

Newsletter – March 2007

After four and a half years as Head Coach of Sydney Rowing Club it is with a heavy heart that I write my last newsletter, more about that later.

The young athletes from Sydney Rowing Club have just returned from their National Championships which were held in Nagambie, Victoria. The weather for the Australian Championships was terrible with a lot of racing restricted to time trials format because of the windy and unfair conditions. It is unfortunate that Rowing Australia conducts its National Championships on such an unfair rowing course.

The Sydney Rowing Club athletes did very well over the course of the regatta; club captain, Simon Nola won three medals, silver medals in the open men's lightweight double sculls and open men's lightweight quad sculls and bronze in the open men's lightweight eight. Luke Woods won three medals, silver in the U/23 lightweight pair and silver in the U/23 lightweight four and bronze in the open men's lightweight eight. Luke also represented New South Wales in the lightweight four which is the race for the Penrith Cup, NSW came a very close fourth. Ry Kehlet gained a silver medal in the men's U/23 Eight.

The club's current international oarsmen, Kurt Spencer and Bede Clarks also gained medals at the National Championships; Kurt Spencer won a bronze medal in the U/19 single scull and a bronze medal in the schoolboy eight and Bede teamed with Kurt in the schoolboy eight to also win a bronze medal. Alex Berzins won a gold medal in U/19 single scull and a silver medal in the schoolboy eights. Alex will team with Kurt at the National Selection Trials in April in an endeavour to represent Australia in the Australian Junior Rowing Team.

Toby Ledgerwood who is a Sydney Rowing Club Junior member stroked the Shore VIII to a brilliant win from the wind affected lane one in the schoolboys eight race, we congratulate Toby on his gold medal. Sarah Handley won two medals at the Nationals, a silver in Schoolgirl eight and a bronze in the U/19 women's double sculls. Patrice Kotoulas also from our Junior program won a bronze medal in the schoolgirl eights.

Other athletes who distinguished themselves at the Nationals were Eliza Mathews who performed well in the U/23 lightweight single sculls; it's Eliza's first year in the single scull and her improvement under coach Rob Richards has been outstanding. Phil Matthews, Tom Quilty and Dom Grimm all did well in their first year of rowing out of school and we wish them well for their future in the sport. These boys were also coached by Rob Richards

Special congratulations to Phil Matthews who has received a full scholarship to Harvard University in Boston. Phil has been a member of Sydney Rowing Club for over three years and has been to Henley twice with Sydney; he rowed two seat in the 2006 Fawley Cup crew which was narrowly beaten in the final. We wish Phil well with his studies and rowing at Harvard.

At our recent State Championships Sydney Rowing Club performed very well gaining many podium finishes, however our best performances on the weekend were from current World bronze medalist Kurt Spencer. Against tough opposition Kurt won the U/19 single sculls in fine style. Spencer Turrin won a gold medal in U/17 single sculls and teamed up with Hamish Playfair, Chris Connelly and Patrick Reuter-Town to win gold in the U/17 quad sculls. Luke Woods won a silver medal in the men's U/21 pair.

Sydney Rowing Club made up half of the Men's squad in the 2007 Youth Olympics crew; Kurt Spencer, Bede Clarke, Luke Woods and David Neuhaus represented New South Wales in the Youth Olympics. This competition was against the six states, New Zealand, Great Britain and China. The competition at the Youth Olympics is of a very high standard and is against some of the most powerful rowing nations in the world. Kurt, Bede and David won a silver medal in the men's quad sculls and all four won the gold medal in the men's eight. This is the first time New South Wales has won the eight's race and to have half the crew from Sydney Rowing Club was outstanding and stands the club in good stead for the future.

At the end of January Sydney Rowing Club journeyed across the ditch to compete in a major regatta at Lake Karapiro in New Zealand. The experienced gained at this regatta proved invaluable for the athletes in their preparation for the State and National Championships. The trip was organized by tour manager Jenny Cole and Amanda Spencer and we thank both these members for making the tour possible.

As I mentioned at the start of this newsletter this will be my last for Sydney Rowing Club. I leave Sydney to return to my home town of Brisbane and as Head Coach of Commercial Rowing Club. I have loved my time at Sydney Rowing Club, it is a great club and I feel honoured to have been its Head Coach. I wish to thank all those people who have helped me over the last four and half years, I appreciated it and enjoyed your company immensely. To all the athletes who I have been associated with – I have loved coaching you and hope you have learnt a little off me as I have been touched by all of you; thank you for supporting me as your coach.

Finally I thank the Board led by President Keith Jameson for showing me direction and leadership during my time at Sydney Rowing Club, particularly with trusting me with their most valuable asset – THE ATHLETES. Sydney Rowing Club will always be close to my heart. Goodbye and good luck to you all.

John Bowes