

draw and drew the eventual winner along with a number of other very fast scullers. He made a really solid effort within the race, but was unfortunately not able to progress beyond a very classy heat.

Due to high winds and expected gusty conditions, Saturdays racing was moved forward, so Jonathan Mitchell had less preparation time than hoped for before his attack on the junior single scull category. Due to the very high number of competitors involved in this field there were a total of six heats, with only the top two progressing from each. Mitchell proved to be in a different class to the other individuals in his heat and made light work of the race, dropping his rating for the second half and comfortably paddling home clear of the field. The semi-final was a tougher race, but the result was the same. After positioning himself in third, the last of the qualifying positions, Jonathan decided to push for the finish to show what he could do. His push was very effective and took him into the lead, where he remained until the finish line. About half an hour before the final the weather turned even worse and no more boats were permitted to race. During this time, in boat-

sinking conditions, Jonathan's boat got over-turned by a freak wave. He gathered himself together and rather than back out decided to race the final with far from ideal preparations. Jonathan raced really well and acquitted himself fantastically in the conditions. On the line he was judged to have come sixth only a matter of feet behind the fourth place boat.

The main event for the CAI squad at the Championships was the Men's Intermediate coxed four. An event last competed in by the school 12 years ago. In a highly competitive event CAI lined up in their heat against crews from Belfast, Cork, Galway and Dublin. With only two through to the final the crew of Jonathan Mitchell, Michael McNaul, Robert Hart and Steven Archibald with Perry Stynes in the driving seat, knew the racing would be relentless over the distance. After getting off the start in fourth the CAI crew settled into a powerful rhythm. A strong push at half-way helped them into third ahead of the crew from Cork. They then started to attack the Belfast crew and in a reversal of the senior fours result the CAI boys managed to get clear of Belfast and into the second qualifying spot, behind Gal-

way. In the final the four made every effort to stay with the race as long as possible and at half-way were overlapping with the top three. The crew raced with a strong attitude and put themselves right in with the best Intermediate crews in Ireland, including university crews from Dublin and Galway. In the second half the Inst boat attacked again and again and pushed the top three all the way, but was just not able to claw back the lost ground. The four finished in fourth place, a very admirable position considering the time spent in the boat.

On behalf of all the members of CAIBC, I would like to thank all those who make rowing possible; Bobbie Platt MBE whose hard work over the years has been invaluable to the club, to Andy and William Wright, David Stafford and Michael McNaul for their regular help on Saturdays and to Iain Giffin and Ross Cochrane for their services when on leave from work. Also thanks to Jeff Haslett and Richard Archibald for their invaluable help over regatta season. Finally thanks to Dr Hull for all the after school sessions and early mornings he gave up for us.



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COBRA Coleraine Old Boys Rowing Association

Silver Lining



For more information on COBRA or rowing past or present at CAI, visit the website at www.cobrarowing.co.uk or contact William Wright:

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World Championships 2009

Alan Campbell describes his silver medal winning race at Poznan, Poland.

The clouds over Poland on the 29th August had a silver lining in store for me. Last year I had what I would deem a physical and mental 'credit crisis', having had to come through the disappointment of my knee operation and Olympic struggle. I was determined to rectify my fifth place and had my sights set firmly on this year's World Championships. Having gone through rehab and my Christmas program, and knowing I had performed well in my early season races, I felt this was my time. Bill and I put such a huge emphasis on these championships that I sacrificed my last world cup race in Switzerland to concentrate on my preparations for Poland. We had a mini season within the season, having started back on the weights and then building up my endurance and speed all over again. It was a tactic that was to pay dividends.

I arrived at Poznan, Poland on the 19th August, having previously been in Germany, training. I had a few days until my opening race on the 23rd. I used this time to get used to the water, the conditions and the atmosphere. Of all the places I've raced I think it is a coach's favourite as the banks are lined with sun bathing beauties! I promise my focus was firmly on the rowing; Bill would have to account for himself. I also used this time, whilst paddling up and down the Championship course, to visualize my race over and over again. Having sat down with Bill after Beijing,



Alan with his World silver medal

going through my competitors' races and watching their tactics, we had put together a plan to execute the perfect race in order to win. The plan was good. We had practiced all the parts we would need during the season with only Mahe Drysdale of New Zealand getting the better of me.

Sunday the 23rd came and I had drawn the Olympic silver medallist, Ondrej Synek from the Czech Republic. I was fairly confident that I would beat him having beaten him earlier in the season at Munich. I went out with the mindset of not racing him but practicing my race plan. He held onto me for the first half and then dropped back as we were clear of the rest of the field. I was able to take the last part of the race steady, clocking the fastest time of the four heats and not using up too much energy in the process.

Having won the heat I progressed

straight through to the semi-finals, Ondrej had to go through a repechage. And however it worked out, I managed to draw him again in the semi final along with Olaf Tuft, the Olympic Champion. So I had Gold and Silver medallists from the Olympics. Again it turned out to be Ondrej Synek and myself at the head of the field at the half way mark, with Olaf struggling to hold off the advances of the back three. Ondrej pushed me further than in the heats making me push hard to 1700 metres when he settled for second place having put almost eight seconds on the rest of the field. I hadn't had to push all the way yet and had been able to deal with all advances.

Having planned my races from the beginning of the season, I proved it worked against the silver medallist from Beijing; then the Olympic champion in the semi. Now I was confident about the final against the

CAI Rowing 2009

Club Captain: Jonathan Mitchell
Vice Captains: Peri-Jake Stynes, Elliott Clarke

Secretary: Calum McBurney

At the start of September the club once again began training five times a week to build strength and endurance. Training involves long distance running, circuits, rowing machine sessions and water work. This year is the first in which old boys have been able to row under the CAI club name, which has helped improve the standard of the sixth year rowing as well.

Head season began well with a COBRA eight placing first among the four eights that braved a wind-swept Bann mini head. BRC's festive mini head was a chance to race in fancy dress, with the J15 eight and Jonathan Mitchell in the single scull winning, despite Mitchell's costume impairing his vision! On Valentine's Day was Lagan Head. The J16 quad and J15 eight finished close behind some tough Irish crews, whilst Mitchell picked up another win and a COBRA/CAI quad of Mitchell, David Ewart, Stephen Archibald and Michael McNaul beat two Carlow crews to win their category.

On the Erne at Enniskillen, two J16 eights had good races but were out-classed by southern opposition, however the J18 four had their best performance yet, beating two men's intermediate fours, and winning their category. On only their second outing, the COBRA/CAI quad were the fastest four man boat on the water, winning by 42 seconds to take the senior pennant.

Regatta season started on the Friday of Castlewellan regatta week-

end at the Irish Schools Championships. The men's senior four (for school boys under 19, rather than the usual under 18), beat Portora to win in a surprise result. The J16 'A' quad beat five other crews to

win, whilst Mitchell finished second to a Kings Hospital sculler and the J18 2x and J18 8+ both picked up bronze medals. Overall, CAI placed second in the Championship.

The next day was Queens University Regatta, where the COBRA/CAI boys, this time in a four, finished just ahead of BRC to claim second. A J18 quad came fourth in their final and Mitchell took another Bronze after a busy days racing.

The season culminated in the Irish Championships, at Inniscarra Lake near Cork. The men's Intermediate pair was the first event of the weekend and the first race of the weekend was dominated by the CAI pair of Old Boys Michael McNaul and Steven Archibald. After a tentative start the pair settled into a strong rhythm and gradually worked their way through the field and was in the lead by the 1250 metre mark. They pulled out an advantage on the remaining five boats and crossed the line comfortably ahead of their nearest rivals, Neptune. These two crews progressed to the final. In the final the crew had a less settled display and strug-

gled to keep pace with their more experienced competition. They pushed hard all the way finally finishing



The CAI/COBRA quad in action

ishing fifth in a very good field.

The senior coxless four has been one of the toughest events to win in recent years at the Irish Championships, but the crew of Jonathan Mitchell and old boys Michael McNaul, Robert Hart and Steven Archibald were prepared for the challenge. As the first CAI crew in modern times to race in a senior event at the Championships they positively reacted to the situation and raced as hard as they could over the 2,000 metre distance against opposition with World and Olympic experience. After a reasonable start the crew progressed over the next 750 metres to obtain fourth place in the six boat field. The crew then began to attack the crew from Belfast sitting in third. The two crews battled hard over the second half of the course with the Belfast boat just coming out ahead. The Coleraine crew had made an impressive entrance into the ranks of senior rowing, coming away with a credible fourth place.

Also in action for COBRA under the CAI banner was Chris Black, competing in the extremely competitive Intermediate Single event. Chris was unlucky in his

Bobby retires as head coach

An era has ended at CAI Boat Club, with Bobby Platt MBE retiring from his position as Head Coach in September. But don't panic, Bobby is still going to be involved in the club in a less hands on role. Since 'retiring' Bobby has received a number of honours, including being the 2nd ever inductee into the Coleraine Sports Councils "Hall of Fame". He joins Manchester United star Harry Gregg in the Hall of Fame, which marks Bobby's long service to sport in the Coleraine area.

More recently Bobby won the Northern Ireland section of the BBC's Unsung Hero Awards. The regional award was presented by two times Olympian and former pupil of the master, Richard Archibald. Bobby then went with the other UK regional winners to the BBC Sports Personality of the Year Awards in Sheffield where he was narrowly beaten in the final.

It was the least Bobby deserved after a long and sterling service to rowing in general and at Coleraine Inst in particular. He started coach-

ing full-time at Coleraine Inst Boat Club in 1986, although he had been helping out regularly for years before this. It was after the departure of Sid Grey as Rowing Master and Head Coach that Bobby stepped in and ensured the survival of an elite rowing club at

Inst. There are a large number of successful oarsmen who owe their rowing foundation to Coleraine Inst Bobby was involved with the club; Brian Steele, Richard Archibald, Alan Campbell, Richard Chambers and Stephen Feeney to name just a few.

Whoever takes the role of Head Coach at CAIBC in the future will certainly have big shoes to fill, but they can be sure that the previous occupant of the title has laid a good



Bobby with George Hull (rowing master, CAI) and Richard Archibald at the NI Unsung Hero awards ceremony

foundation for the club into the future.

A dinner marking the huge contribution that Bobby has made to the school is in the planning stage and will take place on Saturday the 6th March in Coleraine. If you would like to join us at this celebratory occasion, please get in touch with us as soon as possible.

William Wright (honoured to have been coached by Bobby Platt MBE from 1992 to the present day).

New coach at CAI

Following the retirement of Bobby as Head Coach, Inst have appointed Colin Lawson to carry on the good work. Colin is originally from West Yorkshire and started rowing at age 15 at his local club. He continued his rowing career at Magdalene College Cambridge and later rowed for City of Cambridge.

He started coaching while injured at university and during his time in Cambridge coached the top boats at several Cambridge Colleges as well

as at City of Cambridge. He continued coaching whilst Studying at Oxford before moving to London to be a full-time coach, at Latymer Upper School then Walbrook RC.

Colin has responsibility for all aspects of the boat club at Inst and with a 5 year plan, is determined to return the club to being the dominant club in Ulster. An in-depth interview by Philip can be found on the website, www.COBRArowing.com



Colin Lawson and Muhammad Ali

three times world champion and world record holder, Mahe Drysdale.

At 13:03 on 29th August the top six scullers in the world lined up waiting for the green light to go. From lane 1-6 it read:

1. Olaf Tufte NOR (2x Olympic Champion, winner of the 2009 World Cup series)
2. Ondrej Synek CZE (Olympic Silver)
3. Mahe Drysdale NZL (3 times World Champion, Bronze Olympic Games, World Record Holder)
4. Alan Campbell GBR
5. Tim Maeyens BEL (4th Olympic Games)
6. Mathias Rocher GER (2009 Under 23 World Champion, a complete newcomer at 20 years old)

The green light went and we were off! I got off to my usual fast start leading out at the first 500m marker. As expected Mahe went out hard too and again Ondrej wasn't too far behind. Having got a good start I settled into my good rhythm. The water was a little choppy with a good tail wind pushing us along the course in the direction of the finish. By half way, Mahe had closed up what little advantage I had on him. Ondrej, Mahe and I had established ourselves as the front runners. I expected Mahe to push hard in the third quarter. My plan was to minimise the distance he could make in

this period. I really had to push hard to hold this.

Having 500m to go, with overlap on him, I had done what I had to do and knew I had to push on. I have always, for as long as I have rowed, had a fast last 500m. As the shouts of "GB! GB! GB! GB! GB!" grew louder I went for home, breaking clear of Ondrej in third place with only Mahe holding me in front. As we closed on the last 200m I was trailing Mahe by four metres. The water became very rough and I squeezed out everything I could to

something special to beat him. I knew it could even involve beating the world record. Little did I think he would have to beat it to beat me.

So I raced in the fastest singles race of all-time. What a day! I felt horribly disappointed straight afterwards, but I think it was because I constantly strive for Gold. Over the two days of finals we were the only event to set a new world record. In Mahe's own words "This was the toughest and closest race I've ever raced and I now view Alan as my toughest opponent."



Bann-like conditions water in the M1x final!

catch him, missing the odd stroke. Mahe managed to hold on coming home a worthy winner by 0.95 of a second. I had broken the previous world record only to face the disappointment of Mahe breaking it as well. The previous world record stood at 6:35.40. Mahe clocked 6:33.35. I knew I would have to do

Naturally it was a night for celebrations and this proceeded as normal, and the rest is history. I made the plane home, that's all I'm saying!

A special thank you for all of your messages of support over the championships.

Alan Campbell

www.COBRArowing.co.uk

For more information on rowing at CAI, past and present

Rowing...

Is there any value in it as a sport?

Perhaps we should start with the question; is there any point in sport? It has been said by more learned scribes than me, that at best it is a magnificent irrelevancy, with no bearing on real life. Possibly this is true, but to any sports person, particularly those over 50, I would suggest it is a very essential part of life.

Jack Kyle, arguably Ireland's favourite and best rugby player, now in his eighties, spoke recently at the funeral eulogy for Karl Mullen, the last Irishman to captain a Grand Slam team. He said that the greatest legacy that he had from the 1940's and 50's was friendships. Winning was important and the thrill of the contest was why we primarily did whatever sport we choose, but long after the final whistle sounded friendships were all that remained.

Rowing creates as many close friendships as any sport. The captain of rowing at CAI in 1968 and 69, Alan Millar, is now my Brother in Law. I met our Cox, Iain Ferguson, recently in London – still involved in the sport. Charlie Charlton, from 1969, still rows and is actively involved in the sport. Our great mentor, Mickey Eyre, put us on the fast flowing stream of the River Bann, and in doing so, set us on a course for life itself. I had the good fortune to succeed at a high level in rowing, but along the way the colleagues at Queens in the 1970's Rowing Club remain as firm friends to day (six from the 1973 crew are still involved in rowing today).



I could barely name anyone in the Economics class – it really is a dry subject with no real characters; imagine JM Keynes as a role model!

It has been said that all rowers are actually failed rugby players. Probably true, but we became part of a worldwide sport, whereas rugby is only seriously played in about ten nations of the old Empire! To return to the statement above, I can remember a Queens Boat Club dinner in the Great Hall sometime in the 1980's when captains from each decade gave long boring speeches, and then it came to Philip Matthews-then captain of the Ireland rugby team- to make a speech. It lasted all of ten seconds and he made reference to the rugby aspect of a rower's life as mentioned above – he received a standing ovation. So we really do get on!

Back to CAI, we trained all year for one race – the Wray Cup against Portora. Won by three feet on the Erne in 1968, and lost by 1½ lengths on the Bann in 1969. I meet the seven-man of the Portora

crew each week in Enniskillen where I now live and the race is sometimes a topic of conversation, but the result of '68 still stands. The Reverend Percival Rogers judged the finish standing on his own yacht at Portora boathouse, so we definitely won, as he was never one to take defeat lightly.

It's a long story, but I now coach at Portora where defeats or victories of the 1960's no longer matter, but the joy of instructing others in the mysteries of rowing far outweigh the pain of my own hours of training. We now have 80 boys and girls rowing out of Portora and six other schools are involved in a unique project in Irish Rowing – crossing all divides and classes, united in a common pursuit of the unattainable - the perfect rowing stroke. One of rowing's greatest coaches, Steer Fairburn, went nuts towards the end of his life looking for the perfect stroke! It is impossible to achieve, but at Portora under the guidance of Derek Holland, once an Olympic Oarsman, we win

Continued on next page

Coupe de la Jeunesse '09



Peri-Jake Stynes (front) with the Irish Junior Eight

Last summer, Jonathan Mitchell and Peri-Jake Stynes from CAI competed as part of the Irish junior rowing squad at this year's Coupe de la Jeunesse in Vichy, France.

Also known as the Junior European Rowing Championships, The 'Coupe' is an international regatta of 12 countries rowed over 2,000m. It was founded in 1985 and is open to rowers who are 18 or under by the end of the current calendar year. It is a two-day team event, with points awarded to nations based on finishing position in each category.

Rowing in the four man "quad" event, in what was the strongest of the Irish junior men's crews, Jona-

than Mitchell collected a bronze medal from the final on the Saturday and was pipped to 4th place on the Bobby Platt, William and Andy Wright, and Richard Archibald. I really appreciated all the time and effort they have given to coaching at the school". Peri quipped, "I was able to share lots of the advice and expertise given by many of the coaches at Inst over our time at school, which helped the crews at the 'Coupe'".

Peri-Jake Stynes coxed both the Irish four and eight to 5th place on the Saturday and the eight to 6th place on the Sunday.

Representing their country was a fitting way for the two boys to end not only a



Jonathan Mitchell (second from right) with the Irish Quadruple Scull

Continued from previous page

many races. That brings me to another subject – women in rowing! Can you believe it?

When I rowed at school, no females rowed in Ulster, and only a few die-hards in Dublin, who incidentally had the field to themselves après rowing if you get my drift! Throughout the 70's and 80's women got involved, and from inauspicious beginnings they are now a valued half of Irish rowing. Ini-

tially they had to change in cars outside the boathouses and got the worst equipment. I for one am glad they persevered in the sport as I met my wife on the River Liffey when she was rowing for UCD. So, on this point I rest my case. There is a point to rowing – it can find you a life partner and a friend! There are plenty more like me and the stream will continue to flow.

In conclusion, I would refer to the

Grand Old Man of rowing and true friend, Bobbie Platt; I couldn't refuse when he asked me to write this article. When Bobbie grasps you lightly by the elbow and speaks in a low tone, you know there is no way out. He coxed me once at City of Derry Regatta in the 1980's and said to us at the start, "We are just out for a bit of fun boys, but we do like to win!" He was 60 then.

Iain Kennedy (1961-1969)