



No Corporation and no title. Winner of last year's race, the raft, No Corporation, ponder their efforts after finishing second. (Staff Photos by Kramer)



It was a rough race. Faces of this raft crew reflect the disappointment of finishing out of the money. Crew came in fifth.

New Norelco Raft River Race Winner

By CHARLES STANNARD

HADDAM - The ninth annual Connecticut River Raft Race paddled to its third successful year at Haddam Meadows State Park.

Hundreds watched as 60 homemade rafts completed the near four mile run from the race starting point at Hurd State Park in East Hampton to the finish line at Haddam Meadows.

The winner was a new raft, Norelco-America, that was constructed and crewed by employees of Norelco-Phillips Park in Essex. The Norelco raft crossed the finish line in a record 24 minutes and 37 seconds.

Second place went to the No Corporation raft, the 1982 race winner, with a time of 26 minutes and 25 seconds. Third place at an even 33 minutes went to the the Last Chance, another raft crewed by

Norelco employees that had placed second last year.

The Norelco and No Corporation crews have been engaged in a friendly competition for the past several raft races.

Competition was secondary to most of the other rafts and crews that paddled, pushed and drifted down the river Saturday. The event lived up to its tradition of offering a wide variety of bizarre and humorous crafts and contraptions.

There was the Fat Chance, the Horrendous, the River Queen with its all woman crew, Scumally and the locally based We-Haddam-All. A good time was evident from both the raft crews and the riverside spectators.

The race was started with a drop of the red flag by Governor William O'Neill. The Governor, wearing a red raft race t-shirt, later greeted the arriving rafts with a

bullhorn from the bow of a State Police river patrol boat.

Haddam First Selectman Mark Lundgren served on the crew of a raft, a large green craft called "Heiney" for the supply of beer on board. Lundgren agreed that the race was a good time and that the Haddam Meadows was a good spot for the finish line.

Each raft paid a \$50 entry fee, with a \$10 fee for each crew member. The proceeds from the race will be donated to children's charities, chiefly the Little White Schoolhouse cerebral palsy treatment center in Waterford.

The afternoon continued with an awards ceremony and music from a rock band, folksingers and a round of what could be the race anthem "What do you do with a drunken sailor".

The raft race began in the sum-

mer of 1974 as the brainchild of a group of Old Saybrook and Essex residents. The race was run between the Deep River town dock and Notts Island off Essex, growing in size and popular interest each year.

By 1979, the race and the traditional post-race party were prompting objections from some Essex residents. In 1981, the race committee moved the race upriver to the Haddam Meadows after receiving permission to use the park from the state Department of Environmental Protection.

State Police reported no major problems in the Haddam area Saturday related to the raft race.

The Connecticut River Raft Race appears to have found its perfect location at the Haddam Meadows as it approaches a first decade next year.