

Paddle Battle

A CAMDEN PROFESSOR EXGLS AT AN AN(IENT SPORT GROWING IN POPULARITY

Looking for a new way to exercise and meet friends, Katelina Bezrukova was intrigued by a flyer posted on the bulletin board at her gym last year. "I saw some funny-looking pictures of screaming women in a boat with a dragon head," says Bezrukova, a 33-year-old assistant professor of psychology at Rutgers-Camden. "It looked pretty neat."

She called the number on the flyer, and a few weeks later she was out on the river with the Schuylkill Dragons, learning how 20 paddlers, one steersperson, and a drummer work together to propel the narrow and colorful 48-foot-long boats safely through a river's current. "I found it easy to develop the necessary skills and technique within a doable time frame," she explains. "I also like the fact that we train on [the river, a very beautiful place to be when it's not raining]."

Bezrukova has found that the sport, which originated in China 2,000 years ago, provides

"the most rigorous exercise I could have ever imagined." Her 50-member team, one of 128 in the Delaware Valley region, won silver and bronze medals at a national competition in 2004 and won two gold medals, along with \$4,000, at a festival in Flushing Meadows, New York,

She has applied the team's success to help teach undergraduates in her industrial and organizational psychology course. Says Bezrukova, "Conflict resolution, distribution of roles, and situational leadership are some of the lessons I've already learned from racing." -B.9

