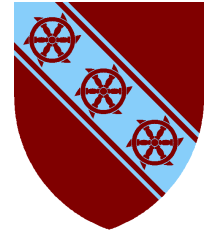




St Catherine's College Rowing Society
St Catherine's College,
Oxford OX1 3UJ



3rd November, 2001

Dear Alumnus,

As you are no doubt aware, a couple of our old boys had a rather busy Saturday afternoon in Lucerne last August, attempting to win both the coxed and coxless pairs at the World Championships. Neil Chugani (M.87) was coxing the first event, with Matthew Pinsent (M.89) and James Cracknell doubling up on the rowing. Extracts from Neil's recent article in REGATTA magazine:

'... [coxed pair final, GB in front] After 1750m, I was mentally counting the number of buoys left and telling James and Matt how far we had to go. I thought that we might get away without having to lift it at the end, but with 150m remaining the Italians were storming back into my peripheral vision. I certainly hadn't visualised that and now I was seeing it for real. We squeezed on at 100m out and then sprinted at 50m to go, all three of us watching the Italian boat all the way to the line for the last five or six strokes.

'The strange psychology of the coxed pair race continued even after we had finished the race. We had just won the gold medal but I didn't feel any real elation when we crossed the line, even though my World Championships was now over. Like James and Matt, I knew that the job was only half done, and I knew that I would only be able to savour victory in the coxed pair once I knew that it hadn't come at too high a price.

'We spun round quickly, and paddled back to the landing stage where Jurgen [Gröbler, the coach] was waiting. He hugged me with a huge grin on his face and said 'Neil you are a World Champion. Now go and de-rig the boat!' For once, I ignored him, spending quite some time unsuccessfully trying to find my 10mm spanner.



Matthew Pinsent, James Cracknell and Neil Chugani, 2001 World Champions in Coxed Pairs.

suddenly drained and it was only then that I finally felt the surge of emotion that had been absent on the finish line two hours before.'

Neil becomes the second Catz alumnus to win a World Championship Gold Medal.

'... [coxless pair final, GB lying second] I never stopped believing in James and Matt's ability to come back through the Yugoslavs, but it was starting to look as though they might run out of course after the third 500m during which they didn't appear to have clawed anything back. But in the fourth 500m, they finally started reeling in the Yugoslavs and as they passed me, about 100m from the line, they led by three feet. Two or three strokes later James hooked a buoy at the finish of a stroke, and they lost all but a bow-ball of that three-foot advantage on one stroke (now you know why they need a cox!). Brilliantly, James managed to recover, and the rest is history. When the result of the photo-finish came up on the scoreboard, the tension



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Over the summer, while most students put their feet up, Will Mulholland, Mike Bull and Matt Denmark rowed with the lightweights in the I-Lan International Regatta in Taiwan. Some alumni also got back into training: Tony Mitchell (M.78) competed at Maidenhead and Oxford City Regattas in a mixed double scull, I joined up with former rowers Keith Pritchard (M.82), James Sergeant (M.84), Jem Brown (M.83), and Paul Miron (M.84) to variously run, jog and hobble around the Windsor Half Marathon course (winning the ‘Social Team’ category, which probably sums up our ambivalent attitude). Tom Wright (M.95) and Pete Murphy (M.95) competed as ‘SCCBC-alumni’ in Marlow’s Rower’s Revenge Triathlon: 4km on an ergometer, 25km cycling and 7.5km running — thoroughly recommended if you have nothing better to do on a cold, wet and windy Sunday morning in October.

In Oxford, the river’s been surprisingly docile so far. A report from Will Mulholland, Captain of Lower Boats.

‘It never really clicked to me on that night of Summer Eights last year, when I was approached by the captains Laura and Matt D (wearing hula dress/bikini top and toga respectively) that I had just agreed to do this job. Most likely this was because they had waited until the night’s end before popping the question, by which time I was excessively inebriated and said yes to them. From that moment on, I was engulfed in the phenomenon of Novice Rowing. Considering Oxford is regarded by many as the seat of learning, thus far I’ve learned . . .

- That it is possible for a novice cox with sufficient gusto, to steer a course from Catz Boathouse to the top and back which, when straightened, would extend down beyond the Isis Tavern.

- That a person can row with their seat backwards if they so desire.

- That Pay-As-You-Go mobile-phone plans are useless if your job title has the word ‘Captain’ in it.

While many of our newcomers have learned . . .

- That it’s difficult to row if your collar is on the outside of your rigger.

- That ‘backing down’ and ‘rowing on’ are two different things

- That ‘sit the boat’ is a command to the crew, not a plea to the boat god.

‘But most importantly our novice rowers are well on their way to learning how to win a regatta, having loads of fun along the way. This is all thanks to our committed bunch of Catz people willing to help out with the coaching, coxing and organising. A good example of this commitment is in the work of Laura, who hooked a women’s VIII up for a crew date on their second outing ever — good to see the important principles of rowing are being established first.’

Ah yes, all horribly familiar. Well, apart from the bit about mobile phones. This term, Will and Mike Bull are continuing with the lightweights, Fiona Howarth is trialling for OUWBC and Matt Smith is joined by Angus Warner (ex-Imperial College) in OUBC Trials.

Finally, a plea to our alumni for help. This is the last year of our (generous) 4-year sponsorship from Madge and we’re hoping to find someone else to take over. So if you know of any company willing to put up a few thousand a year to have their name associated with one of the ‘livelier’ College Boat Clubs, please contact John Mitchell (M.89, handaxe@hotmail.com) or myself.



Will Mulholland, before learning the necessity of adopting a more ‘novice-friendly’ image.

Anu Dudhia (email: dudhia@atm.ox.ac.uk)

Rowing Society: <http://www.atm.ox.ac.uk/rowing/rs.html>