

Texas Operation Challenge Team's Bring Home Four Trophies Trinity River Authority CReWSers win Third Place Overall

2011 was a remarkable year for the three Operations Challenge Teams representing WEAT at the National Competition in Los Angeles. This would be the first year that all of the teams representing Texas would be competing in the ultra-competitive Division 1. This story starts back in April, when the Texas teams competed in the state competition to earn their spot at nationals. Making the trip this year was the state first place team the Trinity River Authority CReWSers, state second place team Austin Dillo XXpress, and state third place team, the Dallas Aqua Techs.

Due to a late season surge in Operations Challenge Sponsors, WEAT was able to send all three teams. While the accommodations in Los Angeles left a lot to be desired (The Rodeway Inn – Los Angeles Convention Center is surprisingly not Zagat rated), the teams approached it with good spirit. James Ray, Dallas Aqua Tech's claimed, "All I need is a place to lay my head." After making the journey to Los Angeles and checking in, the teams rallied with the WEAT Officers for a mini-pep rally in the "lobby" (read: parking lot) of the motel.

David Briggs, WEAT President, gave encouraging words to the teams, and spoke of how highly regarded the Texas Operations Challenge program is. Jeff Sober, WEAT Operations Challenge Chair, broke out the new competition t-shirts. Joe King, who recently passed away, was an ardent supporter of the Operations Challenge program. To recognize his contributions to the program, competition t-shirts were created that said "In Memory of Joe King" on the back, as well "Don't Mess with Texas". This was the first year that all of the teams wore the same shirt heading into Monday's competition, showing the rest of the country the support and camaraderie that our Texas teams possess.

INSERT PHOTO IMG: joe king shirt.jpeg

The overall competition includes five events that each team can place in, as well as an overall first, second, and third for the teams that are the most consistent among all the events. This competition takes place over Monday and Tuesday during the WEFTEC conference. The Monday portion of the competition represents the "smart" events, including laboratory and process control.

The laboratory event simulates completing an *E-Coli* procedure as fast as possible. On each event, a raw time, which is the time it takes to complete the event without any penalties assessed, is known by all. The final time, which includes the raw time plus any penalty time assessed, is not known until the award ceremony. Rumor had it that the TRA CReWSers had one of the best times of the day, and the rumor would hold true when they won second place in Lab.

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Caption: The TRA CReSWers, represented by (L to R) Steve Price, David Brown, Dale Burrow (Captain), Jake Burwell, Patrick Lynn (Coach) won second place in the laboratory event.

Also representing Texas in the laboratory event as national Judges were WEAT members Gary Sober and Mary Evans (State Coordinator for the laboratory event). The next event of the day

was the process control event, which is an extremely difficult test focused on wastewater operations. This test drained the teams, with our best finish at No. 4 from the TRA CReWSers.

Tuesday is arguably the most exciting day of the competition with the three “physical” events. The safety event, which represents retrieving a downed colleague from a confined space, was visible from across the giant exhibit hall floor due to the elevated platforms. The Dallas Aqua Techs brought home a hard earned second place finish in the safety event, finishing less than 30 seconds behind the first place team. TRA CReWSers came in fifth.

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Caption: The Dallas Aqua Techs, represented by (L to R) Kevin Willey, James Ray, Rey Davila (Captain), Thai Nguyen, and Eric Rivera (Coach) won second place in the safety event.

The collection systems event represents repairing a leak in a sewer system. Teams race to complete a hot tap as fast as possible. This competition represents the closest of the events in time, as teams can finish within a second of each other. The TRA CReWSers and the Austin Dillo XXpress placed a respectable fourth and fifth in this event. WEAT Operations Challenge Chair Jeff Sober was on hand as a collection system judge, as were states judges and WEAT members Roger Cagle and Rick Johnson.

The last event is the maintenance event, which simulates taking a submersible mixer and pump out of service, replacing seals and performing maintenance, and putting it back into service as quick as possible. The Austin Dillo XXpress brought home the only first place trophy for Texas as they went on to win first place in the maintenance event with an impressive finish and no penalties.

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Caption: The Austin Dillo XXpress, represented by (L to R) Ash Bledsoe, Justin Forsett (Alternate), Daniel Smith, Ellery Studivant (Coach), Richard Hamilton (Captain), and John Benham hoist the unique first place trophy of the maintenance event.

The TRA CReWSers also placed 5th. Texas was represented by National Judge Jared Schmerse as a maintenance event judge.

At the award ceremony on Tuesday night, WEAT held down eight tables of teams and supporters waiting in anticipation to hear the results of the event. As the individual events were completed, the winners of the overall competition were announced. The TRA CReWSers, proving that consistency is key to success, brought home a surprising third place overall finish behind Virginia’s Terminal Velocity and California’s Wrecking Crew.

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Caption: The WEAT Texas Teams show their support for each other while displaying their new hardware. Patrick Lynn, TRA CReSWers (front, center) holds TRA’s third place overall trophy.

The teams traveled back to Texas the next day after completing a significant feat: All three Texas teams placed in different events!

Stay tuned for the 24th annual Texas State Competition in April in San Antonio at Texas Water 2012. The WEAT Operations Challenge Program would like to thank our numerous generous sponsors without their support, this would not be possible: AECOM, Alan Plummer Associates, Inc., Andritz Separation, Inc., Byo-Gon, Inc., Carollo Engineers, CDM, CF Engineered Equipment, Inc., CH2M HILL, CP&Y, Inc., DXP Enterprises, EI2, Eutek Systems, Freese and Nichols, Inc., Gupta & Associates, Inc., Hartwell Environmental Harutunian Engineering, Inc., J&S Valve, Inc., JMB Environmental CRP, Matous Construction, Municipal Valve & Equipment Co., Inc, Newman Regency Group, OFS, Inc., Perkins Engineering Consultants, Inc., Premier Magnesia, RJN Group, Inc., Texas Lime Co., Treatment Equipment Company, Veolia Water North America, Victaulic and Whipps, Inc.