



OLYMPIC CANOE/KAYAK 2024 MEDIA GUIDE

AMERICAN CANOE ASSOCIATION



2024 Paris Olympic Games Media Guide

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About the American Canoe Association

The American Canoe Association (ACA) was founded in 1880 and is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that serves as the National Governing Body for Canoe/Kayak as well as serving the broader paddling public by providing educational programs, supporting stewardship initiatives affecting paddlers, and offering competition opportunities to athletes of all abilities. The ACA has over 15,000 members and 300 paddling clubs and affiliate organizations spread across all 50 states and over 35 countries worldwide.

ACA Media Contacts

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Note: Additional media information and resources including results, athlete headshots, and more, will be updated at americancanoe.org/paris-2024-media-hub. Public updates will be available at americancanoe.org/news.



U.S. Olympic Team Roster at a Glance

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There will be a canoe and kayak event each day of the Olympics, a combination of two disciplines — canoe slalom (whitewater) and canoe sprint (flatwater).

Canoe Slalom Women's Team

[Evy Leibfarth](#)

Event(s): WK1, WC1, WX1

Hometown: Bryson City, NC

Club: Nantahala Racing Club

Canoe Sprint Women's Team

[Nevin Harrison](#)

Event(s): WC1 200m

Hometown: Seattle, WA

Club: San Diego Canoe/Kayak Team

Canoe Slalom Men's Team

[Casey Eichfeld](#)

Event(s): MC1, MX1

Hometown: Drums, PA

Club: Potomac Whitewater Racing Club

Canoe Sprint Men's Team

[Jonas Ecker](#)

Event(s): MK2 500m, MK1 1000m

Hometown: Bellingham, WA

Club: Bellingham Canoe Kayak Sprint Team

[Aaron Small](#)

Event(s): MK2 500m, MK1 1000m

Hometown: Seattle, WA

Club: Seattle Canoe and Kayak Club



About Canoe Slalom

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Olympic Canoe Slalom is a timed event where athletes navigate a minimum of 150m and a maximum of 400m long whitewater course through rapids and a combination of 18-25 downstream (green) and upstream (red) gates, of which six or eight must be upstream gates. The athlete receives a 2-second penalty for a touched gate and a 50-second penalty for a missed gate or incorrect gate navigation.

Canoe slalom is contested by two types of boats, canoe (C) and kayak (K). Canoe athletes kneel in a canoe and propel the boat with the single-blade paddle. Kayak athletes use the double-bladed paddle while in a seated position.

The canoe slalom originated in Switzerland in 1933 as a summer alternative to slalom skiing. It debuted as an Olympics sport during the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, Germany, and it has appeared continuously in the Olympic Program since the 1992 Games in Barcelona, Spain.

At the Paris 2024 Olympics kayak cross is making its debut. In kayak cross, four paddlers launch off an elevated platform and race down the whitewater course navigating 4-6 downstream (green) gates and 2 upstream (red) gates and a roll zone.

As of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, the USA Canoe Slalom Team has earned 1 Gold Medal (MC2), 2 Silver Medals (WK1), and 2 Bronze Medals (MC1 & WK1).

Paris 2024 Olympic Canoe Slalom Events

- Men's Canoe Single (MC1)
- Men's Kayak Single (MK1)
- Men's Kayak Cross (MX1)
- Women's Canoe Single (WC1)
- Women's Kayak Single (WK1)
- Women's Kayak Cross (WX1)



About Canoe Sprint

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Powerful athletes race head-to-head on a 9-lane course in narrow, high-speed canoes and kayaks. Olympic Canoe Sprint combines grace, power, fitness, exact paddling mechanics, and tremendous mental strength in three distances — 200m, 500m, and 1000m. First introduced in the 1924 Paris Olympic Games, canoe sprint became a full medal sport in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Canoe sprint also represents one of the largest Olympic sports with 10 events.

In kayak events, athletes are seated and use a paddle with a blade at each end while racing in one-person (K1), two-person (K2), and four-person (K4) boats. Canoe events, in single (C1) and double (C2), are characterized by a single-bladed paddle and are raced from the powerful high-knee position. Women's C1 and C2 was first added to the Olympic Program for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

As of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, the USA has won 7 Gold, 4 Silver, and 6 Bronze Olympic Medals in Sprint.

Paris 2024 Olympic Canoe Sprint Events

- Men's Kayak Single 1000m (MK1 1000m)
- Men's Kayak Double 500m (MK2 500m)
- Men's Kayak Four 500m (MK4 500m)
- Men's Canoe Single 1000m (MC1 1000m)
- Men's Canoe Double 500m (MC2 500m)
- Women's Kayak Single 500m (WK1 500m)
- Women's Kayak Double 500m (WK2 500m)
- Women's Kayak Four 500m (WK4 500m)
- Women's Canoe Single 200m (WC1 200m)
- Women's Canoe Double 500m (WC2 500m)



U.S. Olympic Team Coaches

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Rafal Smolen
Canoe Slalom
U.S. Head Coach

Rafal Smolen has worked with the U.S. Slalom National Team for over 18 years. He has coached professionally for Poland, Chile, Canada, and the Nantahala Racing Club in North Carolina. Prior to that he was a member of the Polish National Team for years, and was an Olympic alternate in 1992 and 1996. He has been the U.S. Olympic Team Assistant Coach in Sydney 2000, and the U.S. Team Coach in London 2012, Rio 2016, and Tokyo 2020. Smolen holds a Masters Degree in Physical Education and Sports Science.



Lee Leibfarth
Canoe Slalom
Olympic Canoe Slalom Coach
lleibfarth@frontier.com

A coach for Team USA in Tokyo, Lee Leibfarth has been actively involved in paddling for over 40 years. He is the Chair of the ACA Slalom Competition Committee, president of the Nantahala Racing Club, and previously served as the COO of the Nantahala Outdoor Center where he oversaw paddlesport operations.

Leibfarth lives in Bryson City, NC with his wife, Jean, and their daughter, Evy, who represented Team USA at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.



Joseph Harper
Canoe Sprint
U.S. Head Coach - Canoe

Formerly a member and Team Captain of the 1996 Olympic Canoe and Kayak Team, Harper brings valuable experience and perspective to the athletes he coaches.

Harper also served as Head Coach for the the United States at the 2022 and 2023 Jr, U23, and Senior Canoe Sprint World Championships, with historic finishes for both women's and men's canoeing.

In 2022, Harper received the California Paddling Hero Award for his dedication to coaching and the promotion of women's canoe.



Shelley Oates-Wilding
Canoe Sprint
U.S. Head Coach - Kayak

Shelley Oates-Wilding has served as the the U.S. Sprint Canoe (Kayak) Head Coach from 2021-2024. She has Coached the team to our best results in over 20 years in Senior World Championships, and U23 divisions. She founded and has been the head coach of Ikaika Hawai'i for over 13 years and before that time coached the successful Lanier Canoe and Kayak Team after completing in the 1996 Olympics.

Shelley competed in over 10 World Championships and in the Sydney 2000 Olympics in the Women's K4 5000m event. Shelley looks forward to building a full team to compete in the LA 2028 Olympics.



Athlete Bios

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Bio

Sport: Canoe Slalom
Events: WC1, WK1, WX1
Hometown: Bryson City, NC
Club: Nantahala Racing Club
Coach: Lee Leibfarth
Age: 20
DOB: January 26, 2004

Social

- Instagram: @evykayak
- Facebook: @evykayaks

About

Fresh off a Kayak Cross podium at the first 2024 World Cup, Leibfarth is set to compete in her second Olympic Games and has strong medal potential. At the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, Leibfarth will make history, becoming the first American woman to compete in three whitewater events — women's canoe, women's kayak, and women's kayak cross.

Leibfarth made a name for herself early in her career for her signature hummingbird stroke. Being only 15 years old at her first international competition, Leibfarth employed a unique paddle stroke that allowed her to be competitive with older and stronger paddlers. This stroke is ultra-fast and displays extreme precision.

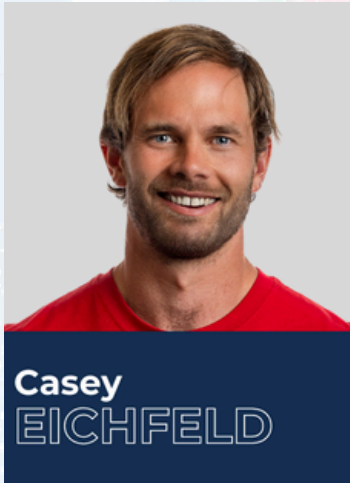
Career Highlights

- 1x Olympian (2020)
- 3rd place 2024 ICF World Cup 1 Augsburg in WX1
- 1st place U23 World Championships in WK1
- 3rd place U23 World Championship in WC1
- National Champion in WC1 in 2023, 2022, 2021, 2019, 2017
- National Champion in WK1 in 2023, 2022, 2021, 2019, 2018



Athlete Bios

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Bio

Sport: Canoe Slalom
Events: MC1, MX1
Hometown: Drums, PA
Club: Potomac Whitewater Racing Club
Coach: Rafal Smolen
Age: 34
DOB: November 15, 1989

Social

- Instagram: @themadkanuer
- Facebook: @CaseyEichfeldCanoeSlalom

About

A veteran of three Olympic Games, 2008, 2012, and 2016, Casey Eichfeld is set to compete in his fourth Olympic Games in the Men's Canoe Single event. One of Eichfeld's favorite experiences in the sport was at the opening ceremony of his first Olympic Games in Beijing. Surrounded by hundreds of American athletes all chanting USA is a moment he will never forget. In Paris, Eichfeld is gunning for the podium, hoping to top his 7th place finish at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Eichfeld is a Disney fanatic and he and his wife got married at Disney World in 2016. Fortunately, Disneyland Paris is conveniently located near by the Vaires-sur-Marne Nautical Stadium where Eichfeld will be racing. He hopes to visit Disneyland Paris after the games with his wife and daughter.

Career Highlights

- 3x Olympian (2008, 2012, 2016)
- 17 seasons on the U.S. Canoe Slalom National Team
- 7th place in 2016 Rio Olympics in MC1
- 4th place 2019 World Cup 2 Bratislavan in MC1
- 3rd place in 2016 World Cup Final Tacen
- National Champion in WC1 in 2022, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015



Athlete Bios

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Nevin
HARRISON



Bio

Sport: Canoe Sprint
Events: WC1 200m
Hometown: Seattle, WA
Club: San Diego Canoe/Kayak Team
Coach: Joseph Harper
Age: 22
DOB: June 2, 2002

Social

- Instagram: @nevinharrison

About

At her first Olympic games in Tokyo, Nevin became the first woman to win a gold medal in the canoe single 200m event. This year, she will defend her title as Olympic champion in the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. In Paris, Nevin looks forward to the energy of the crowds — a dramatic contrast to the empty stands and palpable silence of her winning race at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

Since her Tokyo victory, Nevin got an English Bulldog named Reggie, and she traded in the Seattle rain for some San Diego sun — moving from Washington state to California to train full time. Off the water, Harrison enjoys spending her free time surfing, exploring the San Diego area, riding motorcycles, and going to the beach.

Career Highlights

- Olympic Champion 2020 Tokyo Olympics in WC1 200m
- 2022 World Champion in WC1 200m
- 1st place at 2021 World Cup 1 Szeged in WC1 200m
- 2019 World Champion in WC1 200m
- Qualified U.S. Olympic Quota at the 2023 World Championships for WC1 200m



Athlete Bios

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Bio

Sport: Canoe Sprint
Events: MK2 500m, MK1 1000m
Hometown: Bellingham, WA
Club: Bellingham Canoe Kayak Sprint Team
Coach: Brain Ecker
Age: 21
DOB: October 26, 2002

Social

- Instagram: @jonasecker__
- Facebook: @jonas.ecker.73

About

Jonas Ecker was first introduced to paddling by his mom, a surfski paddler, when she signed him up for the founding summer camp of the Bellingham Canoe Kayak Sprint Team. To qualify for the Paris 2024 Olympics, Jonas and his kayak double partner, Aaron Small, needed a win at the 2024 ICF Canoe Sprint Pan American Olympic Qualifier. They did just that and now for the first time in 20 years, U.S. men have qualified a Kayak Double to compete in the Olympic Games.

Off the water, Jonas is currently studying Marine Biology and Chemistry at the University of Washington and enjoys spending time outside, skate skiing, backpacking, hiking, and cycling.

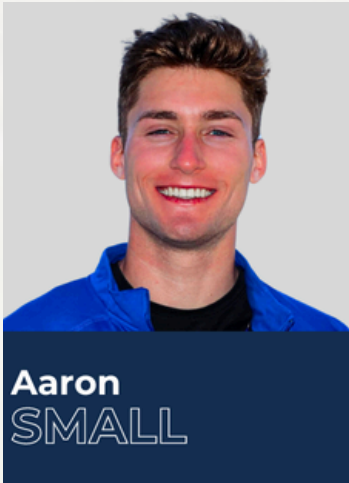
Career Highlights

- 2024 Pan-American Champion in MK2 500m and 2nd place in MK1 1000m
- 2022 Pan-American Champion in MK2 500m, 3rd place in MK1 1000m
- 2nd place at 2023 Pan American Championships in MK1 1000m and 3rd place in MK2 500m
- 3rd place at 2022 ICF U23 Canoe Sprint World Championships in MK2 U23 500m



Athlete Bios

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Bio

Sport: Canoe Sprint
Events: MK2 500m, MK1 1000m
Hometown: Seattle, WA
Club: Seattle Canoe and Kayak Club
Coach: Self-coached
Age: 22
DOB: July 11, 2001

Social

- Instagram: @small.aaron

Career Highlights

- 2024 Pan-American Champion in MK2 500m and 2nd place in MK1 500m
- 2022 Pan-American Champion in MK2 500m
- 3rd place at 2023 Pan-American Championship in MK2 500m
- 3rd place at 2022 ICF U23 Canoe Sprint World Championships in MK2 U23 500m

About

Aaron Small began paddling on Green Lake with the Seattle Canoe and Kayak Club when he was 11 years old and he hasn't set down his paddle since. Aaron officially qualified for his first Olympic Games at the 2024 ICF Canoe Sprint Pan American Olympic Qualifier with his kayak double partner, Jonas Ecker.

Just weeks after qualifying for the Olympics, Aaron graduated from the University of Washington, where he received his B.S. in Oceanography, and studied American Sign Language. Off the water, Aaron enjoys skate skiing, running, hiking, cooking. He is hard of hearing and a Hearing Health Ambassador for Phonak. He hopes to spread awareness about hearing health, help break the stigma behind wearing hearing aids, and inspire the next generation.