

OTRC Match Report - St Ives Regatta, June 2016



Jason writes:

On 18 June, OTRC made its annual pilgrimage to Nobles Field for the St Ives Regatta. St Ives presents a great opportunity for friendly competition over a 550m (300m for Eights) downstream, side-by-side regatta action on River Great Ouse. The weather was classically British, thick gray clouds with a cool breeze but, thankfully, no rain! However, the significant rains from earlier in the week were evident on the water in the form of a very strong stream complicating (to put it mildly) crews' efforts to line up for the start. Despite some late crew entries leading to last-minute draw changes, the regatta was overall better managed than in previous years, allowing for a relatively relaxed day of enjoyable racing. Congratulations to all the winners and big thanks to Dick for keeping us all—most notably the St Ives organizers—on top of the changes and ready to race!

W J14 2x: Etholle, Erin – WINNERS!!!!!!!

After upsetting the 'blazers' and getting stuck in a tree before the race we thought it couldn't get any worse. We started well and with the opposition crashing into the bank we had a clear run to the finish. As it was a straight final we were happy to get our first win in this double.

W J15 2x: Laura, Erin

The semi was Oundle vs Oundle so the club was guaranteed a boat in the final. We boated early for the final so there was a long wait for the previous division to end, but we entertained ourselves by keeping away from an angry swan and with some pre-race yoga in the boat! Once we were called to the start we began well and inched ahead after taking the first corner well. However, the KSE boat responded and partly due to some dodgy steering they managed to take a quarter of a length lead by finish. Even though they beat us we were very proud since we were up an age group and in turns out they had done well at the Nat Schools earlier this year.

J16 2x: Rohan, Will

The flow of the river was very strong and while waiting at the start there was a lot of moving about as we had to wait for another boat's mechanical to be sorted out but eventually the division started and we got called up. We were on the jetty side with a large tree that stuck into the river just after the start, I tried to steer around this but the river's strong flow pushed us very close to it, lucky we managed to miss it and we were at level pegging with the other crew, during the middle part of the race they started to pull ahead but then we brought it back level but with some hard steering needed we lost our place and came out with a very close second.

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MasE 2x: Peter, Brian

A difficult start from a stake boat in a turbulent stream allowed the opposition a clear lead after about 100m. However, undeterred, and knowing they had plenty to offer, this lead was gradually eroded, and rowing nicely they prepared to unleash their potential in the final straight. However, their steersman had other thoughts. Some say it was a deliberate ploy to influence the next Specsavers advert or possibly too much time watching Springwatch, but a visit to the reeds was sadly the end of their race. Potential still to be unleashed.

Mx Nov 2x: Lauren, Richard – WINNERS!!!!!!!!!!

Having had a few good results through the head season, some of which in the open novice category against all male crews, this was our first true short distance sprint race.

Our division was called to boat which we duly did only to spend 20 minutes trying to hold station in the very strong currents in the holding area just past the finish. The last race of the previous division finished and we were able to proceed up the course towards the start, managing a single practice start on the way up which was encouragingly strong. We arrived at the start post and found a safe spot next to the bank to hold in, as it turned out we would be there a very long time and had both of us wishing we had brought more layers with us. After 40 minutes and a seemingly endless stream of narrow boats and cruisers interrupting the races it was finally our turn. We paddled through the stake boats and backed down on to ours on the regatta field side without a problem. The marshal had told me as we were boating that the current favored the other station in the first half and shifted to our side in the second half, so a good start would be important. We got attached and I was trying hard to keep the bow pointing in the right direction in the stream, also knowing we had the longer side of the bend to deal with. The start marshal called the club names and I had one last look at the racing line and it was good, attention was called and we were off. Due to the offset start positions the other crew were visible in our peripheral vision, and as go was called we saw them take a very unstable first stroke; however, ours was clean and very powerful. We pulled away with every stroke from the first, Lauren setting her usual impeccable stroke rate, the long corner was negotiated with proficiency and on the straight our lead extended further, winning as they say "easily". A very clean, heartening win, a big thanks to Lauren and may there be many more to come.

W J15 2x: Chloe, Etholle

In our race we decide that it was not the weather for rowing so we decided to garden, oops! On our first stroke we went into the reeds and it took us a while to get out so we were way behind, but we carried on and have put it down to experience.

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J16 1x: Joe

Unfortunately I lost the race by quite a way. I started off on the opposite side to the jetty, the river had a strong flow which made the standing start from the stake boat quite difficult in a single. The start wasn't very powerful due to these conditions but I felt as though the rest of the race was good and I managed to keep the gap even. Was still a good day though. A big thanks to everyone that organised and helped out.

Mx 4x-: Hugh, Fiona, Peter, and Becky Smith (Jnr.) - **Winners!!!!!!!**

Not bad for a first outing...

It all started with the search for a sub - and we struck lucky

Thank you to Becky for not only stepping in but taking on the steering job

We had some paddling time to get the crew into shape whilst the 'oppo' battled it out for the privilege of competing against us; there were lots of practice starts and one particularly dramatic 'banking' incident involving overhead obstacles as well as the reeds! However, Becky got the measure of the river conditions after that and once we'd 'bounced' ourselves clear of the bank we were back in business.

We agreed on some tactics and calls. There was one new one for me - FRIDGE...as in 'everything including the...' This call was held in reserve in the event of a close finish, but luckily was not needed, which was just as well, as I am likely to have looked around for the fridge floating in the river!

Finally we were ready to start and hooked up to the stake-boat with some style - Peter yelled for me to pull my oar in, but I heard "dig" the oar in and subsequently nearly took the poor lad's head off!

Having magnanimously dispensed with our age appropriate early start, we got off to a good start and had a smooth row to the finish keeping the opposition in sight all the way. An enjoyable and morale boosting race and a very useful engraved glass tankard to boot!

W J18 1x: Becky

This was my first race in a single and not having the girls there, I felt pretty nervous. I was the first race down in this division so I weaved my way through all the other boats which was a task in itself! I swiftly made it onto the stake boat but the other girl took about 4 attempts so I had to wait a while for her. The current was so strong and I was advised not to square my blades until they said "go" so I didn't. The start felt really slow and I was so fixated on steering, I wasn't really thinking about anything else so I can't really remember the actual row apart from it was pretty wobbly. I lost by a fair bit but considering it was my first single race, a strong current and a difficult course to maneuver, it didn't go too badly. Thanks to everyone who helped out, especially Anita and Simon for actually getting me a row!

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MasD 8+: Dick, Brian, Ian, Peter D, Richard, Jason, Antony, Ron; Cox: Lauren

We left the crustaceans behind at the Masters and looked ahead to St Ives with anticipation as a MasD crew.

Jason's cunning research on the opposition unearthed a worrying depth of knowledge on our opposition and St.Ives's strokesman's movements/success over the last two years. It's amazing what the Internet can reveal these days...!

It was a positive outlook and we were due to have a 3 second advantage, so it was all looking rather well...

But an early email from Dick the morning of the race revealed an unexpected semi-final with an 'older' MasE boat from Cambridge - a late entry from none other than Bob Carpenter & Charlie Efford's crew!! Of course, their average age meant they received a 3 second head start which we were unable to argue, despite our best efforts with a calculator, just 2 years shy of a level start!

We lined up at the start navigated superbly by our stand in cox Lel. Our instruction by the umpire was to start on the second "Go" and so we waited, and waited, and waited, before finally being called to attention. Then, we heard "Go!"... which... was followed by a premature stroke and a great deal of alarm and confusion. We left into full swing like a dazzled centipede after hearing another, "Go", and our focus was to row hard and fast over the 300m course.

The Cambridge crew took advantage of their 3 second start but we kept within their tail. The encouragement from Noble's field signalled a step up in rate and we pushed towards the finish. The first and the second beep between the two crews must only have been 3-4 seconds apart so not too bad all things considered.

We watched Cambridge to go on and beat the St.Ives IM1 crew in the final and reflected on our efforts.. Outclassed somewhat on the day but a respectable effort.

The quest to lose Novice status for the Men's Eight continues!!

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MasD 1x: Philip – **WINNER!!!!!!!!!!**

Having entered this race as a Masters E rower to be told I would get a 6 second start, I was somewhat dismayed to be told by the start official that my advantage was to be cut to 3 seconds. I'm not sure quite why, but as this was the first time I've been on the receiving side of such an advantage, I was somewhat disappointed!

As everyone will have found, the start wasn't easy in such a fast flow, but after a wobbly first few strokes on the meadow bank, I found myself ahead. My plan was to stay ahead - just - in anticipation of the final in the afternoon, thereby leaving something in the fuel tanks. Although I knew that because Steve Mulligan had scratched from the event, that this was the final, I still didn't want to over-do it (tennis elbow, bruised coccyx, excuse, excuse....!)

At the finish - thanks for the OTRC support from the banks, by the way - the two beeps were very close together and I thought I'd won, but on returning to the trailer with my boat I was consoled by Peter who thought I'd just missed out....

I hot-footed it over to race control to check and I was vindicated: winning, apparently, by a massive 6 inches.....it all matters!

Phew!