

*The Voice in Munich. Keep up with the worlds: regular results, forecast, tips, news and views. Rowing Voice live from the world championships starting on Monday 27 August.*

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*"Get the f\*\*\*ing rate up!" Hodgely and Alex go for broke in the fours semifinal*

*Photograph: RAW Images/Richard Wearne*

## Charge of the heavy brigade

*Race by race: where the GB crews finished in the semifinals and where they're going next, by Christopher Dodd and Rachel Quarrell.*

### Men's coxless fours

**World champions** — GBR (Williams/Reed/Partridge/Triggs Hodge)

**Olympic champions** — GBR (Williams/Cracknell/Coode/Pinsent)

**Qualified to final** — S1 GBR, FRA, ITA; S2 NZL, NED, SLO

**GB crew** — Steve Williams/Pete Reed/Alex Partridge/Andy Triggs Hodge

Holy hell what a race. Getting the first 1000m right gave GB a stonking rhythm and strong lead, the near-length that connoisseurs of their 2005 and 2006 antics will remember. All seemed set for a nice clean semi-final win until the USA began to charge, Italy and then France on GB's bowside catching the bug and going too. The result was a four-boat dash to the line and photofinish. GB won, France breathing down their necks, while Italy sent USA miserably to the B-final. Groans from the grandstand, oohs and ahs at the result, which had Britain's champions just 0.67 seconds off not even qualifying for the final. New Zealand lorded it over the other race, putting the Dutch in their place and setting themselves up as

the main contenders to take the fours crown with an extremely quick second 1000m. Slovenia were the others through, while Germany's difficult season showed with fourth.

**GB result** — first in semifinal (just)

**Next race** — final on Saturday

**Qualified for Olympics 2008** — yes

### Men's double sculls

Qualified direct to final — S1 Slovenia, GB, Belarus; S2 France, Estonia, NZ

**GB crew** — Matt Wells/Stephen Rowbotham Spik and Cop of Slovenia led (**World champions** 2005, silver medallists 2006, Olympic champions 2000, silver medallists 2004). Belarus, who have twice been under-23 champions, were second for a while, GB then went through the Belorussians but couldn't catch the Slovenians, who annoyingly beat the British double for the first time this year. A great finish in second second semi when NZ pipped Oz for third and 28-year-old Tonu Endrekson and 41-year-old Jueri Jaanson (Estonia) shadowed the world best time holders and 2007 champions, Macquet and Hardy of France.

**GB result** — second in semi-final

**Next race** — final on Saturday

**World champions** — Macquet/Hardy (FRA)

**Olympic champions** — Vieilledent/Hardy (FRA)

**Qualified for Olympics 2008** — yes

## Racing schedule

### SATURDAY

B-finals 8:30 to 10:00  
A-finals:  
Women's singles 10:10  
Men's singles 10:25  
Women's pairs 10:40  
Men's pairs 10:55  
Women's doubles 11:10  
Men's doubles 11:25  
Men's coxless fours 11:40  
Women's coxless fours 11:55  
Men's coxed pairs 12:10  
Ltwr women's singles 12:25  
Ltwr men's singles 12:40  
Ltwr men's eights 12:55  
Arms women's singles 13:30  
Arms men's singles 13:40  
TA mixed doubles 13:50  
LTA mixed coxed fours 14:00

### SUNDAY

B-finals 9:30 to 11:00  
A-finals:  
Men's coxed fours 13:00  
Ltwr men's pairs 13:15  
Ltwr women's quads 13:30  
Ltwr men's quads 13:45  
Ltwr women's doubles 14:00  
Ltwr men's doubles 14:15  
Ltwr men's fours 14:30  
Women's quads 14:45  
Men's quads 15:00  
Women's eights 15:15  
Men's eights 15:30

## Weather forecast:

(updated Saturday am)  
Sat 1: 15deg, cloudy and cold, occasional light rain. Wind 4mph from NNW.  
Sun 2: 18deg, overcast with some sunshine, no wind forecast at time of going to press.

## Champs on UK TV:

BBC: Live on BBCi on Saturday 1 September during both the Olympic and adaptive A-finals, starting 10am BST. Live on BBC2 on Sunday 2 September during all A-finals, starting 14:45 on BBC1 and switching to BBC2 at 15:30 BST. Radio 5Live coverage.

### Eurosport:

Sat 1 and Sun 2 September: live coverage for A-finals.

## Arms-only men's singles

Qualified direct to final — S1 T Aggar (GBR), E Nawi (ISR), P Laureau (FRA); S2 D Monypenny (AUS), R Harvey (USA), P Morel (CAN)

### GB crew — Tom Aggar

GB's Aggar is a good find, winning his semi by five seconds from Israel's Nawi. The holder, Monypenny of Australia, narrowly defeated Harvey of the US in the other, although his crown is surely threatened by the Brit if you compare the times — 6:06.75 for Monypenny, 5:40.94 for Aggar.

### GB result — first in semi-final

Next race — final on Saturday  
World champion— Monypenny (AUS)  
Qualified for Olympics 2008

## Women's doubles

World champions — Kell/Pratley (AUS)

Olympic champions — Evers-Swindell twins (NZL)

Qualified to final — S1 GBR, ROU, CZE; S2 CHN, NZL, GER

GB crew — Anna Bebington/Elise Laverick  
The only people who have the first clue how Bebington and Laverick are going to row are the scullers themselves - and possibly coach Miles Forbes-Thomas. This time the strategy was a fast start (done), good rhythm (yup) and then deal with anything flung at them. Roumania were the main flingers, shifting into an early lead, but being closed down by controlled power on the part of the Brits. The gap went from 2/3 length at halfway to 1/2 length at 1750, then GB nipped ahead with a neat gear-shift from 24 to 37 in the final sprint. Roumania initially tried to match them then backed off. China had the better of the under-par New Zealanders in the other semi, women's sculling

clearly being the area in which they excel.

GB result — first in semifinal

Next race — final on Saturday

Qualified for Olympics 2008 — yes

## Men's pairs

Qualified direct to final — S1 NZ, GB, Serbia; S2 Australia, S Africa, France

GB crew — Colin Smith/Matt Langridge  
6th at 200, fifth at 700 in fourth at 1500  
Smith and Langridge did not allow a slow start to faze them. Still only fourth after 1500 metres, they shortened a gap of five seconds behind the winners, New Zealand, to one second as they went past Serbia and the US. If they start quickly in the final, all hell will break loose. The second semi was delayed because the German stroke's oar handle fell apart in his hands at the start. Australia's Drew Ginn and Duncan Free won without batting an eyelid, although the Goblets winner Ramon Di Clemente and Donovan Cech moved back on them in the third quarter. This race was 20 seconds faster than the other, but don't let this fool you — it took place nearly an hour and a half later. Nevertheless, the Aussies remain favourites for the gold.

GB result — second in semi-final

Next race — final on Saturday

World champions — Ginn/Free (AUS)

Olympic champions — Ginn/Tomkins (AUS)

Qualified for Olympics 2008 — yes

## Women's pairs

World champions - Marquardt/Rumball (CAN)

Olympic champions — Damian/Susanu (ROU)

Qualified to final — S1 ROU, AUS, GER; S2 BLR, NZL, CHN



Laverick and Bebington lead the flingers

Photograph: Peter Spurrier



Being here I come

Photograph: Peter Spurrier/Intersport Images

Roumania's superstars haven't been out to play much this year, but looked the champions as they dominated semifinal one, with Australia (Sarah Cook and Kim Crow) having to row back through Germany to be sure of a place in the final. The shock of the race was Canada, the **World champions** knocked out and straggling in clear way behind Germany. In the other semi the three qualifiers rushed ahead to leave the USA and Britain initially fighting it out for fourth. Britain's too-new combination didn't quite have the legs to reach the final. China were rather lucky to qualify, hunted down by the USA who nearly levelled them before giving up just before the line.

**GB result** — fifth in semifinal

**Next race** — B-final on Saturday

**Number to Olympics** — 8

## Arms/trunks/legs mixed coxed fours

**World champions** — GBR

**Qualified direct to final** — S1 GBR, CAN, NED; S2 GER, USA, ITA

**GB crew** — Victoria Hansford/Alan Crowther/Alastair McKean/Naomi Riches/cox Alan Sherman

The British crew were beaten by the Germans in their heat, although the conquerors were relegated to last when their boat did not meet the minimum weight. The Brits and the Germans won their respective semi-finals, GB in 3:52 and Germany in in 3:53. Canada were closer to the Brits than the US and Italy were to the Germans. Let battle commence

**GB result** — first in semi-final

**Next race** — final on Saturday

**Qualified for Paralympic 2008** — yes

## Men's singles

**World champion** — Mahe Drysdale (NZL)

**Olympic champion** — Olaf Tufte (NOR)

**Qualified to final** — S1 Alan Campbell (GBR), Olaf Tufte (NOR), Lassi Karonen (SWE); S2 Mahe Drysdale (NZL), Marcel Hacker (GER), Ondrej Synek (CZE)

**GB crew** - Alan Campbell

Campbell produced his usual blistering start, then settled into a steady sensible row, waiting to see what the rest would try. Karonen was the one to take it on, staying close to Campbell then nipping briefly ahead just before 1500m gone. That didn't last long, Campbell seeing the Swede off with a short rate-lift, then adding a controlled sprint to confirm first while Tufte overtook to swipe second. Tick in the box as the first British male to qualify for the Olympics. The second semi saw Hacker (in dark glasses despite the murky Munich day) unsuccessfully testing Drysdale's limits a couple of times, while Ondrej Synek, who has not yet shown anything like his World Cup-conquering speed, was content to stay third. It's the six you'd expect in the final, the same as Amsterdam. Those medals were won by Synek, Tufte and Hacker, with Drysdale fourth and Campbell sixth. It's anyone's guess what the order will be this time.

**GB result** — first in semifinal

**Next race** — final on Saturday

**Qualified for Olympics 2008** — yes

## Lightweight women's single

**World champion** — Marit Van Eupen (NED)

## What they said

*"Can I envisage no Russians at the Olympics? Yes, I can." — Denis Oswald, FISA president, answering questions on the doping scandal*

*"I remember Gifu where the Kiwis won four golds in succession. Potentially, it's a really exciting time on Saturday. This is another defining moment for British rowing." — Elise Laverick, GBR W2x*

*"You have to learn the other person." — Matt Wells GBR M2x on double sculling*

*"We've not been really tested in the last 250 metres this year like last" — Stephen Rowbotham, GBR M2x*

*"We've been looking at other fours and how they do it, and there was one four in particular at the veteran regatta in Henley..." — Steve Williams, bow of GBR M4-*

*"I reckon the French've screwed their heads on and started to race." — Andy Hodge, GBR M4-, after the semi-final*

*"From very early on in the race we were rowing really long. On the eighth or ninth stroke we were at full length, and all the way through the first thousand we had a strong rhythm." — Peter Reed, GBR M4-*

*"Perhaps we can superglue today's first half to last Sunday's second half." — Steve Williams, GBR M4-*

*"Bebo is really, really*

*strong. In a headwind others are going to be working hard.” — Elise Laverick, bow of GBR W2x*

*“I’ve been tamed a bit more by the illustrious Bill Barry”. — Alan Campbell, GBR sculler, on his coach*

*“The heavyweight four were within 0.7 seconds of missing a final. We were keen not to make it a trend.” — James Lindsay-Fynn, GBR LM4-*

*“The pacing of the race was important. The guys executed a wise race plan exactly. They’re much closer to what they are capable of.” — John West, coach of GBR M8+*

*“Cveryone clawed onto us and held on. My Mum in the grandstand lost all her nails after that.” — Mark Hunter, stroke of the GBR LM2x*

*“Olympic qualification was everything.” — Acer Nethercott, cox of GBR M8+*

*“Before the race I was quite nervous. There was a lot riding on it. We had to send*

Qualified direct to final — S1 Jen Goldsack (USA), Marit Van Eupen (Netherlands), Andrea Dennis (GB); S2 Melanie Kok (Canada), Mirna Rajle (Croatia), Ilona Hiltunen (Finland)  
GB crew— Andrea Dennis

The first semi had two scullers coached earlier in the season by Rob Dauncey of Wallingford — Andrea Dennis and Jen Goldsack who in May put her British passport away and took out her American one. Also present was the holder, Marit Van Eupen of Netherlands. Dennis started slowly but had third position before the 1000 mark and produced the fastest fourth quarter to get very close to Van Eupen in second. Goldsack is clearly revelling in her new life by leading all the way and finishing five seconds ahead of the holder. It was a faster race than the other semi, won by Canada’s Melanie Kok ahead of three battling for the other two qualifying places. Rajle of Croatia and Hiltunen of Finland triumphed over Maria Pertl of Denmark, all doing 8:44.

**GB result** — third in semifinal

**Next race** — final on Saturday

**Number to Olympics** — 0

### Lightweight men’s singles

**World champion** — Zac Purchase (GBR)

Qualified direct to final — S1 Jonathan Koch (Germany), Ivan Baldychev (USA), Takahiro Suda (Japan); S2 Duncan Grant (NZL), Lorenzo Bertini (Italy), Jaap Schouten (Netherlands)  
GB crew— Alasdair Leighton-Crawford

The novice Russian-born American Ivan Baldychev continues his cheery run, following Koch (Germany) across the line after being fifth at halfway. Alasdair Leighton-Crawford began well and was up with Koch, but couldn’t keep up with the pace of Baldychev and Suda (Japan). Duncan Grant (NZ) won the other

semi. Zac Purchase set the world’s best time in Eton last year and kicked upstairs to the GB lightweight double.

**GB result** — fourth in semifinal

**Next race** — B final on Saturday

**Number to Olympics** — 0

### Men’s eights

**World champions** — USA

**Olympic champions** — USA

**Qualified to final** — S1 CAN, GBR, GER; S2 USA, RUS, POL

**GB crew** — Tom James/Tom Stallard/Tom Lucy/Tom Solesbury/Josh West/Richard Edgington/Robin Bourne-Taylor/Alastair Heathcote/cox Acer Nethercott

The eights semis were humdingers in which Britain followed Canada and headed Germany into Olympic qualification, and Australia stroked by the great Tomkins were sent to the B final by the US, Russia and Poland. The British crew rowed a race described by cox Nethercott as “really calm, really composed,” praising his men for making his life easy. China were ahead of the Brits in the first quarter but were tactically defeated. Olympic qualification was the thing on the Brits’ minds, and now they can enjoy themselves with big game hunting in the world final. Russia led the other semi until the Americans burst through near the end. The Aussies were quickest in the last 500 but too far behind to catch the Poles.

**GB result** — second in semifinal

**Next race** — final on Sunday

**Qualified for Olympics 2008** — yes

### Lightweight women’s doubles

**World champions** — Xu/Yan (CHN)

**Olympic champions** — Burcica/Alupeu (ROU)

**Qualified to final** — S1 AUS, FIN, DEN; S2



Big game hunting

Photograph: Peter Spurrier/Intersport Images



*The renaissance of British lightweights*

*Photograph: Peter Spurrier*

CHN, GRE, GER

**GB crew** — Helen Casey/Hester Goodsell  
Xu Dongxiang has a new partner now, Chen Haixia, and together the duo are taking on the world. It took them some while to plod through the field, but they eventually got past early leaders Germany and 2006 bronze medallists Greece and took control. The gap to crews four, five and six was too far to expect a change, and Casey and Goodsell slipped to sixth fairly early on and could do nothing to change matters. They now have to take the B-route to Beijing qualification. In the other semi, Finland were early leaders before Australia's Amber Halliday and Marguerite Houston (last year's runners-up) decided they wanted the best lanes and went for the win.

**GB result** — fourth in semifinal

**Next race** — B-final on Sunday

**Number to Olympics** — 8

### Lightweight men's doubles

**World champions** — Rasmussen/Quist (DEN)

**Olympic champions** — Kucharski/Sycz (POL)

Qualified to final — S1: DEN, GRE, AUS; S2 JAP, ITA, GBR

**GB crew** — Zac Purchase/Mark Hunter

The going certainly gets tough in semi-finals. Purchase and Hunter diced with the leaders, leading themselves for more than half of the race while Japan and Italy changed places, eventually with the Brits, who finished third behind them, qualifying their boat for the Olympics next year. China also joined in with the leaders but finished fourth. The first semi was also close and faster, won by the current **World champions** from Denmark who streaked through the Greeks and Aussies in the last 500 metres.

**GB result** — third in semifinal

**Next race** — final on Sunday

**Qualified for Olympics 2008** — yes

### Lightweight men's fours

**World champions** — CHN

**Olympic champions** — DEN

Qualified to final — S1 GBR, ITA, CHN; S2 FRA, CAN, DEN

**GB crew** — Richard Chambers/James Lindsay-Fynn/Paul Mattick/James Clarke

These four have set themselves the challenge of redeeming the fortunes of the British lightweight four, and it shows. Encouraged by coach Robin Williams, they aren't scared of anyone, and learnt a lot from being too complacent in their quarterfinal. They also watched the heavyweight four's semi on Thursday, which taught them to stay out of trouble up the front if possible. A staggeringly good semi performance followed, in which they stalked early pace-setters Egypt before cruising through to take their rightful first place while Italy and Canada scrapped for minor places. An even-split race which had the coaches purring. Only one Olympic champion remains in the Danish quartet, who look like a spent force. GB have now beaten everyone in the final at least once. Watch out France and Canada - who mounted a pitched battle to the line in the other semi - these lads are on a mission.

**GB result** — first in semifinal

**Next race** — final on Sunday

**Qualified for Olympics 2008** — yes

### Lightweight men's pairs

**World champions** — Kuehner/Kuehner (GER)

Qualified to final — GER, GRE; GBR, FRA

Already qualified direct to final — ITA, AUS

**GB crew** — Matt Beechey/Danny Harte

Repêchages felt a bit anticlimactic on this day of thrilling semis, but were no less important. Germany's pair are new boys since last year, but had their rep in hand, beating Greece

*a message which said 'We're the winners; fight against us if you want.'"*

— Rich Chambers, GBR LM4-

*"Wednesday was a serious wake-up call. A percentage off the game and you're off the podium."*

— James Lindsay-Fynn, GBR LM4-

*"It's something to see Leander and Molesey working together." — Martin Cross, Guardian correspondent, on Banks and West coaching the GB men's eight*

## DOPING BANS

**The following rowers have been banned by FISA or their national federations in recent years:**

1995 CAN Silken Laumann inadvertently took a banned substance when taking Benadryl

2000 CHN Seven rowers withdrawn from the team before the Sydney Olympics after failing home tests.

2000 LAT Andris Reinholds at the Olympics, life ban for nandrolone

2003 ARG Ulf Lienhard, banned for 2 years for cocaine use at Pan Ams

2003 AUT Three rowers given 6-month bans for taking contaminated supplements

2004 UKR Olena Olefirenko at Athens Olympics after taking a mislabelled medicine

2006 — Valentina Galmerini (ITA) 8 months; Zhou Huihua (CHN) 2 years, El Moaty (EGY) 2 years; Milka Manchorova (BUL) 2 years, and a Portuguese rower taking part in an indoor rowing competition in jail was suspended.

## Who's left in

There are 27 events in total, of which 14 are Olympic-class, 9 non-Olympic, and 4 Paralympic (adaptive). Here is the roll-call of how the top rowing powers (large teams and/or good medal count) are doing so far:

Great Britain (19/24 entered) — 10 Oly, 6 non-Oly, 3 adaptive still in.

Germany (19/25 crews entered) — 10 Oly, 8 non-Oly, 1 adaptive still in running.

New Zealand (8/11 entered) — 7 Oly, 1 non-Oly, 0 adaptive.

USA (15/26 entered) — 4 Oly, 7 non-Oly, 4 adaptive.

Italy (13/25 entered) — 4 Oly, 7 non-Oly, 3 adaptive..

Australia (10/20 entered) — 4 Oly, 4 non-Oly, 2 adaptive.

Netherlands (17/14 entered) — 1 Oly, 5 non-Oly, 1 adaptive.

Canada (8/18 entered) — 4 Oly, 2 non-Oly, 2 adaptive.

China (8/21 entered) — 6 Oly, 2 non-Oly, 0 adaptive.

France (8/25 entered) — 5 Oly, 2 non-Oly, 1 adaptive.

China are host nation for the Beijing Olympics next year. So if they do not qualify for an event in Munich, they can (at FISA's discretion) be allocated a 'host place', which may otherwise be given away at the Final Qualifying Regatta or used by FISA to increase Olympic universality.

handily and never led. Beechey and Harte had a fractionally harder time, having to row back through France and Japan but eventually finishing first of a tight threesome out of which two qualified. Good bleeding before Sunday's final, which would otherwise have come as a shock after a week of mostly training sessions. Ominously, Germany were as quick despite not being pushed, so the Brits' world cup medals might be hard to duplicate.

**GB result** — first in repêchage

**Next race** — final on Sunday

**Number to Olympics** — 0

## Women's single sculls

**World champion** — Ekaterina Karsten (BLR)

**Olympic champion** — Ekaterina Karsten (BLR)

**Qualified to final** — S1 Zhang Xiuyun (CHN), Mirka Knapkova (CZE), Michelle Guerette (USA); S2 Ekaterina Karsten (BLR), Rumyana Neykova (BUL), Emma Twigg (NZL)

**GB crew** — none

Guerette had an odd race, at first trailing far back with Zhang and Polish youngster Julia Michalska in the lead, but then moving up to challenge Russia's Yulia Levina and get into a decent position. Knapkova moved up, and she and Guerette calmed down once the Pole and Russian had been dropped, content to let Zhang win it at a steady trot. In the other semi Neykova had her annual go at Karsten, putting one over on her just before the 500m gone marker. Karsten shortened a smidge and jacked up the rate, hoisting herself cleanly away while Neykova had to get busy against under-23 champion Twigg and Swede Frida Svenssen.

## Voices off in Munich

### Blues for Tipperary

The ace jazz band which plays rags and blues between races is adept at picking appropriate tunes as winning crews pass them by. For Britain's lightweight four they chose "It's a Long Way to Tipperary," more appropriate than they thought because Ireland failed to qualify for the final in the same. Furthermore, **James Lindsay-Fynn** and **Rich Chambers** of the British crew are both Irish. Frustratingly for the Irish, their best shots for Olympic qualification — the heavy and light fours — will both have to try again next year. But three Irishmen — Lindsay-Fynn, Chambers and the single sculler from Coleraine, **Alan Campbell** — have propelled British boats into Beijing qualifying places.

### Shouts and murmurs

**Pierre-Jean Peltier** (France) withdrew from the singles D final for medical reasons. **Anastasiya Fadzeyenka** subbed for **Volha Ustsienska** in Belarus's women's double before the C final, also for medical reasons.. **Felix Otto** of

**Next race** — final on Saturday

**Number to Olympics** — 9

## Trunk/arms mixed doubles

**World champions** — Brown/Madsen (USA)  
Qualified to final — S1 BRA, ITA, UKR; S2 AUS, POL, USA

**GB crew** — Karen Cromie/James Roberts

The writing was on the wall for the British double early on in this semi: while they had a great repechage, others have looked faster all week. It may be curtain time for the US multiple champions too: others with more swinging ability have taken over, and the event moved on. B-final: Cromie and Roberts, selected just before these championships, could not quite catch Zliong Shan and Yangling Zhou of China in this B final, but their second place gives them a ranking of eighth and qualifies their boat for the Paralympics, meaning that Britain's adaptive crews have a full house for Beijing next year. China and GB were comfortably ahead of Canada and the rest.

**GB result** — overall second in B-final (=8th)

**Qualified for Paralympics 2008** — yes

## Men's quads C-final

**GB crew** — Simon Fieldhouse/Sam Townsend/Alex Gregory/Ian Lawson

C-finals are no joke, and the GB quad know the plot next year depends on them doing as well as possible. Argentina and Canada had a scrap (won by Argentina) but the GB quartet weren't far behind. 15th isn't anything to be sorry about, but 2008 beckons with a strong under-23 duo joining the selection party.

**GB result** — third in C-final (=15th)

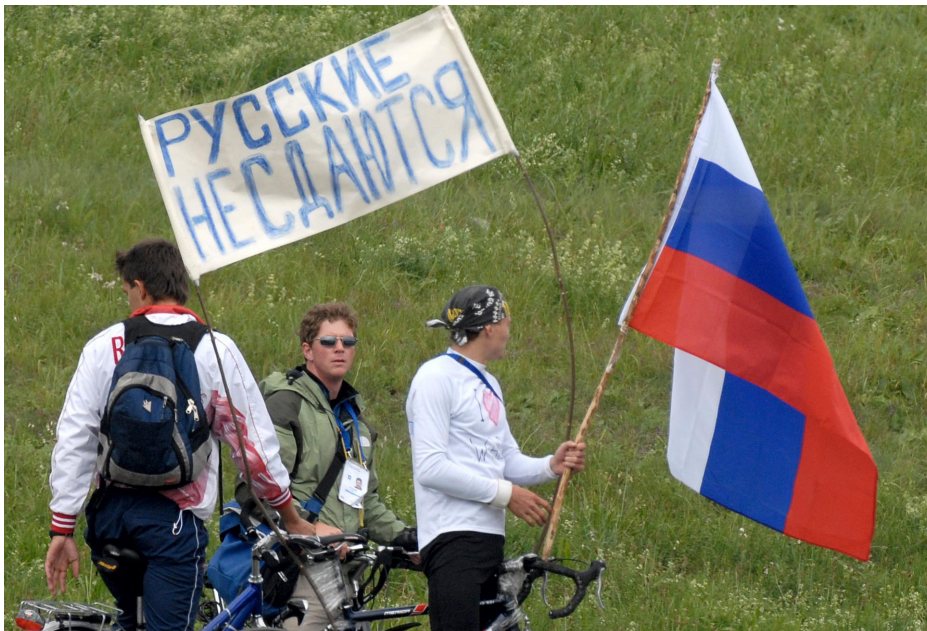
the German lightweight four is ill, causing his crew to withdraw from the C/D semi-finals (whatever they are). **Tomasz Kucharski**, partner of **Robert Sycz**, was unable to row in the C/D semi-finals. Kucharski and Sycz were double Olympic champions and triple world silver medallists. **Marco Resemi** subbed for medically afflicted **Mario Palmisano** in the Italian eight for the C final. **Lukas Babac**'s illness caused the Slovakian lightweight double to miss the D final. **Majda Jerman** of Slovenia withdrew, again for medical reasons, from the C final of the women's singles. Serbia's lightweight four scratched because **Milos Tomic** could not row.

### Single or return, Squire?

A Dutch photographer who requested assistance with using the new fancy ticket machine at Munich's main station to go to Dachau was asked: "is that Dachau holocaust or city?"

*Hammer Smith*

Tittle and tattle to [voice@rowing-service.com](mailto:voice@rowing-service.com)



"We love WADA" says Russian men's eight supporter Photo: Peter Spurrier

# No dopes at FISA

*Christopher Dodd and Rachel Quarrell on the Russian doping scandal*

After FISA imposed two-year bans on three Russian rowers on 28th August, the Russian federation faces sanctions from the world governing body pending further investigation of the cases.

The lightweight double scullers Vladimir Varfolomeev and Denis Moiseev and the bow of the women's eight, Svetlana Fedorova, were banned when it was found that they had used a "prohibited method" of taking legal substances — intravenous infusions (drips) of legal substances — without a legitimate medical reason. All three athletes admitted that FISA's suspicions were correct at a hearing last Tuesday evening. Their crews were disqualified from the championships on Wednesday.

The athletes concerned claimed that they had administered the substances themselves, without assistance from a doctor or other persons. It is this claim that is under further investigation. If others are found to be involved, the Russian federation could find itself fined, its officials suspended, or the federation itself suspended from competition for up to four years.

Denis Oswald, president of FISA, addressing a packed press conference on Friday, said: "FISA was the first international federation to introduce out-of-

competition testing in 1983, and we are determined to take action against violators." Matt Smith, executive director of FISA, gave a breakdown of how the cases came to light. He said that a bag found in a garbage bin near the hotel used by the Russian team at Lucerne regatta was handed to FISA on 16th July, the day after the regatta. It contained substances and medical equipment used for intravenous infusions. Some of the boxes were labelled "LM2x" in Cyrillic script. The contents were sent to a WADA-registered laboratory in Lausanne and analysed for substances and forensic evidence. Blood traces were stested for DNA.

On 13 August FISA carried out unannounced blood sampling and urine testing at the Russian training camp at Trakai, Lithuania. All were negative. More negative returns were recorded in tests on 23 August in Munich. On 29 August all remaining Russian athletes were blood tested. The three athletes whose blood samples matched the DNA tests were called in as soon as the results of Munich tests were known.

Oswald made it clear that none of the athletes had tested positive for an illegal substance, no prohibited substance was used, nor had there been blood doping or intake of EPO. The offence was the use of a prohibited method in breach of clause M2 of the anti-doping code.

The athletes were asked to produce medical certificates to say that they needed treatment, but were unable to do so. The Russian federation, Oswald said, had no choice but to accept the decision. The federation said that it knew that taking substances intravenously was banned.

"We don't believe the athletes did it themselves," Oswald said. "There must be someone else who deserves greater punishment. The fact that more than one athlete was involved scares me into thinking that there may be a scheme behind it."

FISA refused to say what substances were found while the investigation continues.

Pressed about possible sanctions, Oswald said that he could face the prospect that there would be no Russian crews at the Olympics. "But you have to be cautious not to punish athletes not caught in the case." Any punishment of the federation must be commensurate with the crime, he said.

A factor that contributes to this is the case of Olga Samulenkova of last year's quadruple scullers who was banned for two years — the maximum permitted sanction for a first offence under the world anti-doping code — on 26 September 2006 for taking testosterone artificially. The ban was backdated to start on 23rd July, resulting in her crew losing the gold medals they had won at Eton, and GB being elevated from silver to gold. The significance is that there have now been four Russian athletes suspended within 12 months, which gives FISA licence to suspend the federation itself.

The investigation is in the hands of the FISA executive, who must report their decision to the World Anti-Doping Authority (WADA). WADA, and the athletes concerned, have the right to review and appeal.

On Friday evening the Russian women's eight was out on the water training, with a substitute for Fedorova in the bow seat, while Russian officials emerged from a meeting with FISA looking despondent. It was at this very course during the world championships of 1981 that a life ban imposed on two eastern bloc athletes and their coach sparked the introduction of round-the-year out-of-competition testing in rowing. FISA was the first international sports federation to do it, and the ARA was the first national federation to do so. About 3000 tests are performed annually.