

ATLANTIC

Coastal Kayaker



April 2010
Volume 19, No. 2

\$3.00

www.atlanticcoastalkayaker.com

2nd Annual Golden Gate Sea Kayak Symposium

(Events, Page 10)



David Valverde Takes Over BSD

By Tamsin Venn
Photos by
David Valverde



A racer gets ready at the start of the Florida Challenge this year.

Balogh Sail Design has a new owner. The 24-year-old company famous for the invention of batwing sails that set kayakers on a speedy, paddle-free course gained David Valverde as its new leader last November.

Valverde is not new to BSD. He has been using BSD rigs since 1992 as a self-taught sailor who “gets seasick on anything larger than a kayak.”

“Our sail rigs enable any kayak or canoe to sail easily close to the wind - an ability that is simply just not available with the more common down-wind sail rigs. Especially using our patented BOSS outrigger system, a kayak is able to carry an

efficient, fully battened sail in safety and comfort with full control from inside the boat’s cockpit,” says Valverde from his office in New York City.

“We think the idea of having a sailing rig like this, with this capability, adaptable to any existing kayak, and easily installed, removed, and stored, to free the boat for pure paddling use, is unique to BSD,” he adds.

Founded by Mark and Sam Balogh in 1986, the small but well respected company was noted for the revolutionary use of the bat wing for kayak sails, an invention Mark transferred from the speedy sails he had developed for windsurfers.



An onlooker checks out the amas and Batwing sail before race start, Florida Challenge in March.

Balogh developed a reputation for producing quality sail rigs and outriggers. The rigs were so popular, however, that customers started grumbling about deliveries – sometimes it would take a year to get a rig, and kayak adventurers aren’t always known for long range planning.

“The company had problems with very slow delivery dates. We’re working to turn that around. One order we were recently turned around in 24 hours (more common is 7 to 10 business days). That worked for some Water Tribe racers, who ordered the sail last minute,” notes Valverde.

Water Tribe’s Florida Challenge race circumnavigates Florida in 29 days. The use of sails is common practice among all the participants and is handy for the long stretches of open bay.

Valverde’s goal is to have a continuous supply of sails and rigs in stock for quick delivery. He will continue to offer custom rigging and sails, however. He also offers fully rigged, “turn-key” boats that are ready to sail, having become a retailer for several kayak companies.

Formerly a successful real estate broker, he came out of retirement to run BSD, following training from the Baloghs. Mark has moved to France, and Sam remains in

Virginia, where they last ran the company following a move from Cedar Island, N.C.

Valverde knows the product well. He used the rig for several “extreme kayaker” trips. He has paddled from Palm Beach to the Everglades, paddled from Albany to Nyack on the Hudson River in New York, and paddled Lake Powell by folding kayak. (He flew in with his boat and luggage.)

“I lived out of the kayak and got my suntan. I knew the strengths and weaknesses of the rig,” says Valverde.

He also took part in two of the famous Cedar Island Races in North Carolina before the Water Tribe took over the race last September.

The Cedar Island Race, now called the North Carolina Challenge, is about a 100 nautical mile counter clockwise circumnavigation of Cedar Island. Valverde got shipwrecked on Cedar Island, and the Coast Guard sent out a helicopter to look for him. He was stranded for 17 hours and hypothermic. It took him a week to start eating again, he says.

Despite that mishap, he hopes to take part in the race this year to test new equipment he is developing.

The company offers the Batwing Sport and Batwing Expedition sail for both hardshell and folding kayaks and Twins for downwind sailing, as well as an array of hardware and accessories for custom fitting the sail and rig.

Valverde is working to introduce some new equipment, including the use of high performance laminate fabrics, another type of sail, a different type of reefing system, and custom colors. Also key for his worldwide customers, he is negotiating with UPS to lower shipping rates, which he indicates can add a significant amount to buying the product.

“\$350 to Spain,” he says. “People are complaining about the freight.”

Valverde moved the company to New York

with offices in Manhattan, at 78th St. between First and York. Production takes place in the Bronx.

“There are a lot of companies still up here; it’s lower production and shipping costs,” he says. BSD moved in November, and he started full production in January.



He is grateful that he has sold four rigs for the Florida Challenge and that all have held up so far. Except for one. “Product failure due to wildlife,” says Valverde. A sea creature rammed the boat, broke the seat, and the outriggers bent. “It was a Kruger. Those boats are like tanks, so it must have been a big sea creature,” says Valverde, refer-

ring to the Kruger decked canoe, a popular choice of boat for the race.

Another is a father/daughter duo who gained Valverde’s highest complement: “He actually looked like he knew what he was doing.”

“I was at the Florida Challenge and there were a lot of Krugers using BSD rigs. I was impressed with their performance. Right now I will say that Krugers with BSD rigs are very popular for long expeditions. I sold a lot of BSD rigs this year to Kruger owners. They are great for surviving long trips and have enough capacity to bring a cappuccino machine,” says Valverde.

He will continue to offer the sails and rig through mail order. He has one dealer, Easy Rider, in Washington but is reluctant to get dealers involved.

“They have to make sure they know what they are doing. This is a service related company, and the service they provide reflects on BSD,” says Valverde.

Valverde owns both folding kayaks and hardshells and sails both.

“After my folding kayak wore out, I bought a hardshell, a high volume Necky Tofino. I used that one from Palm Beach to Everglades with a schooner rig. It performs well. This kayak has met all my needs from sailing alone or sailing with a friend. I put three sails on this kayak and learned a great deal about the performance of a Batwing and outriggers.”

The Balogh Batwing is a fully battened, camber-induced rig. In 1978, Balogh began to design sails for sailboards in Florida when sails used were soft, i.e. unbattened and uncambered. Balogh looked to airfoil designs being used for hang gliders and saw similarities – both had limited stability and the hang glider industry had developed lightweight, efficient fabrics. For about eight years, Balogh’s company made custom-designed sails for sailboards – some of the designs and rigs were among the fastest in the sailboard world.



Cedar Island Race before it became the North Carolina Challenge.

In 1986, Balogh transferred that expertise to kayakers, limited stability boats with efficient hulls that could benefit from lift to drag ratios. The camber induced rig would provide forward thrust with less heeling force.

Balogh designed the original Batwings with tapered fiberglass battens and precisely cut panels of sail. Reefing zippers allowed kayak sailors to cut down the sail area; and he offered a range of mast sizes from 10 to 14 feet.

In November 1992, ACK ran an article by Folding Kayaker Editor Ralph Diaz about the “revolution” that BSD was starting.

“Leading the vanguard of this quiet revolution is Mark Balogh of Balogh Sail Designs in Cedar Island, North Carolina. BSD has come up with two components that are thrusting sea kayakers into the exhilarating realm of all-out sailing: a revolutionary sail rig, the Batwing, that is easy to control and gets enormous power out of a modest amount of sail; and a system of inflatable outriggers, BOSS (Balogh Outrigger Stabilizing System) that is easy to set up or stow away...

“The BSD Batwing has forever changed folding kayak sailing. Up until recently, the only rig that could be sailed upwind was the

venerable Klepper S-4 (and some variations of it used by at least one other folding kayak maker)...

“Now you are seeing a daring navy of folding kayakers who have turned to the Batwing and BOSS to sail under control in 30-40 knot winds...”

Balogh originally conceived the Boss Outriggers as training wheels for kayakers learning to sail but he saw how the outriggers could provide for aggressive sailing to windward without capsize. He went on to improve the outrigger/amas system, eventually shaving eight pounds off the rig.

For all this technology, however, BSD also had a lot of fun. BSD used to host meetings dubbed “The Gathering of the Born to Raise Sail” where kayak sailors could meet, sail, and compare notes.

The company may have changed hands, but the spirit is still alive.

“It’s the best sailing rig in the world,” Valverde declares confidently.

For more information, www.balogsailsigns.com



Necky Tofino with a schooner rig.

David Valverde shows off his Challenger paddle prize, Cedar Island Challenge 2004.

