

# Introduction

I began as a flatwater kayaker back in 1968 and raced the 1969 season. Then I discovered whitewater and have done that in various capacities for about 20 years. In 1984, one of my former whitewater slalom paddlers, Norm Bellingham, took up flatwater, or sprint as it is called today, and asked me to be his coach. For the next four years I did that as best I could, along with coaching the U.S. Whitewater Slalom Team.

During that time, through Norm, I came to know Greg Barton. In the time since our first meeting Barton would become a three-time world champion and an Olympic champion in both the K-1 and K-2 1,000 in 1988, along with Norm.

I realized that Barton was a good story; he was probably the best singles paddler of the late 80's and he was not from Eastern Europe. How did he do it? I was curious. Also, I'd never seen a book on sprint which contained the level of detail I thought necessary to show what it takes to win today, especially considering how the sport has changed with the advent of the wing paddle.

Then, there was "symmetry." I already had written books on slalom and wildwater; why not make it a hat-trick and do one on sprint, too? Finally, there was the obsessive thought that this may be the best way to learn more about canoeing and kayaking in general and worth a year of my spare time to find out.

I have targeted several groups of people I believe might be interested in the book. The first, as with my earlier books, is actively training athletes. For them, the book goes into great detail about technique and general sports training principles. Another section of the book, the biographical portion, goes into detail about Barton's career. In the past, I've found athletes like to have this kind of data.

The second target is coaches and other students of the sport. A third target is the media. While I know they won't be interested in all the details, they often appreciate background material that explains the sport so they can write their stories more accurately.

I would like to thank several people for helping me with this project. First, there's Norm Bellingham, because without him I never would have come close enough to sprint at the highest levels. Then there's my old Australian friend, Reg Hatch, coach of several world and Olympic medalists, who gave me a number of ideas on how to do such a book.

Obviously, the greatest debt goes to Greg Barton, for this project would not have been possible without his complete cooperation. He gave a great deal of time, submitting to interviews and reading drafts. I can only hope that he is satisfied with the outcome.

I would like to thank David Hearn and Brian Brown for making a number of valuable comments. My wife, Abbie, and Melissa Andrews edited the book, and I would especially like to thank them, also. Finally, my thanks to Steve Kelly, United States Canoe and Kayak Team Associate Director for Programs; Erika Austin, USCKT Communications Intern, and the rest of the USCKT staff who helped prepare the book for publication.

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