



Men's Captain Report 2008

True victory is not about finishing first, it is about finishing regardless of how many times you fall. Last year it was said that the NMMU men's rowing team enjoyed one of the greatest seasons, this year we enjoyed the greatest rowing season ever produced by the university. We competed strongly in over 8 regattas in which each of us raced our hearts out and pushed beyond that beyond.

ZRC Regatta:

Season got off to a relaxed start with the annual braai at the ZRC regatta and a couple of informal races. Started with the NMMU men's 8 vs. the outgoing rowers from Grey High, in a heartily contested race the experience of the NMMU crew pushed them across the line in first place; this was then lately followed by the heads event where our 4 and sculls took the fastest times to kick the season off to a great start.

River Vaal:

For the first time the NMMU was represented at the river Vaal regatta by Shane Reynolds and Benjamin Ekron, working on a knockout system like the Royal Henley regatta, this is one of the toughest regattas but hats off to them for competing outstandingly in the sculls and double. I hope we can take up more guys next year and make this an annual regatta for the NMMU.

Buffalo Regatta:

This regatta saw one of the strongest men's performances ever, making all of our finals and taking up 18 men was a victory on our own. We dominated in most of our races, winning 6 finals and almost winning the entire point's trophy, just losing out to Rhodes University, this could have been a different story if the Varsity had supplied us with more equipment and that is the reason we missed our races. Not only did we have a strong presence at the regatta, but we went out with a big hit at the after party.

SASSU Sprints Regatta:

With men's members strong and borrowing of Grey's equipment we decided to step it up a little and enter some A division races. We were really competitive throughout the regatta and a lot of heart was shown in the racing, especially by some of the novice rowers. The race of the day went to the men's A8, where we raced in the B finals just to lose out by 0, 03 seconds to take top honors. This regatta really brought the team spirit to a high, especially later that night on the super tubes. With Jason, Benji, Shane and Brad having an outstanding regatta.

SA Champs:

This was yet another experience for us. We arrived there knowing that we were about to race SA's finest and just to be able to race in the same regatta as them was an awesome experience. This regatta proved to be tough for the 17 men that went up, but the character, the pride and the passion that coursed through their veins that day was of none other and they showed that we were capable of knocking off the best. The race of the day was the men's A8, we knew going into our heat that we would have to beat Rhodes to have a chance of racing in the Finals, sitting at the start we knew we could do it, being a length down with 500m to go we just locked down and went for home, clinching a one second win over Rhodes and advancing to the A finals as the fastest university with Stellenbosch in second. Going into the finals the next day had our nerves on edge as we lined up against our heroes and SA's best. In a difficult race hampered by the umpire boat we came in at 6th spot with our heads up high, one of the highlights of the year.

We also gained the help of Don Cech who would end up helping us throughout the rest of the season we then traveled back to P.E for a night that brought us all closer even though Dave had his Batista shirt torn off.

Rowing Camp:

12 men traveled up to Port Alfred for 9 days to be coached by Mike Clark and Don Cech, it started off rocky as we gained yet another Zimbabwean in place of the black pearl, this one could row at least, Zim. The first day we were there Zim and Blake came to blows. When Zim mistook the hi-fi control for the TV remote and almost blew Blake's speakers thinking that he was turning the TV up but was actually turning the hi-fi up. The rowing throughout the week was of high quality and a lot was learnt with the help of Don and Mike. Gareth and Andrew improved 10fold and this paved the way for a strong quad.

Tri-Varsity:

Unfortunately with the withdrawal of Fort Hare it came down to NMMU vs. Rhodes, the A8's where first off in a tick tocking battle over the first 3km Rhodes took an unforgiving lead and managed to hang on to the race that we knew we could have won. The men's B8 then took to the water with an all new crew and could just not keep up with the more experienced Rhodes crew. A lot was taken out of these races.

Boat Race:

I firmly believe that in any man's final hour is his greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle victorious . It's that last push or that final straight; it's knowing that if you don't push beyond it, there will never be a beyond. It's that moment where your mind and body meet and realize they have a common goal called winning. I feel that this sums up Boat Race in a bottle. The men's B VIII had their strongest performance in years and can be really proud of themselves, knocking a massive 2minutes off their time from last year.

The A VIII, this crew was only decided days before the race as seats were hotly contested for throughout the year. The heats was a tough race in windy conditions and it never been more

proud of a crew, just 13 seconds off the B final and 20 seconds off the A final says a lot about how far the NMMU men have come over the past years. Earning a 6th spot was a proud moment and nothing to be ashamed of; I feel the way we rowed and went about doing things spoke for itself.

I've been asked throughout my rowing career why do it, the time, the money spent, the early mornings, why? I have never had an answer until the Saturday of Boat Race, it is that feeling you get when the boat is running in synergy, the sound it makes, only a rower will know it, that is something that only few people are privileged to experience.

This season would not have been made possible without the likes of Mike Clark and Don Cech, our coaches, our friends, their passion for the sport; they put our season together and made our dreams and goals a reality. Finally to the people who without this season would not be possible; you are the reason we are where we are today. A special mention to Andrew and Robin, the passion and effort they put in throughout the season. Gareth for his never say die attitude. Shane the pillar of strength he was for us. Dave who without – none of this would have been possible.

I hope that this season will live fondly in your memories for the rest of your lives as it will in mine.

Remember that by perseverance the snail reached the ark.

Stacey Howcroft

Men's Captain

NMMU Rowing Club