

## **NMMU Rowing Club**

### **Buffalo Regatta 2008**

#### **14<sup>th</sup> 15<sup>th</sup> 16<sup>th</sup> February**

This past weekend the NMMU Rowing Club traveled down to East London to participate in what is widely regarded as the most prestigious regattas in the South Africa, the Buffalo Regatta. It is held in the heart of East London on an Olympic style 2000m rowing course on the Buffalo River, from which the regatta takes its name. The regatta attracted participants from all rowing clubs within the country.

The main draw card of this regatta is two of the magnificent trophies that are on offer. The Grand Challenge Trophy for the Men's Coxless fours, and the Silver Sculls Trophy for the Men's A single sculls. Both trophies are priceless as they are made out of pure silver, although they are insured for over two million rand each.

The competition was of an extremely high standard with Olympians and Springbok rowers rowing right along side Club level oarsmen. The regatta kicked off for the NMMU rowers at 06:30am on Friday morning with the heats for the men's D, C and B single sculls as well as the ladies C single sculls and women's A double.

The Novice Men did extremely well with two out of the three entries going on into the A final. All other oarsmen and women racing the heats made it through to the A finals. A superb achievement.

The oarsmen and women of the NMMU Rowing Club then got to relax for the rest of the day and be spectators for the Selborne Sprint Regatta which is held for High School Clubs and is raced over a distance of 500 meters.

The finals for the Buffalo Regatta started on Saturday morning with the Men's D single sculls race. This race was held over 1000m due to it being for novice oarsmen. NMMU's *Marvin Nelson* did extremely well to win this race by a comfortable margin in what turned out to be a keenly contested race.

The next race of the day was the Women's C single sculls with NMMU's *Claire Hulbert* taking an excellent 3<sup>rd</sup> place in what was another tough race that was dominated by Rhodes University.

The NMMU Men were next in action in the Men's B Coxless 4. They were behind in the first 500m but put in a push at the 1000m mark to inch ahead. They were then able to hold onto this slender lead for the next 500m. In the final 500m NMMU took it up a gear and won by one boat length. An excellent achievement as this is the first time that NMMU has ever won this race.

NMMU's crew consisting of *Tanja Gauss* and the Ladies Captain *Cari Maclean* were up against tough opposition from Rhodes in the Women's A Pairs race and although not able to keep up with the pace of the impressive Rhodes crew still managed an excellent 2<sup>nd</sup> place.

Straight after the women's A pairs race *Cari Maclean* and *Leigh Stephenson* had to get ready for their single sculls races. Again this race was dominated by Rhodes, taking the first two places with UCT in 3<sup>rd</sup>. Our ladies still did extremely well finishing in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> place respectively.

The next race was the men's C eight which was entered by our novice men. They led for the majority of the race but in the final 500m *Rob Goosen's* seat broke causing the men to have to finish the last 500m with only 7 rowers. They still did extremely well to finish in a close 2<sup>nd</sup> place.

Then it was time for the more experienced men to take part in the men's B double. Here the two *Taylor* brothers, *Jason* and *Brad* dominated from the first stroke, completely blowing away their opposition. They led from start to finish and were deserving winners against some very tough and experienced Gauteng crews.

Our ladies after having made it into the A final for the women's double were extremely disappointed not to be able to partake because of boat clashes. The Club's severe lack of boats remains a major problem. The University has only one recently acquired double and as such they were unable to compete in their final due to the race being too close to the Men's B double. A very stringent regatta programme did not help matters.

The Men's B and C four were also highly frustrated to have missed their races due to being unable to borrow a boat for the event.

In the men's B sculls *Shane Reynolds* and *Benji Ekron* did extremely well to place 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respectively. This is an extremely tough race with the competitors of the highest caliber taking part.

The Ladies were next in action in the B Fours and did well to place second in a race that was again dominated by the talented Rhodes ladies.

The highlight of the Regatta for the NMMU Men's division would have to be an excellent race in the Men's B eight. Although only a 3<sup>rd</sup> place was achieved the racing was neck and neck the whole way down the 2000m course with only the final sprint separating the crews. NMMU were pipped to the line by Leander, the eventual Regatta points winner and the University of Pietermaritzburg who were at the top of their game having just returned from a trip to the Royal Henley Regatta held on the Thames in London.

Still more excitement was to come with the NMMU Men dominating the C Single Sculls events with a first and second place and an excellent performance from the Novice Men's Four winning their race comfortably and making up for their disappointment in the C Eights.

Overall Buffalo 2008 has been the best performance for the NMMU Rowing Club to date; placing 3<sup>rd</sup> in the overall points trophy which is a truly magnificent achievement if one takes into consideration the level of competition present at this regatta as well as the very modest equipment and resources of the Club. The NMMU Oarsmen and Women showed great courage in adversity and great character to come from behind in many races and to end up with Gold around their necks.

If one thing can be learnt from this regatta it is that organization can win you races. The committee must be commended for the hours they put into organizing accommodation, transport, food and training sessions. Above all the Club's members must be congratulated for the way they raced as well as for their behavior on and off the water. The dedication displayed by the Rowing Club's members continues to set the benchmark for other sporting codes.

In a regatta which draws hundreds of competitors and thousand of spectators from all over South Africa the impeccable behavior and excellent results achieved by The Club's members had everyone talking about NMMU. The Oarsmen and Women were a credit unto themselves as well as to their University. I look forward to building on this momentum that the Club has established and capitalizing on it during the rest of the sprints season as well as at the SASSU Boatrace in September.

*David Pearton*  
*Chairman*  
*NMMU Rowing Club*

#### **Final Individual Standings:**

- **Men's D Scull, 1<sup>st</sup>**
- **Men's C Scull, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>**
- **Men's B Scull, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>**
- **Men's B Double, 1<sup>st</sup>**
- **Men's B Pair, 2<sup>nd</sup>**
- **Men's D Four, 1<sup>st</sup>**
- **Men's C Four, No boat**
- **Men's B Four, No boat**
- **Men's B Coxless Four, 1<sup>st</sup>**
- **Men's C Eight, 2<sup>nd</sup>**
- **Men's B Eight, 3<sup>rd</sup>**
  
- **Women's C Scull, 3<sup>rd</sup>**
- **Women's B Scull, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>**
- **Women's A Double, No boat**
- **Women's A Pair, 2<sup>nd</sup>**
- **Women's C Four, 2<sup>nd</sup>**
- **Women's B Four, 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**Final Club Standings:**

Leander Rowing Club	27
Rhodes University	26
<b>Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University</b>	<b>23</b>
RowSA Academy	15
Old Edwardian's Rowing Club	9
Roodeplaat Rowing Club	7
Pietermaritzburg University	5
The University of the Witwaterstrand	5
Victoria Lake Club/University of Johannesburg	4
University of Cape Town	4
Stellenbosch University	3
Ravens Rowing Club	1