

The Canoe Era



CULVER ACADEMIES

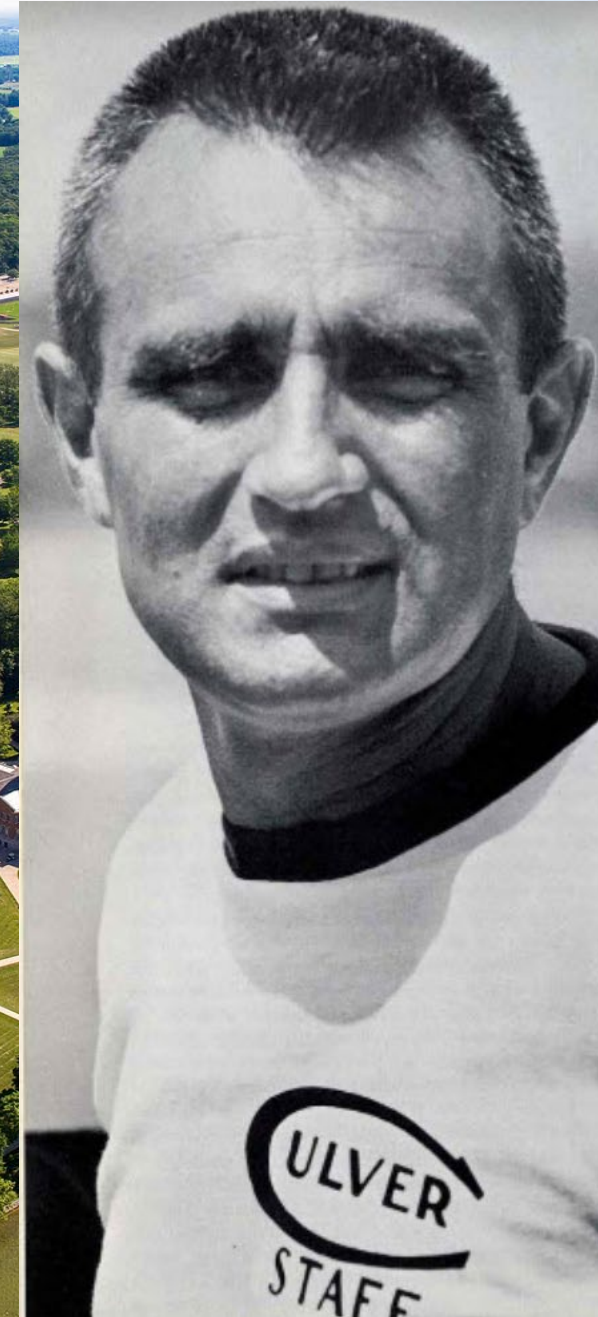
A black and white photograph of three rowers in a canoe, viewed from behind. They are all in a synchronized rowing motion, with their oars dipping into the water. The water is choppy with small waves. A dark red horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the name "Kálmán Blaho" in white text.

Kálmán Blaho

Kálmán Blaho Treasured

Kálmán was part of Culver and the lives of the Canoeing Team for only a few months.

It's a testament to his integrity and character that he was such a formative influence and treasured memory almost sixty years later. When he passed away, just after the students returned to school in the fall of 1966 following the New Rochelle triumph, the Team was told that his heart weakened and damaged in World War II, had finally given out.



Scan Me



World War II

The drive and discipline he instilled in the 1966 Canoe Team was of the courage that got him through some of the worst of the war. As young man, from Szabadszállás, Hungary, he was barely 19 when Hungary formed up its military in 1939 as an ambivalent member of the axis powers. In 1941 the reservists were fully activated and Kálmán was conscripted into the Second Hungarian Army under the command of the Germany Army Group B. They marched, on foot, into the Ukraine for Hitler's ill-advised and ill-fated attempt to seize the resources of the region.

World War II Picture

Scan Me



World War II

At the Battle of Voronezh (освобождение Воронежа) the Second Army was mauled by the Soviets despite an Axis success. Under the onslaught of the Soviet Army's 1942, winter, Stalingrad offensive -- lacking food, shelter, and supplies -- the Hungarian army disintegrated. 210,000 men departed Hungary. 100,000 perished. 60,000 were taken prisoner, many of whom didn't survive the Soviet POW camps. Kálmán and 40,000 others escaped the soviet envelopment and headed home, on foot, in the cruel Ukrainian winter. The journey, through the Carpathian mountains, was over 2,500 kilometers.

Kálmán was one of the few who returned home. There is no record of his service, if any after that. Hungary, and the reformed Second Army, was caught in the crossfire between the Russians and the Germans, eventually falling into the Soviet sphere of oppression.



Scan Me



Hungarian National Champion

He was an accomplished racing canoeist, having won the Hungarian national championships 22 times in C-1 and C-2 (one- and two-man boats) in the 1940s and 1950s. After the war, he met the imposing Hungarian basketball and canoeing champion, Margo, who became his loving and devoted wife. He competed in the 1948 Olympics in the 1,000m K-2, advancing to the finals. His partner in the K-2 was honored in 2007 on a Hungarian postage stamp.

Chafing under communism, and demands he trained Soviet athletes, Kálmán made no secret of his desire to defect to the west. The circumstances are not clear, but, according to one aural recounting, he was a bad boy in the 1956 uprising, having taken on a Soviet tank with a Molotov Cocktail.



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CMA Canoe Clinic October 1965

The Culver Citizen, October 14, 1965, announced what would be the start of the Blahós association with Culver: “Olympic Coach To Hold Canoe Clinic At CMA” on October 16. So much for retirement. Marcia Smoke, a prominent American kayak champion (Bronze medal at the 1964 games in the 500m K-1 event), and others, had persuaded Kálmán to host a series of canoe and kayak clinics across the United States to foster the sport.



Scan Me



Her husband Bill, a Culver Summer School graduate, prevailed on Kálmán to come to Culver as Lake Maxinkuckee would be an ideal location for Olympic training. Chet Marshall, the Academy's Director of Athletics, noted "We are presenting this exhibition in the hope of encouraging interest in Olympic canoeing."

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Blaho to Assist Culver In Canoe, Kayak Program

Kalman Blaho, Hungarian-born coach of the Italian Olympic canoe and kayak teams, has been appointed to the staff at Culver.

Major General Delmar T. Spivey, USAF (Ret.), superintendent, said Mr. Blaho will assist

the Academy in setting up and operating a canoeing and kayaking program in both the winter and summer programs.

General Spivey said that with the acquisition of Mr. Blaho, Culver has asked to be the site of the U.S. championships. If granted, the national competition would be held on Lake Maxinkuckee in July and would include top canoeists from throughout the nation.

A team would be selected at that time and would then train at Culver for the August World championships in East Berlin.

Mr. Blaho will work with William Garrison, a member of the Academy's history department, who two years ago developed an annual 60-mile Tippecanoe River race sponsored by Culver.

The two men will develop a program in all phases of canoeing with special emphasis on flat-water racing.



Kalman Blaho demonstrated paddling techniques during his canoeing clinic here in October.

Before he left Hungary in 1957, Mr. Blaho was the national canoe champion for 22 years. He became national coach of canoeing and developed many world champions in Europe where canoeing enjoys greater popularity than in the U.S.

Before he left Hungary, he also trained Soviet canoeists and helped start the Soviet teams toward victories in the sport, which is a major activity in international competition, in recent Olympics.

Since he came to the United States last year, Mr. Blaho has headed the canoeing program for the Olympic Development Committee. Mr. Blaho also has been recognized for his work in physical development and has prepared both Hungarian and Italian athletes for international competition in crew, skiing, and soccer.

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Kálmán was appointed to the Culver staff in February 1966, and a few months later was named the National Canoe Coach by the American Olympic Committee.

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Scan Me



First Season Success

Kalman soon began training a canoe team even before the ice melted on the lake. He brought his discipline and work ethic necessary to build a strong new team. The team learned quickly and by the end of the season they were sweeping the races. With success came a new vision to win the...

National Canoe Championships

Tutored by William P. Garrison and former Olympic Coach Kalman Blaho, Culver's inaugural canoe team earned a worthy reputation in midwest canoe racing circles. The team participated in races at Crawfordsville; Kokomo; Greenville, Ohio; the Tippecanoe River, and Lake Maxinkuckee. In the Academy sponsored, 60-mile Tippecanoe race, the first of the year, team members took second and third places. The following weekend the team captured sixth, seventh, and ninth places in a 15-mile race at Crawfordsville. Developing quickly from this point, the canoers swept seven of the top eight places in the 21-mile Greenville race. Following the Greenville trip, the squad crushed Brookville High School 160-21 in what was believed to be the first high school canoe regatta in Indiana. The final and most rewarding races of the year were at Kokomo. Here, Culver teams swept the top three positions in the 2 mile C-4 race; the first eleven places in the slalom; and first, third, and fourth positions in the 15-mile marathon.

This summer, Culver will be represented at the U. S. National Canoeing Championships in New York. From eight to ten cadets who are presently on the canoe team will return to the Academy about July 1 to begin three weeks of practice before traveling to New York to participate in the races.

Scan Me



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National Canoe Championships

Culver in a Canoeing Way

National Coach Blaho Trains 9 Culver Canoeists for National Contests

Culver has selected nine winter school canoeists to compete in the National Canoe Championships in New Rochelle, N. Y., July 23 and 24. They returned to the Academy June 28 to take part in a rigorous training routine supervised by Kalman Blaho, director of canoeing at Culver and coach of the American canoe and kayak teams.

Mr. Blaho, a native Hungarian and former canoe coach of the Italian Olympic teams, is developing a canoeing and kayaking program at the Academy and will be in charge of the North American Canoe championships on Culver's 1,800-acre Lake Maxinkuckee.

The American Canoe Association selected the Academy as the site of the North American championships Sept. 17-18, after the world championships in East Berlin in August. Mr. Blaho was selected to coach the American teams at the same meeting.

Ray Dodge, former commodore of the association from Niles, Mich., said after the meeting:

"For the first time in history, the United States has a great canoe coach in Blaho. All of us feel that he will bring our country into a stronger position in canoeing and kayaking at the

international level."

A native Hungarian, Mr. Blaho won the national canoe championship in his own country 22 times before he left for Italy in 1957. In Rome, he was professor at the College of Physical Education while at the same time leading the Italian teams to a gold and silver medal in the 1964 Olympics. He served during the past year as a consultant to the U. S. Olympic Committee and the American Canoe Association.

The North American championships will bring to Culver three top canoeists in seven different classifications from both the U. S. and Canada. In addition, association officials hope that Mexico will send a team to Culver. The championship will involve a flat water race course of 500 meters for women and 1,000 meters for men. Additionally, there may be a 10,000 meter race.

In addition to their practice schedule, the team is assisting Blaho in canoeing classes for 48 summer school students and helping begin work in four-oared company crew shells.

Team members include: John Benner and Chris Greenleaf, Culver, Ind.; Ted Frison, Englewood, Colo.; Fred Mann, South Bend, Ind.; Keith Oldham, Durham, N. C.; Jim Etchen, team captain from Pittsburgh, Pa.; Bob Fogel, Attica, Ind.; Steve Kling, Wayne, Ill.; and Casper Martin, Elkhart, Ind.

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Culver's Canoe Team

Under the guidance of the US Olympic Canoe and Kayak Coach, Kalman Blaho prepares the Culver Canoe team for a masterful challenge ahead.





Yonkers Canoe Club - NY

The Yonkers Canoe Club had dominated the National Races since 1886 relying on the expert training of several past Olympic Canoers

(source <https://http://www.yprc.org/yprc-history.html>)



Herald Statesman
Monday, July 2, 1973

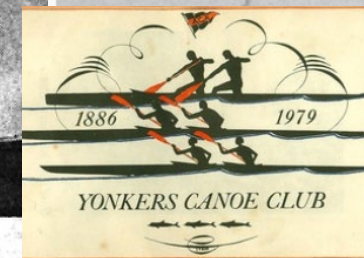


IT'S DOWN TO THE SEA IN CANOES AS THE 2ND ANNUAL HUDSON RIVER CANOE REGATTA HITS THE WATER
... War Canoe Race between civic organizations was one of the highlights of the day's festivities

— Staff Photo by Red Mory



WAR CANOE WINNER—In photo is pictured Steve Macknowski winning the war canoe race last weekend at Tibbetts Lake. Steve Macknowski is at the tiller as he guides on Gus Stahl's "Speaking of Sports" column at left).



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ACA National Championship

His first American triumph was the surprise win of the Culver team in the nine-man “war” canoe at the National Championship Junior races in New Rochelle NY in July 1966. The win was probably gratifying for Kalman as the favored Yonkers team was coached by Stephen Macknowski – an American 1948 Summer Olympics C-2 Gold and Silver medalist. Macknowski also served as the Yonkers coxswain, which obviously didn’t do them any good against the Culver onslaught. Four of the same Culver cadets then won second and third place in the 5,000-meter C-2 events. These upsets by Blahó-coached teams “electrified” the American canoe and kayak communities and led to a resurgence of interest in the sport. The trip was also memorable for when he left a car full of anxious Culver boys by the curb in Harlem while he visited a friend.



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Kálmán's 1966 Nationals Team



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Silver Canoeists Win First National War Canoe Race

Culver's canoe team brought home a first, second, and third place competition last weekend at the National Canoe championships in New Rochelle, N.Y.

Working under American Canoe Coach Kalman Blaho, who will be the U.S. team to East Berlin for the world championships next month, the Culver canoeists flashed home with a victory in a grueling race in the nine-man war canoe event. Since the war canoe classification is a new event, Culver's time of 2:28.1 established a record for 500 meters.

The Academy paddlers edged the Yonkers, N.Y. squad in the war canoe race after the New York team took an early lead. Coach Blaho described the race as "combat—all the way," but it was not until the final section of the event that Culver edged ahead. The Eagles edged the Yonkers by one and one-tenth of a second.

Culver's war canoe squad was composed of nine Winter School students who have been working on Lake Maxinkuckee for several weeks. They are: Robert Fogel, Attica, Ind.; Casper Mar-Elkhart, Ind.; Steve Kling, Duane, Ill.; Keith Oldham, Durand, N. C.; Chris Greenleaf, Chicago, Ind.; James Etchen, Pittsburgh; John Benner, Culver, Ind.; Fred Mann, South Bend, Ind.; and Ted Frisco, Cherry Hills, Colo.

Along with the first place, four Academy paddlers placed in the 100 meter C-2, two man racing canoe competition. Fogel and Martin combined to grab a second place and the team of Kling

and Oldham won third in the same event.

This year's championship at New Rochelle is the first attempt by Culver in national canoeing competition. Coach Blaho, former Hungarian canoe champion and twice coach of the Italian Olympic canoe teams, joined the Culver staff last winter. He was named American canoe coach this spring by the American Canoe Association, and he has served the Olympic Development Committee as a consultant in canoeing.

Coach Blaho will take the American team to East Berlin for the world championships next month. He will be in charge here when the North American canoe championships are held at Culver, Sept. 17-18. The North American event will involve American, Canadian, and possibly Mexican paddlers.

Next year the boys hope to enter a kayak team in the competition. Although there is no official academy kayak team, Mr. Blaho has been coaching some students informally.



Spivey Congrats Letter



August 5, 1966

Mr. Kalman Blaho
Culver Military Academy
Culver, Indiana

Dear Kalman:

This letter will arrive while you are in East Berlin, but I want to express my heartiest congratulations to you for the junior national championship won by our boys at New Rochelle. I am tremendously pleased with the way in which you have led the boys in the canoe program, and the victory at New Rochelle is simply further proof of your ability.

I have heard many excellent compliments about the canoeing program from boys and from their parents, and most of the compliments are directed at you, personally. You prove that our young men are willing to work hard if given the proper leadership and inspiration.

I hope that by the time you read this the American canoe and kayak teams have scored long-awaited victories in the world championships. If they don't make it this year, I am confident that with your guidance it will only be a matter of time before they dominate the sport.

Sincerely,

DELMAR T. SPIVEY
Major General, USAF (ret.),
Superintendent

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U.S.-Canada Tie Here In Continent Canoe Race

By Jon Nagel, Assistant Sports Editor

For the first time in the 14-year history of the event, United States and Canadian teams tied in the North American Canoe Championships at Culver last weekend.

The list of 63 competitors included several medal winners from the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo as well as a host of Canadian and U.S. national champions. Favored Canadian paddlers swept three of the first four long-distance events in Saturday's competition.

Bolstered by a clean sweep by the American girls, the U.S. teams recovered Sunday and won the last event to deadlock the race for the national team winning the most first places.

U.S. men were headed by Kenny Wilson of New York City, who is the American 10,000 and 1,000-meter champion in the kayak, and James O'Rourke, also of New York, who is U.S. national champion in the 10,000 and 1,000-meter Olympic-style racing canoe. Key competitors in the Olympic style two-man canoe were Dennis Murphy and Robert Fletcher from Columbia, Conn.

Heading the list of Canadian entries were Gabor Joo, who has been 1,000-meter kayak champion for 10 years. He is one of eight Hungarian canoeists who left their native country for Canada around the time of the Hungarian revolt in 1956.

Joo, along with Canadians Frank Hesse and James Simon-yik and Americans O'Rourke and Dennis Van Valkenberg, competed in the Tokyo Olympic Games two years ago.

Culver Canoeists Win

This summer Culver's own varsity canoe team traveled to the National Canoe Championships in New Rochelle, N.Y. where they set a record time 2:28.1 for the 500-meter war canoe event.

Culver's war canoe squad was composed of John Benner, Jim Etchen, Bob Fogel, Ted Frison, Chris Greenleaf, Steve Kling,

Fred Mann, Casper Martin, and Keith Oldham.

Along with the first place, four team paddlers placed in the 5,000-meter C-2, two man racing canoe competition. Fogel and Martin combined to grab a second place and the team of Kling and Oldham won third in the same event.

Blaho Missing

This year's championship at New Rochelle is the first attempt by Culver in national canoeing competition. The team's coach is Kalman Blaho, former Hungarian canoe champion and twice coach of the Italian Olympic canoe teams.

He was named American canoe coach this spring by the American Canoe Association, and he has served the Olympic Development Committee as a consultant in canoeing.

Coach Blaho, who led the nine Culver canoeists to a national victory, suffered a heart attack as he was preparing for the North American races here. He is in Parkview Hospital, Plymouth, where he is still in serious condition after a setback caused by a blood clot in his leg.

Recognized internationally as one of the finest canoe and kayak coaches, Mr. Blaho's absence from the championships here last weekend somewhat dampened the spirits of the American and Canadian competitors, most of whom he coached either in the United States or back in Hungary.

In early September 1966 Kálmán and Chet Marshal were laying out the courses on Lake Maxinkuckee for the North American Canoe Championships when he suffered a major heart attack. Hospitalized and unable to participate, he died a few days after his American team tied the Canadians – the first time in 12 years they had not been beaten by the Canadians.



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Kalman Blaho, the proud, but quiet, international canoeing coach, died Sept. 24 after a brilliant career as an Olympic athlete and trainer. His record while at the Academy included the distinction of training a national championship team, election as American coach and being prime mover in the North American Canoeing Championships just before his death.

Culver Remembers Kalman Blaho

Coach Kalman Blaho, 46, died at 2 a.m. Sept. 24 at Parkview Hospital, Plymouth, after suffering a heart attack Sept. 14. He joined the Culver staff last February and was in charge of the canoeing program.

The native-born Hungarian was known the world over as one of the foremost authorities in the sport of canoe racing. Mr. Blaho was at one time selected as Hungary's most outstanding athlete for proficiency in 11 sports, but he left his country in 1957 after the Hungarian Revolt.

He became coach of the Italian Olympic canoe teams and a professor of physical education at the University of Rome between 1957 and 1965, when he and his wife Margo, a well known European basketball player, came to the U.S.

Mr. Blaho was selected almost immediately by the Olympic Development Committee to give canoe clinics throughout the U.S. in 1965. One of his clinics was given at the Academy which led to his appointment in February.

Only two months later he was named national canoe coach—the first in history—by the American Canoe Association. He took the

U.S. team to the world championships in East Berlin last August. As he predicted the U.S. team was badly beaten by European teams although the American girls performed relatively well.

Prior to the world championships, Mr. Blaho took a team of Culver winter school students to the national championships at New Rochelle, N.Y. There, with little background in Olympic-style racing, the Culver squad placed first in junior competition in the war canoe event.

Mr. Blaho was stricken with a heart attack Sept. 14 while mak-

ing plans for the North American Canoe Championships Sept. 17-19 on Lake Maxinkuckee. Together with Max Wentz, of the Academy's boat department, and Director of Athletics Chester Marshall, he had laid out the Olympic-style course and made other arrangements for the competition between U.S. and Canadian teams. The American team beaten all but one of the previous 13 years of the North American event, for the first time tied the Canadians.

At services Sept. 26 in the Memorial Chapel, Maj. Gen. Demar T. Spivey USAF (ret.), superintendent, cited Mr. Blaho as an example of dedication. He said that although Mr. Blaho had not been at the Academy for a long period of time, his intense commitment to work and his determination in athletics as a method of building men "has served as an inspiration to all that know him."



Coach Blaho: A Memorial

Kalman Blaho died Saturday, Sept. 24. Yet, in the few months he was here, he had started a varsity canoe team and had given many cadets the opportunity for participation in the varsity sports program who might not have had the chance. By June, only four months after his arrival at Culver, he had developed a war canoe team that went on to win a national championship.

The interest he kindled is obvious, as one looks at the strange kayaks skimming across the lake, and groups of canoeists racing between bouy after bouy. Indeed he has broadened the scope and opportunities of athletics at Culver. His contributions and dedication will never be forgotten.

Relatively few cadets knew him personally. It was rare to see him anywhere but near the lake, but the Corps and faculty knew of him. Attendance at his memorial service showed in a small way that many cadets and instructors felt proud and honored that he was at Culver. If his death proved anything, it was the profound influence that a truly extraordinary man transmitted to everyone around him in such a short time.

CMA's Superintendent, Major General Delmar, Spivey stated that Kálmán's intense commitment to his work and his determination in athletics as a method of building men "has served as an inspiration to all who knew him."

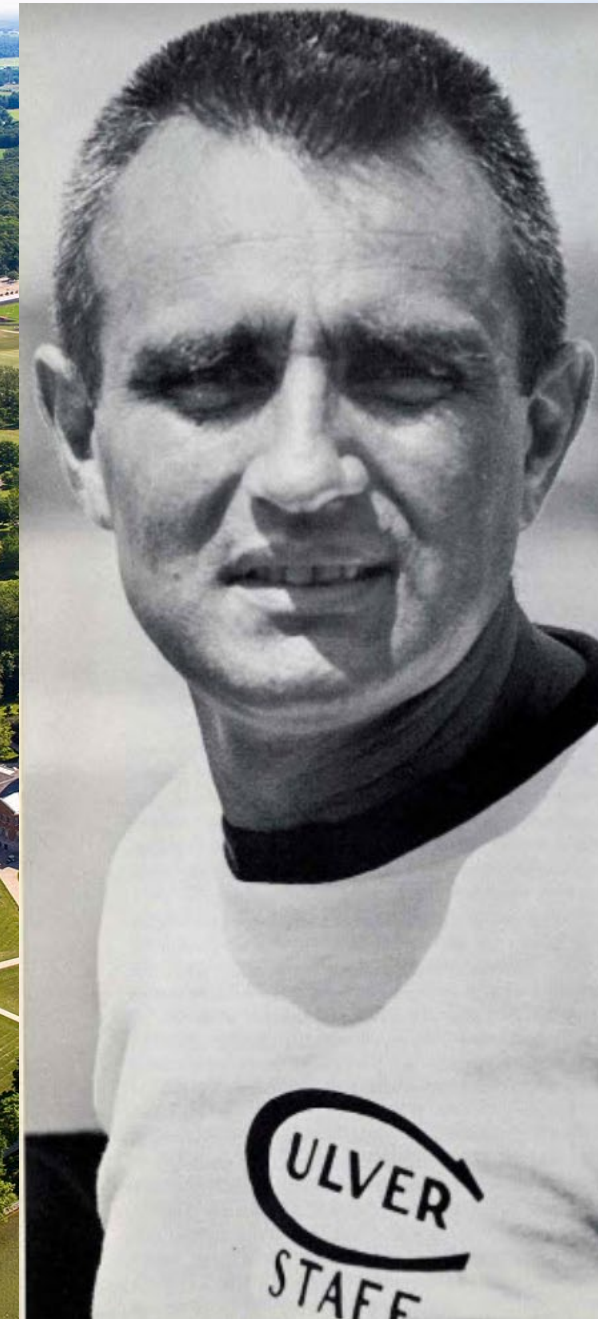


Blaho No-Coach Loser

IN a small inlet of the Atlantic Ocean near New Rochelle, N.Y., the elite of American canoe racing gathered recently to decided its national championships and to pick a team to represent the U.S. in the late summer world championships in East Berlin.

While the U.S. team is selected from among the senior competitors, the sponsoring American Canoe Association also holds national junior and juvenile races. It hopes that from the younger set will come fresh, new talent to bolster a sport that, in this country, has suffered from disorganization, minimal popularity, and 30 years of European superiority in the Olympics.

In this setting in late July, a group of nine Culver athletes emerged as national junior champions in the sport of canoe racing, which, if viewed with less than wild



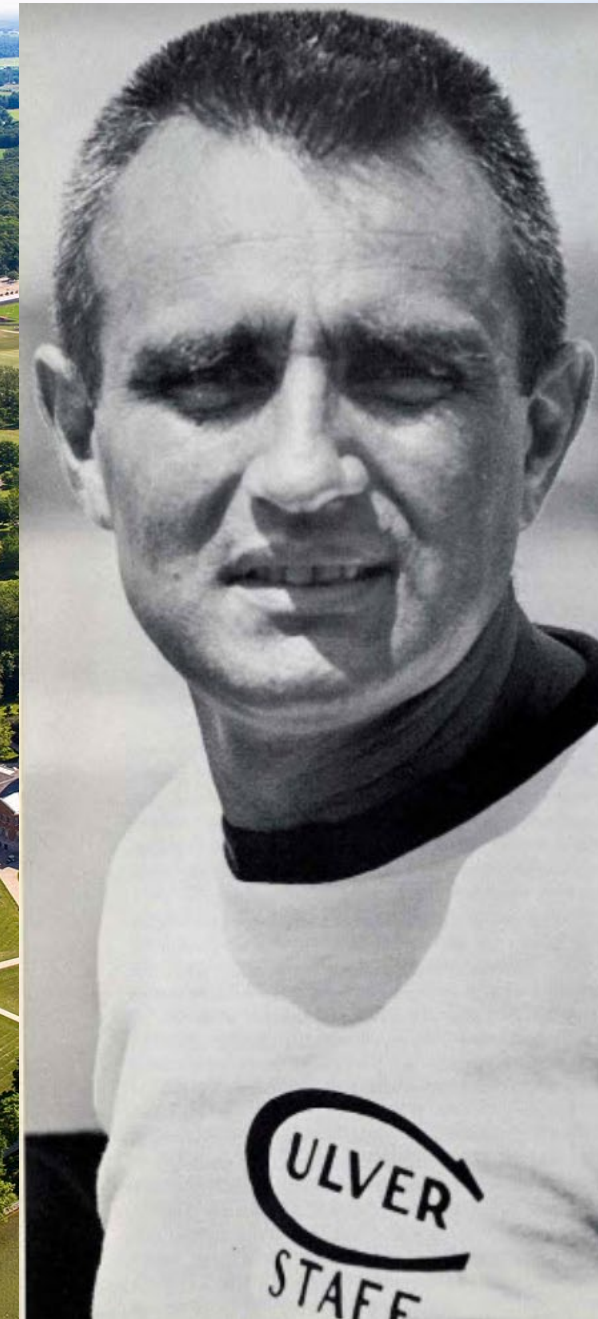
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Blaho No-Coach Loser

enthusiasm at the national level, has suddenly become an exciting addition to the Academy's varsity athletic program. The reason of the excitement is centered in one man: 47-year-old Kalman Blaho, first national canoe and kayak coach in the US History and a member of the Culver staff since January 1966.

Rated at best a second or third finisher at the New Rochelle, the Academy's nine-man war canoe - staffed by juniors and sophomores from the Winter School under Blaho's coaching - snaked past the favorite Yonkers, N.Y. squad to win the junior national title by a minuscule one and one-tenth seconds over a 500 meter course. Then four boys from the same crew jumped into two-man cruising canoes and won unexpected second and third places in 5,000 meters.



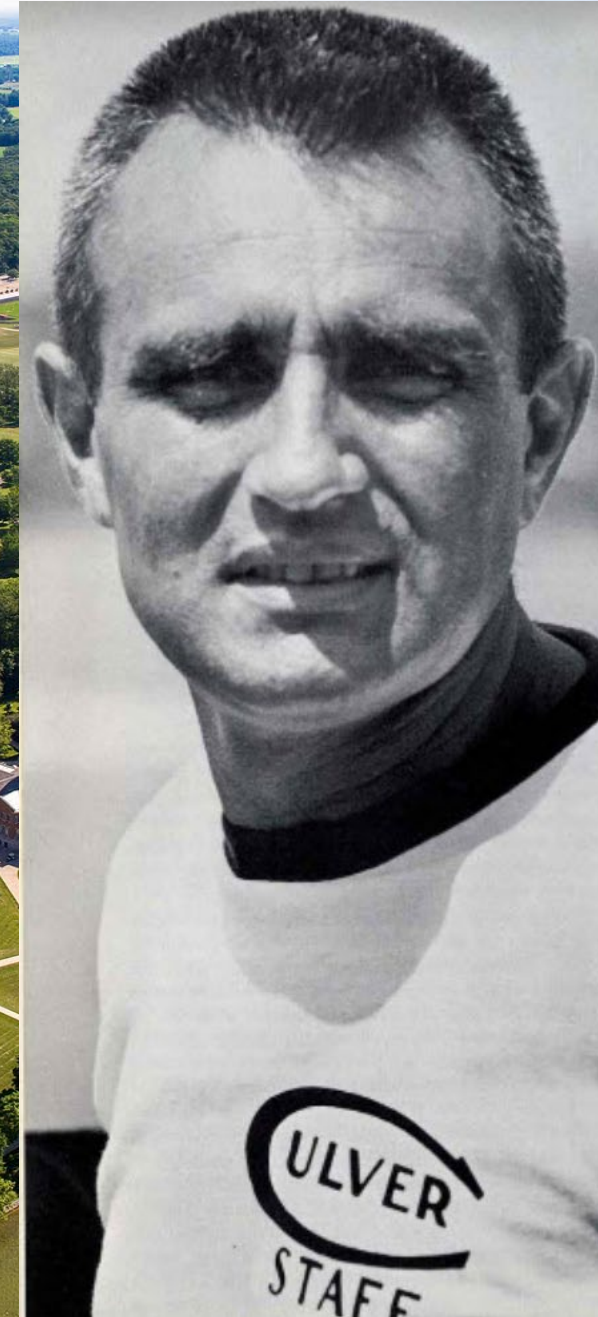
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Blaho No-Coach Loser

The victory over Yonkers was a surprise for several reasons. Yonkers had so convincingly beaten other teams in the war canoe in a divisional championship earlier on the Potomac that no one else was willing to take them on in the nationals. And Yonkers took advantage - which Blaho did not - of a general ACA rule permitting it coach, 1948 Olympic Gold Medal winner Steve Macknowsky, an old hand at training youngsters how to paddle their canoes, to sit in the stern and serve as coxswain.

Culver Alumnus - Summer 1966



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The Canoe Era



CULVER ACADEMIES

