

The Eton Mess 2

WORLD ROWING CHAMPS

MONDAY 21 AUGUST 2006



Caption competition: come up with a title for this. Answers to hammer@rowingservice.com

Miracle of precipitation

Hammer Smith reports from the Little White Hart (deceased), Henley-on-Thames

I am sorry to report that the Little White Hart, where a deftly-positioned bar stool could give one an uninterrupted view bang down the centre of the Henley course, is no more. The bar has now morphed into a designer curry house and a ladies' outfitters, a sad reflection on the drinking man's times. The thunder storm which accompanied my trip down memory lane at Henley again made me mindful of pickle that Thames Water has inflicted on rowing man's country.

But arrival at Dorney in time for the first race on Sunday showed me that there is a god. It absolutely pissed down for at least 20 minutes at the start of the racing, topping up the lake and the nearby river Thames.

What's more, the forecast for today is the same. This is just as well, and could avert a major catastrophe. What Mike Baldwin and his intrepid organising committee have been keeping close to their chests is that the lake at Eton is a reserve reservoir should London get too short of water, and it was scheduled to be emptied on Wednesday. If this is not divine intervention, it must be April 1.

I hear that in the finish tower, the talk among the FISA types yesterday was that if the weather got worse, racing could be suspended for the rest of the week while the fairness commissioners

selected the lanes and picked the winners. The whole thing could be done on a computer, saving countless hours of effort and strife. Such thoughts arose when the commissioners were spot on with their seeding of lanes for most races. It will also save the expense of building a roof over Dorney Lake, which chairman Thor Nilsen was contemplating before the regatta started.

Hammer Smith

Let's hear it for the volunteers

"My first impression is the human touch provided by the ever-smiling volunteers. If you have a problem that they can't sort, they know a man who can. This human touch is what these championships will be remembered for."

--Alan Campbell, GB sculler



Athletes' shoe exchange

"We have been brought the wrong shoes two days running now, being given the lightweight women's quad's shoes instead. It doesn't matter what happens now - we are happy!"

-- Debbie Flood, GB women's quad

What's on today

Heats from 9:30 to 12:45

LM2- Lightweight men's pairs

LW4x Lightweight w's quads

LM4x Lightweight w's doubles

LM2x Lightweight m's doubles

LM4- Lightweights men's fours

W4x Women's quads

M4x Men's quads

W8+ Women's eights

M8+ Men's eights

Brits to look out for

9.20 LM2- Chris Bartley & Richard Chambers

9.54 LW4x Laura Ralston, Lindsay Dick, Sophie Hosking, Hester Goodsell

10.12 LW2x Helen Casey & Jane Hall

11.00 LM2x James Lindsay-Fynn & Mark Hunter

11.30 LM4- Matt Beechey, Daniel Harte, Paul Mattick, James Clarke

11.42 W4x Debbie Flood, Sarah Winckless, Frances Houghton, Katherine Grainger

12.06 W8+ Vicki Etiebet, Natasha Page, Natasha Howard, Carla Ashford, Beth Rodford, Elise Laverick, Katie Greves, Alison Knowles, cox Caroline O'Connor

12.24 M8+ Toby Garbett, Tom Solesbury, Jonno Devlin, Richard Egington, Josh West, Kieran West, Matt Langridge, Tom Stallard, cox Acer Nethercott

Quote of the day

"It felt like a normal practice session. Then I saw the whole lane at the start, and turned into a bunny bouncing all round the boat. I loved it, that was f***ing awesome."

-- a certain blond British stroke

Got a story?.....

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Keeping it in the family

Hello there.

Dateline Sunday. There was that familiar 'lull before the storm' feel around the Dorney Lake. Competitors all seemed quite keen to stop and have a chat. It was politic not to talk too much about the rowing, although the wind was a topic.

But, more importantly, what about the FISA Family and Friends? Well, I can reliably inform you that everything should be OK on that front. I was intrigued that some parents of British team members seemed too busy to talk to me. Was it that my charismatic charm was waning somewhat? Apparently not. I was told by the



Trigger happy

Photographer Joel Rogers spent the first day snapping American crews and was very excited to find that there was a sculler from Palestine (Mark Gerban, above) taking part in the regatta. 'I'm going over to shoot him,' he said — and then re-phrased. This lingo is a potential mine-field for photographers, with crews from Israel and Iraq also taking part in the champs.

Stand to attention

The crew of HMS President's cutter in the procession of traditional craft at the opening ceremony were anxious to know if any VIPs present were royals. Apparently if they are in full naval uniform they have to salute members of the royal family. They were advised to salute anyway, in case Ma'am was watching from Windsor castle.

Pile 'em high

Which Mediterranean crew has asked First Aid for haemorrhoid cream? Industrial strength has been ordered....

Houghtons (daughter Frances in the quad) and Fosters (son won gold in Sydney 2000) that they were all part of Mo's Team and were busy discussing and practicing. Somewhat mystified, I dug deeper.

The Mo concerned is Mo Thomson whose involvement with international rowing spans many years. She told me that she had, apart from the Houghton mum and dad, two Stallards (son Tom stroking the eight), two Triggs Hodges (son Andy stroking the four), two Cracknell parents (son won gold in 2000 and 2004, and is a bit of an ocean rower and cyclist), and mums Elaine Laverick (daughter in the women's eight) and Liz Rowbotham (son in the double scull). Their task... to keep the FISA Family and Friends happy! So how far would they go in this aim was the obvious question to Mo. 'We will use our discretion and keep things safe and secure.'

ALF

Roadmap goes askew

One of the few teams to be affected by the Heathrow emergency last week was the British team.

Hah! You thought they were training at their spanking new base at Caversham, didn't you? Not so. The men were in Aiguebelette and the women were in Varese, and they had to duck flying home in favour of the Eurostar. Many teams are staying at hotels in the vicinity of Heathrow because it is normally convenient for the M4 and Dorney. Not, however, when the Department of Transport decides to rebuild junction 4 (Heathrow). Some people have no sensibility.

Postbag

hammer@rowingservice.com/text 07710-538114

Dear Hammer,

Thanks for the laugh. I was sure that Alf had passed on years ago.

I was a little bit distressed at being unable to find any real ale for my pre-prandial today. That fizzy stuff causes a lot of visits although there was soap and HOT water there. Not like a normal regatta.

Do come over and join the plebs sometime.

Best wishes,
Ivan Pratt.

Alf writes: "Rumours of my demise have been greatly exaggerated. I am alive and well and still skiffing around."

Blow me down with a feather

"What can you do about this bloody course? Can you move it round a little?"

—Thor Nilsen, chairman of FISA's fairness commission, before Saturday's opening ceremony

"A lot of people are talking about the wind, but rowing is an outdoor sport. Unless you want to build a 2000m long corridor there's not a lot you can do about that"

Steve Williams, GB coxless four

"The statistical analysis shows that there was a beautiful distribution of lanes. This was the fairest course I've ever seen. You could end up with the fairest course in the world!"

—Thor Nilsen, chairman of FISA's fairness commission, after Sunday's racing programme

Nottingham's record holds

Nottingham 1986's record of 1 minute 19 seconds for hard copies of the result of the first race to reach every occupied desk of the media centre held up another year after Eton's result clocked 5 minutes 45 seconds for its first result. Nottingham's 20-year record of results on every journalist's desk inside 4 minutes for the entire regatta will, therefore, also hold good. The first race record has only been matched by Strathclyde in 1998, but the pace was not sustained.

Commentaryballs

'We will now go over to the commentary car for a commentary.'

'A women's double contains two scullers.'

'People new to rowing will not know these two twins.'