



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2008

Manager - *Andre Van Zyl*

Chairman - *David Pearton*

Vice-Chairperson - *Gareth Lochhead*

Men's Captain - *Stacey Howcroft*

Ladies Captain - *Cari Maclean*

Transformation Officer- *Leigh Stephenson*

Boatman - *Nicholas Jones*

The 2008 season has been an extremely busy and eventful one, kicking off with the SASSU symposium in January and representation at the River Vaal Regatta long before students had even returned to University. Planning for the 2008 season had begun as early as September 2007 with a meeting held by Club members to discuss how to improve on the performances of the previous season. With a solid foundation laid by the 2007 committee a platform was established for the Club to succeed in 2008 and the Club certainly did this.

The committee for 2008 remained largely unchanged from last season with the exception of Cari Maclean and Gareth Lochhead taking over the roles of Women's Captain and Vice-Chairperson, respectively. Tarquin De Vega filled the new position of secretary. The continuity of the committee has played a critical part in the Club being able to build on the ground work laid down in 2007 and being able to improve on this even further. I hope that future committee members will fulfill their roles for more than one term in order to keep the positive momentum of the Club flowing.

2008 saw a number of major developments in the Club. The arrival of two sculls and a double from RowSA at the beginning of the year served as a much needed lifeline for the Club as we would not have been able to continue to operate with our current equipment. The remarkable achievements this year are in no small part to receiving these boats. It should be noted however that the allocation of these boats were not without conditions and the Club needs to do a lot more to encourage people from all backgrounds to take up the sport of rowing. Sadly the lack of improvement in this area during 2008 has been almost completely due to lack of funding for such an initiative. The recent allocation of R50, 000.00 from the National Lottery for such a venture will no doubt see the Club attain the high targets it has set for itself in this critical endeavor.

Another noteworthy development during the year was the sponsorship of the Sports Bureau by Budget Car Rental. The use of a double cab bakkie to tow the trailer has been of a major benefit

to the Club which no longer has to bare the extra financial burden of hiring a towing vehicle for every regatta and event.

Although the RowSA boat allocation and the sponsorship from Budget came as a much needed boost to the Club there were still some serious disappointments during the season. Despite winning the *Most Improved Sports Club* last year the Club received a budget allocation of R8000.00 less than the previous year. This came as a major let down as despite all the talk at the end of last season about getting behind the Rowing Club to achieve it's goal of becoming one of the best Clubs in the country, the actions taken by the University were in complete contradiction to this.

The almost non existent equipment base of the Club continues to hamper the Club's on water performances. Members missed a number of races where medals were a real possibility due to the fact that Club simply doesn't have boats to compete in. The generosity of Grey High school letting us rent their boats is not going to continue and major work had to be put in behind the scenes just to get them to let us use them this year. The continual reliance on Grey High school to bail us out cannot continue and the Varsity needs to do something about this matter urgently. The Club has been suffering for years with this problem and absolutely nothing has been done to improve it.

The University's top management needs to see the enormous benefit that a strong Rowing Club can bring to the NMMU and its students. Every Ivy League institution in the world offers rowing as a major 1st tier sport. Not simply because they can afford to but because they see the value the sport can add to the quality of its students. Dedication, hard work, perseverance and most of all leadership are just some of the traits learnt from participating in the sport. These things cannot be learnt in the classroom and if the NMMU wants to raise the caliber of its students I see no better way than by giving them the opportunity to participate in the sport of rowing.

In spite of the numerous challenges faced by the Club this season the members have persevered and have been a credit to both themselves and their university. I have received numerous complements at regattas from long standing members of the rowing community about the high spirit within the Club and the excellent performances achieved on the water and the good behavior off it. The never say die attitude of the Club's members and the fierce determination to succeed in the face of adversity has seen the Club produce the best set of results ever in the Club's 40 plus year history. The current level of competition in South African rowing has never been higher and to achieve the results alluded to earlier by Stacey and Cari is nothing short of remarkable.

The excellent results achieved this season would not have been possible without the hard and tireless work of the committee members. The organization of all regattas has been excellent this year and there have been very few if any problems experienced. A sincere word of thanks to the members of the 2008 committee for all the effort you put in this year and the immense work that went in behind the scenes to make this year the most successful in the Club's history.

To the incoming committee I wish you nothing but the best and remember that there will be many times when you will want to throw in the towel and give up but I hope that you will rise to challenge like this years committee and persevere and continue to build on the excellent achievements attained by the Club over the past two years.

A special thank you to Nico who has been a major asset to the Rowing Club this year. The restoration of the Club's boatshed was thanks to Nico and his staff who slaved over it for weeks and Nico has also stepped in without fail every time we have needed a driver for the towing vehicle. Nico the Club is sincerely grateful for the help you have given us this year and we hope you will continue to maintain close ties with the Club in the future.

On a personal note I would like to thank Shane who many won't know, was the catalyst for the major improvements seen in the Club over the past few seasons. It was back in 2005 at SASSU Sprints when he sat the guys down and explained to us the potential he saw in the Club and what we could achieve if we put our minds to it. It was from there that a small group of individuals decided to take up the challenge and I think today if you look at the Club, no one can argue that the sacrifices put in over the past three years have not been worth it.

Last, but certainly not least a great debt of gratitude is owed by all to Andre who has been a stone pillar over the past two years, continually championing the cause of the Rowing Club in often very trying circumstances. Andre I can say without a shadow of doubt that all the work you have put in to the Club has not gone unnoticed and that we are all truly appreciative of the many long hours that you have put in behind the scenes to ensure that the Club continues to grow and prosper.

To all the members here tonight remember that NMMU Rowing is what you make it. You will determine where the Club will be in a years time and I hope that all of you will give the committee your full support and continue to fight for the sport that we all enjoy.

“It is not the critic who counts, nor the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows great enthusiasms, great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat. “

- Theodore Roosevelt

Yours in Rowing,

David Pearton

Chairman

NMMU Rowing Club