



Thor thunders, racing stops

Hammer Smith reports from the Hotel du Vin, Henley-on-Thames

Forced to seek shelter after escaping from the press bang somewhere in the wooded foothills east of Henley, I am writing this while luxuriating in the absolutely splendid Hotel du Vin, located just behind the Little White Hart of blessed memory, before braving the electric storms and ocean waves so commonly found at Dorney Lake.

But lo! The lake was level! At the precise moment that announcer Nick Mullins broadcast FISA's decision to postpone racing, the water was ripple-less and the sun was shining. David Tanner, the British team manager, kindly dropped by the press stand to explain that the decision was a "very good call" because there was a weather system beyond the roof of the stand which we couldn't see. But according to the flags the wind was still in the direction which would blow the big black clouds away.

However, the wind had turned by the time the team managers' meeting, called to explain the situation, had fallen out. Everyone was convinced it was a good call, even Igor the Chinese coach who requested a re-row of the men's quads repechage — the last race of the day — because he thought his crew in lane 1 had been at a wind disadvantage. This got short shrift from the high table. Mike Tanner (FISA's water chief) made a statement explaining the decision, (endorsed to me privately by members of Thor Nilsen's fairness commission), and executive director Matt Smith explained in detail the new arrangements for today.

Two questions were answered and Igor's was

batted out of hearing in a trice. The gap between "Any more questions?" and "Thank you" was shorter than between "Attention" and "Go" in a hurricane. The meeting broke up with hardly a murmur. It was brilliant management from a professional outfit.

The real explanation for postponement — that FISA called a halt because their men and women were so knackered after their defeat at the hands of the organising committee on the previous afternoon --- was not mentioned.

Mad bureaucrats

Some of my colleagues in the media are apoplectic about the form we were made to sign which stated that disrespect for the "policy" may entail withdrawal of accreditation and exclusion from the championships. The form does not explain what the "policy" is, but it does ban journalists from the pontoon, boat racks, boat house and athlete rest and massage areas during the opening hours of the venue, plus the crew catering and patio area unless invited in and accompanied by someone with accreditation which allows them in there.

The only time I have ever seen such infringement was at Henley a few years ago when an irate and foolish Eton parent physically attacked a camera crew going about its lawful business outside the boat tent. Coaches here, meanwhile, are queuing at the door of the media centre to be invited in because the coffee is free, and you can get results. But you must excuse me now. I have to rush off to the crew dining tent to enjoy some pleasant conversation with friends and colleagues.

Hammer Smith

TODAY

Brits to look out for

9.00 W8+ Two to qualify in this crucial postponed rep
11.04 LW1x Antonia Van Deventer, in the company of Marit van Eupen
11.26 LM1x Zac Purchase, front runner, but watch Kiwi Duncan Grant
12.25 M1x Campbell takes on Tufte, Syneck and hamburger
12.49 M2- Smith and James meet Aussies Ginn and Free
13.13 W2x Vernon and Bebington in good lane bid for final
13.37 M2x Wells and Rowbotham alongside Slovenes Spik and Cop: score so far 1 all
14.01 M4- Triggs Hodge and the bananaramas, with Slovenia on one side and Germany the other

Live on TV

BBC1 live 10.55-14.30 BST
BBC2 live 12.10-14.15 BST
Europe live 12.00-15.30 CET

Today's timetable

Repechages from 9.00 to 9.18.

W8+ Women's eights
M8+ Men's eights
Semi-finals A & B 11.04 to 14.01
LW1x Lightweight women's singles
LM1x Lightweight men's singles
W1x Women's singles
M1x Men's singles
M2- Men's coxless pairs
W2x Women's double sculls
M2x Men's double sculls
M4- Men's coxless fours

Semi-finals C & D from 9.24 to 10.12

LM1x, W1x, M1x, M2x
Semi-finals C & D 14.06 to 14.36
LM2x, LW2x, LM4-
C finals from 10.18 to 10.36
LW1x, M2-, W2x, M4-
D finals from 14.42 to 15.24
LM1x, W1x, M1x, M2x

PLUS

15.00 Boatbuilders' meeting
16.00 Team doctors' meeting
19.30 FISA, Council, OC & delegates dinner*

**Bloggers note — by invitation only*

Telling tales...

Contact Hammer Smith and the Eton Mess:
E hammer@rowing-service.com
Text 07710-538114

CRIME DESK

Ill wind...

"Jimmy" Haggerty (Crime Correspondent) writes:

A monstrous crime was committed at Eton Rowing Lake yesterday when half of the racing programme disappeared, right before the very eyes of Denis Oswald, the IOC's hit man charged with delivery of facilities for the London 2012 Olympic Games. The future of the London

Games is now under threat. The Eton constabulary have alerted Interpol.

Our intrepid crime reporter has now gone undercover at the FISA Umpires' seminar to investigate which thieving pikey also made off with Wednesday's crosswind. We expect a full report if he makes it back.

He is also investigating the "alleged" fraudulent use of the FISA Hotel car park by event Treasurer Ron Paterson, who "allegedly" has been sneaking in and out without paying to help balance the championship budget.

POSTBAG

Long, boring letters have been cut

BUSAballs

As the recently retired chief executive of BUSA I must express my deep concern that so respected a publication as the Eton Mess should choose to carry a scurrilous, totally unsubstantiated and un-attributed missive regarding ARA/BUSA relationships. Does the editor not realise that students are quite capable of damaging their own credibility without his assistance?

To add insult to injury, it is alleged that the document was found on a photocopier, when we all know that today's student copies straight from the web for everything, thesis included. Does this suggest that the editor has been accepting contributions from un-accredited sources which is absolutely improper at this event.

For 17 years whilst working for BUSA I did my utmost to get into bed with the senior officials of most national governing bodies of sport, and I believe I achieved a particularly close relationship with the hierarchy of the ARA. For 2006, Joanne from the BUSA office worked hand in glove with David Tanner, though I'm not sure whose was the hand and whose the glove (*that's out of order - Ed*) but none the less the team selected achieved two golds, two silvers and a 4th and 5th from nine boats in finals at the World University Games. A not insignificant result for two associations allegedly at loggerheads!

The BUSA/ARA relationship is equally strong here where the chairman's right-hand woman, Ann Louise, is an former member of the BUSA staff, and a disproportionate number of volunteers are current or previous BUSA members.

Greg Jones, CEO BUSA 1989-2006 and volunteer in Accreditation

Our contributor Alf asks: What is a photocopier? Of course, we should have said "found in the spam trap" - Ed



Life in the timing hut

"Whilst watching a race approach our 1000m timing hut position we were somewhat surprised to see the bows of the French lightweight M4-merge through the 1000m bridge. We initially assumed they were simply sheltering from the rain, but the look of horror on their faces told us that they thought they were at the start.

As they frantically backed down back into the warm-up lake, our suspicions were confirmed by the radio broadcast from the aligner's hut informing us that Lane 4 was empty in the next race due in two minutes. Within seconds of the race due to start it was delayed as the 'missing crew had been spotted'. Close!"

Just the ticket?

Rich Branch of the American magazine *Rowing News* wanted to buy a ticket for his wife for the main grandstand at the weekend. He was told that although tickets were available, he could only purchase a ticket for the week.

Body count?

There seems to be some degree of confusion over when able-bodied athletes can go out: early on during yesterday's practice session a few doubles were sent out by the pontoon staff, only to be sent promptly back in by the safety boats who were more clued up about what was happening when.

The Eton Mess

WORLD ROWING CHAMPS THURSDAY 24 AUGUST 2006



Caption competition: what's going on here?

Tell us via hammer@rowingservice.com or text 07710-538114. By 6pm.

Yesterday's runners and riders

It does not surprise the editors that the Andy Hodge Banana Surprise caption competition has produced a record number of entries. Here are some of the cleaner ones....

"I am not doing J13 coxed quads Jurgen" (Simon Ramskill, Maidenhead RC and for this week minibus/commentary car driver)

"For that little bit of extra boat speed here's a handy tip on what to do with YOUR bananas!" (Robert Treharne Jones)

"The four is already preparing to row the coxed four in Munich next year because otherwise the Brits will be out of golds for two years in succession!" (Sybrand Treffers, NED)

"Hodgey, Jurgen wants to know where you've put your water bottle." (Rachel Quarrell)



The banana crew were amused to see where Andy was hiding their spare man... (Chris Kenyon)

"Andy is Bananaman — ever alert for the call to action." (Hannah Thomas)

"And you thought the GB team Monkey sat in the bow seat of the coxed four...." (Alison Mowbray)

SHOWBIZ DESK

"Tufte said if he doesn't get a drink from us on Saturday he'll switch to Filippi".
Reiner Empacher, purveyor of yellow boats to the half the national federations.

"Racing is like chocolate - something to look forward to, and always good"
Frances Houghton, GB quadruple sculler

"I love the guy to bits but his university still sucks" - Oxford Blue **Colin Smith** on his pairs partner, Cambridge President Tom James.

OVERHEARD

Seasoned Canadian competitor:

"It's the first time my parents have attended a world championships, which is a pity, because they'll think they are all like this."

The Eton Mess

Read this issue online at www.rowingservice.com/mess and print off as many copies as you want



Attention! NO!

Hello there.

There is something about the British weather and its forecasts. In 1986 at the Nottingham world championships, Thomi Keller, the FISA president, decided that, due to the forecast, racing would start the next morning at 6 am rather than 10 am. Amazing reorganisation had to be undertaken, the spectators who arrived for 10 am saw no races, and the wind did not blow at all! The only thing the organisers overlooked was telling the stake boat boys, and FISA heavies were seen prone on the starting pontoons.

Yesterday, FISA's reading of the weather was that things would get worse, and unfair, and stopped the racing. Some agreed, some disagreed, but it did not create problems of the 1986 magnitude. Can't really win can you? Remember the 2005 Eton World Cup? FISA got stick for not changing the regatta lanes quickly enough. I blame Thor Nilsen and the fairness commission for not insisting on a roof over the course.

Things got noisier, and more colourful, in the press area yesterday with the arrival of Garry

Herbert and Hugh Matheson, the main commentators for TV. Garry was wearing a rather "noisy" shirt which he told me was a Paul Smith, something which meant nothing to me. His producer said something about Oxfam.

In defence of the press runners trying to get the results out closer to the 1986 record time, a media office official tells me that it is taking four minutes for the results to arrive from the FISA hierarchy, something of a handicap for a 1 minute 19 seconds target.

Cheers. Pray for no wind.

PS. Can the transport team sort out the gate letters. Conversation. "Can you send a bus to Gate F". "There isn't a Gate F". "Well, I have been manning it for three days". "Oh, I think that is Zone A".

Fred Smallbone, the boss man, tells me that "gates are for people. Zones are for vehicles". I think that clears it up.

ALF

The report of the media outing to the Chiltern Valley Winery and Fish and Chip Bar has been held out owing to lack of space.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"People with a lot of experience say that we have raised the bar. But the fat lady hasn't sung yet."
— Mike Baldwin, chairman of the organizing committee

THAT DAM' CROSSWIND

"I think they were worried that if it went round any further towards the head, it would be an unfair cross-wind."

— Pink Palace coach

"So, did you get any pictures of the cross-wind on the start?"
— webwriter Rachel Quarrell to photographers at the start

"No, because there wasn't any."
— Rowing Service photographer Paul Azzopardi

"Is bullshit"
— Igor Meijer, Aviron snapper

BORES, BULLSHITTERS AND BLUSHERS

The *Eton Mess* has already established a reputation for high quality and colourful journalism. Now, as we attempt to raise the bar even further, we turn to our readers for help.

We have observed the various clans attending the championships and are now launching the hunt for the complete collection of rowing's collective nouns. Hence, we have, for example, a **bore** of FISA umpires, a **bullshit** of coaches, a **blush** of Leander members, or an **over-abundance** of volunteers.

Any further suggestions from you, dear readers, would be much appreciated as together we extend the barriers of Eton rowing knowledge.

E hammer@rowingservice.com
Text 07710-538114