



International Rafting Federation

14 July 2010

SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION INTO 2010 EURO RAFTING CHAMPIONSHIP ACCIDENT

By Gaspar Goncz (Head of IRF Guide Training & Education)

On Friday the 4th June 2010, the Bosnian 1st Women's Team flipped towards the end of the Slalom course on the Noce River. Four team members managed to get to the bank but two were swept further down. Later one of them managed to get to the bank but the other, Branka Stulic, was parted from the raft and swept on down the river for approximately 5kms. When she was pulled from the river the medics had to revive her and she was taken to hospital where she passed away 5 days later.

The IRF has conducted an investigation to the best of its abilities. However, as we have no jurisdiction in Italy we must defer to the authority of the police there as far as final responsibility. They have the jurisdiction to legally investigate the incident in depth as well as to lay charges if necessary. Their conclusion has been to charge the "security officer" of the event with culpable homicide.

The IRF's responsibility is to therefore assess its own role in the incident. Having considered all the reports received the IRF's conclusion is that no one group or person was responsible. The accident was a result of a long chain of numerous human errors of judgement that ended in the tragic loss of a young life. To eliminate the chance of such accidents we need to work on all areas to ensure that any chain of errors is broken and so cannot have such devastating results.

These areas are:

1. Guarantees for the professional performance of rescue teams:

The IRF is developing a document of the minimum requirements for safety at A and B level events. It will be obligatory for organisers to keep within these requirements.

2. Self Rescue skills of the competitors:

With the cooperation of all raft teams, we will include tests of minimum self rescue skills in the Race Rules to encourage teams to ensure they have a high standard in this regard. This should be mandatory at all levels of events.

3. Event Organisation:

Enforce penalties on event organisers and their national rafting federations that do not comply with the IRF's bid requirements.

As is stated in the rules at present:

"J. Safety at/on the river

7. In any event competitors take part at their own risk. Neither the IRF, sponsors nor organizers bear responsibility for accidents or damage that may occur during a competition. Every participant,

including organising staff and competitors, is obliged to act in a safety conscious manner at all times so as to minimize the risk of an accident or damage."

We all love to play in Mother Nature's play ground but she can be a hard task master and small human errors can have devastating affects. We ask all paddlers to join in our Forum discussions on adjusting our Race Rules and other documents to reduce the risks in our events.

There will be a candlelit silence held during the WRC 2010 in memory of Branka.

Yours in safe paddling,

Gaspar Goncz
(Head IRF Guide Training & Education)