

Pemigewassett Newsletter

Summer 2011 Number Five

Well, after almost four weeks with hardly any rain to speak of, we've finally had what is passing in 2011 as an inclement day. Nothing especially lingering, just an evening and night of on-again-off-again showers and a day of even less aggressive precipitation. It's hardly held us back at all in a busy week when that finds us preparing for our upcoming day of competition with Camp Tecumseh. Scads of teams practiced yesterday for one of the twenty contests scheduled against our perennial rivals (soccer, baseball, tennis, and soccer matches in five age groups), and three overnights headed off into the mountains. Seniors Alex Baskin, Sparky Brown, Max Borges, Nick Butler, Nathan Tempro, and James Richardson set off with Trip Counselors Sylvia Parol and Will Sargent for a challenging three-day in the rugged and remote Mahoosuc Range right on the NH/Maine border. Meanwhile, travelling to the base of Mt. Carrigain in the company of Sam Day and Richard Komson, were Lowers Andre Altherr, Nick Gordon, Kai Soderberg, Oscar Tubke-Davidson, Sam Berman, Kevin Lewis, and Nick Oribe, poised for an ascent of the mountain today. Not to be outdone by their older colleagues, Juniors Dean Elefante, Dashiell Slamowitz, George Cooke, Henry Jones, and Darren Mangan eagerly joined Jamie Andrews and Ryan Fauver for a five-mile jaunt along the Appalachian Trail, staying at the remote Ore Hill shelter (in the company, we've learned, of a good handful of Maine-to-Georgia through-hikers.) It warms this correspondent's heart that, even in a week when Pemi becomes about as much of an "athletic camp" as it ever does, boys are still sufficiently committed to the full breadth of our program to sign up for trips like these. That a committed and talented athlete like Alex Baskin should jump at the chance to spend three days hiking just as Tecumseh Day approaches as quickly as the Maine border says a lot for him and for Pemi's sense of proportion. Alex will play in multiple sports on Friday and play extremely well, but he'll also have stored away some wonderful memories of backwoods adventure to savor over the coming months and years – perhaps long after he's forgotten the score of the Fifteen's soccer game.

Speaking of Pemi's broad program, herewith the promised report on the occupation program from Kenny Moore, Assistant Director.

The Pemi program is a machine to behold with many moving parts, levers, and pulleys. Athletics, trips, nature, arts, music, and special events are all key components; however the main engine is our daily instructional periods called occupations, presumably named in the early years of camp as wholesome activities to occupy the boys' time. Daily instruction is the hallmark of our system as the boys have the opportunity to try new activities as well as to hone a particular skill in one specific area. Given intentional designing for such a progression, a boy can take Beginning Archery in the first week of occupations having never shot a bow and arrow and then, weeks later, progress to Advanced Archery shooting for his Bowman or Jr. Archer. We offer over 70 occupations over four hours (periods) of instruction. We have over 60 program staff to mix into the fold before assigning roughly 170 boys into their three and possible four hours of daily instruction. In our fourth week of occupations this summer, 621 assignments were given to campers and 248 for the staff. We love that ratio: approximately 1 program staffer to 2.5 boys, allowing us to offer excellent and personalized instruction in all areas, from athletics to nature to arts and music. Our program staff, many of whom are professional educators, excel in direct instruction and are able to relate to each boy, whether they respond best to verbal instructions, to a visual or kinesthetic example, or to the chance to practice by themselves. Overall, the boys respond extremely well to this custom-tuned model of teaching.

Below is a snapshot of one specific hour of instruction to further illustrate the depth and breadth of Pemi's program. As I traveled through camp during 3rd Hour, I witnessed some remarkable examples of our excellent pedagogy.

In Mixed Media, Florian Diel watched Deb Pannell's sewing technique to adequately stitch together his Ugly Doll (a 3-Dimensional stuffed felt doll, designed and created by each artist.) Andreas Sheikh's Ugly Doll was a strategic masterpiece, coming together after Andreas had carefully sketched a plan before he deployed the fabric scissors for non-traditional cuts.



Beware, parents, of many Ugly Dolls coming your way in a few weeks! Forewarned is forearmed.



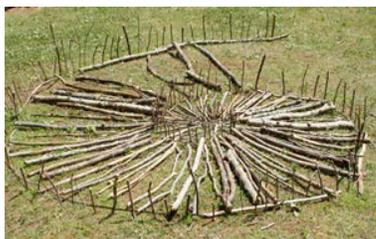
In thirteen-and-older Lacrosse, Zander Buteux and Will Clare led a hearty group of ten boys in warm-up drills, working on direct passes and ground balls. Ryan Murray and Cole Boland followed Zander and

Will's lead by calling, "Ball down!" effectively communicating to their teammates. Next, Zander and Will explained the necessities of "dodging," an evasive skill used to beat your defender in order to open a shooting lane; change of speed, body position, juke-move, stick control, etc. were all skills demonstrated and then gained by the attentive students.

Next, I was off to check in with Cory Fauver and Alastair Bowman in Environmental Sculpture, a



relatively new occupation that stimulates the boys' creative juices to produce visually-pleasing and –arresting artistic concepts using natural elements. At first, the boys worked in the Nature Lodge library, sketching the idea for the day. Soon the group voted on a concept and a location, a fantastic collaborative venture! By the end of the period, a concentric



stick circle had been created behind the Woodshop that entices any passerby to stop and contemplate their natural existence in the alluring spirals of a kind of woody nautilus.

Speaking of the Woodshop, I couldn't resist stopping in and seeing what Harry McGregor and his team were constructing. Each boy (unfortunately participants must remain anonymous in case surprise gifts may be coming your way!) was thoroughly engaged, working with Harry on the sander or Adam Sandler with the wood burners.

In A Cappella, Dorin Delhs, Zach Barnard, and Mike Plecha were putting the final touches on their rendition of The



Whiffenpoof Song, a classic everywhere from the Mess Hall in Wentworth to Louie's Lunch in New Haven. The energy and enthusiasm was inspiring, and as I observed them, Greg Nacheff followed Dorin's lead in the Soprano section, while Daniel and Peter Traver helped Mike anchor the bass. The choreography was as impressive as the singing, illustrating tremendous collaboration from a wide range of boys.



Our athletic instruction provides a clear example of the positive benefits of small ratios and direct instruction from knowledgeable and committed instructors. In 13's Tennis, Jeremy Roque received pointers from Alex Reese to perfect his serve, and after four

attempts, showed remarkable progress. In 12-and-Under Baseball, outfielders worked on catching pop flies on the move – then planting, and throwing, in order to hit the cut-off man. Jack O'Connor and Nate Blumenthal showed great range, always delivering the ball to the cut-off with pop, much to the delight of counselors Ben Walsh and Wesley Eifler.

Athletic Director and Northfield/Mt. Hermon boys' varsity soccer coach Charlie Malcolm led the charge for the 10-and-Under soccer



juggernaut with a precise progression of skill development and live-action practice throughout the week. Initially, they opened up with a 3-versus-1 keep-away drill in a small

grid, as the boys were encouraged to move without the ball to improve passing angles after watching Jeremy Keys' and Ben Ridley's flawless example. After establishing critical passing triangles, Charlie increased the grid size and had the boys play keep-away 4-versus-2. As the boys knocked the ball back and forth, their coaches prompted them to look for opportunities to split the two defenders. The final practice progression had the boys playing a small-sided game of 4-versus-4, with two neutral players attacking and defending goals. This allowed the boys to have constant passing options if they continued to move the ball. This progression yielded major dividends, as it was clear that the boys picked up and developed this vital tactical skill.



Whether it was Charlie's instructional progression on the soccer pitch or the conclusion to the Environmental Sculpture occupation, having the boys end with a culminating, capstone project is essential for the success of any occupation. The A Cappella group performance at campfire was a magnificent example to the importance of the culmination activity for the boys, as they felt a sense of accomplishment for their work put in during the week. The learning atmosphere that occupations foster is the creation of the Pemi Program Machine, as every member of Pemi learns and develops individual skills as well as teamwork. The final two weeks of occupations will no doubt produce the same results, and your boys should return home better for having been part of our program.

As a coda to Kenny's portion of the newsletter, here's a brief account of the recent Allagash Canoe Trip, penned by trip leader Andy Kirk. This is one of Pemi's

banner trips, and every year takes our oldest campers on an extremely ambitious odyssey through some of the least-developed areas of the Northeast. The outing requires a week's worth of training in a trip-specific occupation; selection to join the crew is an honor; and the challenging experience is usually one of the highlights of a Pemi career.



On Sunday, July 17, ten campers and two counselors (Andy Kirk and Sam Day) rose at 5:00 A.M. to embark on a four-day canoe trip down sixty-two miles of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, a nature preserve reclaimed from a long history of logging and farming along its State-O'-Maine banks. Great was the enthusiasm of campers and counselors alike, and they were unfazed by the seven-hour road trip to meet Katahdin Outfitters, who supplied us with canoes—and another three-hour drive through Baxter State Park (and within throwing distance of Mt. Katahdin) and numerous logging roads.



After camping at Churchill Dam, we got an early trial by fire in a set of Class 2 rapids, and the campers

demonstrated the capsize-recovery skills they had learned from guest canoe instructor Doug Hill (Porter's dad) the week before. Ridley Wills and Dana Wensberg set the bar high early on with some powerful paddling even with some heavy loads. Dana later showed ingenuity in repairing a tent, and his only trouble was with the Tabasco sauce that occasionally blighted his meals. Rodrigo Juarez kept the humor up throughout the trip and was always a good source of conversation. Brendon Armitage got right back to basics on this trip: work hard, sleep hard, sparing no effort during the day and wasting few opportunities for shut-eye in the afternoons.

The group was up early every day and made good time; all campers helped willingly with chores, particularly Tommy Tranfo, Dana Wensberg, Max Livingstone-Peters, and Sam Harrigan. The latter two distinguished themselves in two others ways. At the 1/3-mile portage around Allagash Falls, an older gentleman canoeing alone needed help with his canoe, and Max helped him out right away. Sam, throughout the trip, regaled his companions with arresting observations and rhetorically posited philosophical questions.



The weather was pleasant, and there were many opportunities to swim and enjoy the northern flora as well as sightings of bald eagles, moose, and other fauna. Snack stops were frequent—something of an ongoing dope stop [Ed.: ancient Pemi terminology for a post-trip stop for soda pop, formerly called by Granite Staters “dope”]—with Matt Sherman most often piloting the candy barge, the most important canoe, and one for which all travelers had pledged to give their lives to protect and rescue. No harm came to the candy though it was all eventually devoured. Sam Papel came through as a motivated mover at the portage, energetically pushing and dragging canoes,

often single-handed and doing extra work along the way. Dan Fulham astonished all as he hoisted one fully-loaded canoe on each shoulder, carried them most of the way, and heaved them the last fifty yards into the water, holding forth on the writings of Kurt Vonnegut throughout. [Shades of Paul Bunyan? We think Andy, a Harvard grad, may be exaggerating a bit here!]

All in all, the trip was a success, and Pemi Seniors demonstrated all the finest qualities of Pemi men.

That's it for this week. Stay tuned for our next number, which will feature Athletic Director Charlie Malcolm's account of Tecumseh. For now, enjoy the next seven days in your own little corner of summer.

-- Tom and Danny