What’s the big deal?

Jackie Jarrell, John Bennett, Jim Borton, and Steve Harrison
What Is Operations Challenge?
Operations Challenge is the water quality industry’s premier professional skills competition
Ops Challenge is composed of five separate events:

- Process Control
- Laboratory
- Maintenance
- Collection System
- Safety
Now in its 29th year at WEFTEC, the concept originated in Ohio

Ohio 1985

WEFTEC 1988
Today’s characters, um...co-speakers...

John Bennett

Jim Borton
What do people learn from Ops Challenge?

John Bennett
Trinity River Authority of Texas
Denton Creek Regional Wastewater System Plant Manager
What are the benefits of participating in this program?

- Teamwork
- Technical Skills
- Networking
- Leadership Development
- Professional Growth
- Recognition and FUN!
Leadership / Teamwork Opportunities

As a team member
As a utility employee
As a competition committee member
As a MA member
As a WEF member
Further Develops Much Needed Technical skills

<table>
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<th>In their area of focus</th>
<th>In technical areas within the facility</th>
<th>In support areas:</th>
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<td></td>
<td>• Multi-skilled</td>
<td>• Laboratory</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Multi-tasking</td>
<td>• Engineering / Design</td>
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<td>• Increased communication</td>
<td>• Pretreatment</td>
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<td>• Appreciation</td>
<td>• Management</td>
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• Regulatory
Networking with other Professionals in the Industry

Greater appreciation of the industry as a whole
What we do is: Important, Appreciated, Essential

Greater understanding of the challenges we all face
We are not in this alone!
Parts of the world face challenges much greater than ours.

Greater appreciation for our utility
Pride, Appreciation, Dedication
History of Professional Growth

• Promotion within the utility:
  ▪ Increased responsibility, leadership, supervision and management

• Numerous current and former competitors have returned to college and now have or are currently working on a degree

• Motivated, knowledgeable, skilled staff, Can you place a price on this?

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Class A WW License in Texas are current or former Ops Challenge Competitors
Steve Johnson Jr
Superintendent of Treatment Plant Operations

Valencia Water Reclamation Plant
60 MGD

Including 2 Superintendents and an Operations Engineer
Dedication!
Family Tradition
Recognition and FUN!

Awards Ceremony

Magazine coverage
- WEF, MA, TPO, Local News Outlet, YouTube

MA Recognition

Utility Recognition

FUN!
- What happens at the challenge stays at the challenge…
How do I make this work at my utility?

Jim Borton – Ch2m
Operations Challenge Committee Chair
It takes commitment to make this work including lots of practice

Frequency  Time  Schedule
Materials and training

• Starting out – none?

• Highly competitive
  ▪ Pipe, saws, fittings, sampler and tables
  ▪ Pump and tools
  ▪ Laboratory Instruments/Supplies
  ▪ CSE equipment, platform, valve mock up
  ▪ Lots and lots of process scenarios and now a laptop

• In between – operators are very creative…
Funding support

- Varies by situation
- On your own to compete at state/MA level
- Some MA’s sponsor teams or arrange sponsorships
- Some Utilities allowed to find own sponsors
- Costs?
  - Attend WEFTEC typically about $7500/team depending
Sustainable team

- Coach(es)
- Captain
- 3 additional players
- No age requirements
- Willingness to work together, learn and build on previous event scores
- Able to have fun…
The “support team”

- Opportunities for other staff to develop and train while helping the ops team to prepare
- Lab techs train team on lab practices
- Process staff train team on PC calculations
- The team that stays home to keep doing what we do while the competition ensues
Choosing a team

• Varies by situation
  - Some all operations
  - Some all mechanics
  - Some all collection staff
  - Some a mix of operations, mechanics, collections and lab staff

• Key is willingness to:
  - put forth the efforts required
  - step out of comfort area and work with new teammates to learn
I can’t do that...

- Consider this:
  - utility with only 29 total people (Water/Wastewater, Collections and Distribution)
  - Fielded 2 teams to WEFTEC in 2004 each team with coach
  - Left 19 staff at home to cover plants and systems
  - OR – regulatory agency sends a team to compete
  - How do I know?

- Team doesn’t have to be from same entity, work with neighbors
How do I start the program in my Member authority?

Steve Harrison
WEF Operations Challenge
Teams must be endorsed by member associations but there is no mandated selection criteria. Some unique and recommended examples include
What lies ahead?
Dave Vogel (left), 2016 – Munich, Germany
Finalist-Operations Challenge

2014

Application of Content/Education on the Show Floor
Operations Challenge... Where will it take you?