

OTRC "Match Report" - St Neots, July 2016



St Neots' 2-day regatta is one of the more eagerly awaited events on the rowing calendar. Clubs from as far away as Yorkshire and Kent make the effort to attend. It's a well organised regatta with minimum blazer interference which makes for relaxed and enjoyable racing. On the Saturday races are over 1000m while on the Sunday the sprint racing over 500m is slightly less serious, which naturally suits the OTRC way. We took 9 crews (5 junior, 4 senior) to the sprint event with a total of 22 members taking part. Over the years we have noted that the standard of racing has increased and is now as high if not higher than the Peterborough regatta we competed at in June. Nevertheless we performed well across all the events we entered. Conditions were ideal, sunny with almost no wind (until late afternoon). Performance of the day...well read the match reports for yourselves.

Thanks especially to John Milborne for his support, enthusiasm and trailer driving, and once again to everyone who helped during the day and with the rigging/de-rigging etc."

Nov 8+ Dick, Charlie, Ian, Peter, Antony, Ron, Jack, **Richard** and cox, Rhona **WINNERS**

The line-up for this eight was not clear even on the day of the race. There were plans A, B and C all hinging on whether Charlotte and I (Richard) got through to the second round of the 2x race. Sadly we did not, but this did now mean that the crew could now be finalised.

The eight has proved to have a lot of promise during this year, having some very close races and showing that we were very much on the pace. We were scheduled to have our first heat in the morning, only to find out that our opposition had scratched, not necessarily a bad thing but it did mean we had to wait 6 hours until the final. So we waited, and waited, some of the crew caught the other heat in our race, eying up the competition, they were described as "young' and "good", typical opposition in the novice eights category then. Again we waited, eventually taking our blades down to the boating area. We had saved this task as we needed something to look forward to, to break up the afternoon. The time finally came for the race and we were more than ready having been sat around for the best part of the day. We got to the boating area only to find that the other crew were not there, it turned out that 1 of their crew was still on the water from another race. So we waited.... finally they arrived, and as expected they looked young, fit and a well drilled crew.

But we kept our heads in the boat and made our way to the start, Rhona had the suspicion that they had been watching us and making judgements. We squeezed in a couple of starts on the way up, which burn off some of the nerves and meant we were calm on the start. Again heads were in the boat as we lined up, Rhona did a great job getting us on the stake boat and we were soon at attention. GO!!

We had a brilliant start and were ahead almost from the first stroke, as we lengthened we were half a length up and holding them. Past half way we were rowing strongly and still in front, approaching the last quarter still ahead but they were starting to push back at us. We dug deep and pushed on, they had gained and as we crossed the line, none of us were sure of the result until the tannoy announced "Oundle Town". We erupted, disbelief and euphoria at the same time. But we were brought back to earth as we were still in the boat and needed to spin and take it in. There was some debate as to whether we had actually gained a point if there were not enough boats in the race, but having resented our racing licenses, they were duly punched and pots were given out.

A fantastic race and a well-deserved prize for a crew that has worked hard this year, and a lesson not to judge a crew on how they look. We had ages ranging from 20-72 in that boat and beat the youth crew. On a personal note, I have been rowing now for 15 years and this is the first qualifying race I have ever won, thank you to the crew for getting me out of novice, something I was beginning to think would never happen.

WJ14 2x **Laura** and **Etholle**

Etholle and I were in a double together, Etholle was at bow and I was at stroke. We were against a double of Northampton and we both had a good start. We hadn't rowed together since the regatta at Nottingham so it was quite difficult to quickly find a good rhythm. They won by a couple of lengths but it was a great race and regatta.

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WJ18 1x Becky

I arrived nice and early, ready for the race. Rigged and ready followed by a long wait ... and then another long wait by the river for my opposition. When she finally arrived, I questioned to myself whether she was in this age category seeing as she was a foot taller and much bigger than me. We boated and rowed up to the start. Getting onto the stake boat was done quickly and we were off before I was really ready. I had a near miss with the cruisers at the start but soon straightened up and got into the rhythm. She pretty much had me from the start but I wasn't surprised considering how tall she was. I lost by a length and a half but the actual row felt quite good.

Mx Nov 2X Charlotte and Richard

Charlotte and I had not been rowing together for long (5 outings including the race) but we seemed to have found our rhythm and training had been going very well, particularly the last 2. Come the race day we were ready, and the weather was with us being bright and sunny. Having put the boat together we took our blades to the boating area, this is where we got our first glimpse at our possible opposition. Now Charlotte is very tall (6 ft, I believe) I on the other hand am really not (5ft 5 on a good day), the opposing crew were both of a larger stature, the girl being as tall as Charlotte (she was also called Redgrave, a sure giveaway) and the guy must have been about 6ft 5 and well built. Our suspicions were confirmed upon reaching the marshalling area they were our opponents, but as we all know, size isn't everything!

We boated and headed for the start, got on to the stake boat and waited to go. We had been given the meadow side which I was relieved about, having seen at least 1 crew hit the moored boats on the club side. Off the line we had a brilliant start, and had actually pulled ahead, but then the other crews extra height and power came into their own and they began to pull away. We did however have a very solid and tidy row finishing only 3 lengths down. A very enjoyable race, thank you Charlotte.

WJ18 2x Daisy and Becky

We won the heats!!!! ... By default... we got down to the jetty and got told the other crew scratched from the race, which me and Becky had mixed feelings about, considering our first race was at 11:29 now turned into 2:55. Now our semi-final against the 'The Tall Terrifying Twins from Trent' (try drinking and saying that!) These girls had been rowing eight years together in a double and a pair, they had us from the start gaining half a boat in front of us. I blame my steering towards the boats (went the long way round). Having a goodish start, we tried catching then up by going hard for 10 and lengthening again with a great roar from the crowd! (Thank you). Unfortunately, throughout the race the terrifying twins pushed further away and won the race by 1.5 lengths. But thanks for all the help and well done to all crews.

WJ14 1x Laura

I was in a J14 single for my race and I was paired against a Doncaster rower. Both our starts were good but around half way she had the pressure to put on and edged ahead, pulled away, and won by a couple of lengths. I had a really good race and I enjoyed it and it was a great regatta :-)

Mxd IM3 4X- Simon, Vicky, Jo, John M

Who in their right mind would put themselves under the pressure of teaming up with the clubs most successful rowers, Vicky & Jo? More than that, Simon and John were expected to provide "the beef"; what were they thinking?

Learning from past experience the crew decided that a bit of sneaky practice was the way forward, so they had a few outings, tweaked the crew order, and in the absence of any video evidence or coaching, assumed all was well.

OTRC's opposition were four highly toned twenty somethings from Norwich, who were obviously well acquainted with the inside of a gym. The crews were supposed to find their opposition before boating so when our girls caught sight of the Norwich crew, and particularly males, their gaze lasted for rather longer than was necessary before it returned to their own "beef in the boat"; whereupon their little hearts sank. Our OTRC boys on the other hand, weren't about to let a little bit of reality get in their way and didn't see any difference in the crews. Even when the age discrepancy was forcibly pointed out, they only saw more experience in the OTRC boat, therefore, probably on

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balance an advantage to OTRC. So when OTRC held Norwich off the start, the boys in the OTRC boat thought all was going to plan, the girls on the other hand were frankly flabbergasted. Unbeknown to the OTRC crew, Norwich was a fairly scratch outfit and decided to opt for safety first off the start, and put the beef on in the second half of the race. Once they upped the power OTRC were a bit deficient in this department and Norwich were able blast through to their expected victory; much to the surprise of the boys in the OTRC boat.

So the lessons to be learnt were the boys need to start chunking the weights big time. The girls, however, got all dewy-eyed and wistful mumbling about better crew selection or something.....

Vet E 4X- Simon, Charlie, Jon H, John M

These old men have been part of a larger successful OTRC sculling squad and it was the turn of Simon, Charlie, Jon & John to represent OTRC (under the name of Carpenter) at St Neots. This after a hasty re-arrangement from the original crew when Bob remembered that his daughter was getting married!

Round 1:

The first opposition was Maidstone Invicta who had two crews in the draw and a massive and successful club presence at the event. As with a lot of "old man's" racing there was plenty of friendly chat before the race and these guys turned out to be a scratch crew. OTRC managed to get up to the start early and made the most of the time and space to get rid of their nerves and polish their racing starts. They blasted off the start and with the exception of a few marker buoys getting in their way were untroubled during the race.

Semi Final:

The opposition for this round were youngsters i.e. Vet D which meant OTRC received a 4 sec start. The crew were from Peterborough had a bye into this round, so no form to go on. During the "pre-race chat" with the crew, they claimed to be Novice so with a 4 sec start things were looking good. However time is a funny thing, 4 sec seems an eternity when you are on the wrong side of the handicap, but amazingly short when it is in your favour. The OTRC boys got off cleanly and made the most of their advantage, while Peterborough visited the wrong lane and nearly hit one of the crews going up to the start. One of the few times in his steering career where John M could feel smug; but pride proceeds a fall.....

Final:

The second Maidstone Invicta crew made it through the second half of the draw, but we had intel on this crew. OTRC had beaten them by the narrowest of margins two years ago, but with the benefit of a time handicap. In the intervening time the Maidstone crew had put in a load of training and were racing a level above OTRC at the Masters and other events. They had also won the 1K event on the Saturday. By this stage of the day the event was a little behind schedule, so the "pre-race chat" with Maidstone crew was longer than normal but steered clear of matters concerning training and the form book; but both crews were definitely up for it! Off the start Maidstone got a flyer, as the form book predicted, but there was no panic in the OTRC crew who expected their race pace and rhythm to take them through. Much to OTRC's dismay Maidstone were able to build on their start and pulled away from the OTRC boys, turning them into proper "grumpy old men". So there you have it encapsulated in one Vet event, training pays off - who would have thought it, eh?