volleyball (taped), Telemundo

+> 10 a.m.:

Beach volleyball; swimming;

whitewater canoe/kayak;

rowing (live), NBC

+> 2 p.m.:

Boxing: featherweight and lightweight (taped), CNBC

+> 6 p.m.:

Gymnastics recap; equestrian: cross-country phase of eventing (taped), Oxygen

+> 8 p.m.:

Gymnastics: men's team finals; swimming: men's 200m freestyle, women's 100m backstroke; beach volleyball; men's synchronized 10m diving (live), NBC

+> 9 p.m.:

Softball: USA vs. Venezuela (live), CNBC

+> 11 p.m.:

Boxing: flyweight and bantamweight (live), CNBC

+> 11 p.m.:

Men's basketball: USA vs. Angola; women's field hockey: USA vs. Japan; rowing; men's team handball: Spain vs. Poland; tennis; badminton; beach volleyball (live), USA Network

THE GEAR

Whitewater kayaking is a hazardous sport, so athletes take precautions by wearing a helmet and flotation vest. The helmet has holes to let water drain out and the vest and clothing are made to stay light and flexible even when wet. Kayakers use a double-bladed paddle so they can row on both sides of the boat with ease.



THE OBJECT

Whitewater kayaking is a rowing sport in which athletes steer narrow, one-person, closed-top boats through a 250 to 400-meter (820-1,312 feet) course of 18-25 slalom gates set up in river rapids. Athletes are penalized for missing gates in a race against the clock.

THE KAYAK

The boats used in competition are narrow, light and agile. Their tops are enclosed except for a small hole the competitor fits in, and they sit low in the water. While athletes can use almost any type of kayak, it must be at least 11 feet, 5 inches long.

SCORING

Whitewater kayaking is a race against the clock. The competitor who completes the course in the fastest time wins. But there are time penalties judges can hand competitors for a variety of mistakes.

Two-second penalty: If an athlete hits a gate pole.

50-second penalty: If an athlete misses a gate or intentionally pushes a gate to gain clearance, or if a kayaker's head is submerged while passing through a gate.

If a competitor misses a gate, they can try to paddle back through it. But participants start in three-minute intervals and second attempts at gates may not interfere with others kayakers.



THE GATES

There are 18-25 gates in an Olympic whitewater slalom course. Gate poles are hung from a wire stretched above the river. Competitors are penalized for touching the gates and generally pass through with their paddles vertical to avoid inadvertent contact. Red stripes on gates indicate the athlete has to paddle through upstream, green means they must pass through with the current.

GLOSSARY

Blade: The wide part of the paddle.

Deck: The hard top of the front of the kayak.

Draw: When a kayaker pulls his paddle toward the side of the boat to make it move sideways.

Keel: The spine of the underside of a kayak.

Spray skirt: The fabric cover that cinches up the hole of the kayak around the athlete's waist.

ONE TO WATCH

Czech Republic's **Stepanka Hilgertova**, has two female whitewater kayak golds

U.S. HOPEFUL

Scott Parson finished 6th in Athens in men's whitewater