



RUBC – WINNING ON THE WATER FOR OVER A CENTURY

The University of Reading boasts a proud tradition of rowing success. Its boat club (RUBC) is an internationally established name, producing some of the country's best young rowers – including Debbie Flood, silver medallist at the 2004 Athens Olympics. James Barr talks to Debbie about how RUBC helped her to Olympic glory and Will Rand, the University's Director of Rowing, describes how the 2012 London Olympics will be a major boost for rowing in Britain, and Reading in particular.

RUBC's reputation has been forged from one hundred years of enthusiasm, dedication and hard work; attributes that apply strongly to this day. Founded in 1902, the Boat Club was formed when Reading was still the University Extension College of Oxford, becoming RUBC when the University received its Royal Charter in 1926. Sadly, in 1989 the old club house was destroyed by a fire in which much of the history of the Club was lost. With much financial assistance from the University the impressive new club house was built, opening in 1990.

Success stories throughout the years abound and this summer saw a special reunion. In July 1970 a crew from the RUBC excelled by reaching the semi-final of the prestigious Ladies' Challenge Plate at the famous Henley Royal Regatta; although beaten in a closely fought race this achievement crowned an outstanding season for them. The crew were awarded their 'shells' by the University in recognition of a fantastic year. To mark the 35th anniversary of their great performance, six members of the eight reunited at this year's Henley Royal Regatta. For many of them it was the first time they had met up since the day of the race (for more details about the crew's achievement and their whereabouts now, visit the club's rowing alumni website at www.ortnerbc.com).

The club has become recognised as a centre of rowing excellence due to the first class coaching and facilities. A number of athletes, past and present, have participated at national and World Championship level. Famous RUBC alumni include double Olympic gold medal winner James Cracknell. He won his second gold at the 2004 Athens games after triumphing in Sydney four years earlier.

AN OARSOME ACHIEVEMENT

Just some of the leading lights in the rowing world, produced at Reading:

James Cracknell – the well-known double Olympic gold medal rower, whose recent achievements include becoming Olympic champion in Athens. His next feat will be to row the Atlantic with the non-rower, TV presenter Ben Fogle!

Debbie Flood – silver medallist at the 2004 Athens Olympics.

Nick Strange rowed internationally and helped RUBC to Henley Royal Regatta success in the Visitors' Challenge Cup in the 1980's.

Gary Herbert achieved Olympic gold with Greg and Jonny Searl in the coxed pair in Barcelona 1992.

Adrian Ellison coxed the women's crews during his time at Reading and went on to cox the four which brought Steve Redgrave his first Olympic gold in L.A. in 1984.

Ric Egington rowed in the RUBC Temple Challenge eight at Henley. In his first international appearance he won silver in the 4+ at the 2003 World Championships.

Rory Morrison achieved a bronze medal in the coxed pair at the 1997 FISA World Cup Regatta and was 10th in the 1997 World Rowing Championships.

James Behrens, the 2004 umpire of the Oxford and Cambridge boat race.



Left: RUBC 1st VIII racing at Henley Royal regatta in 1999

Above: RUBC Crew 1960; The opening of the old Boathouse c1930; The boathouse today

Debbie Flood, a graduate this year in Physiology and Biochemistry, also starred in the Athens Olympics, returning with a well-earned silver medal and went on to be crowned 2004 'Sunday Times Student Sportswoman of the Year'. She also competed in this year's 'Rowing World Championships' in Japan, along with Natasha Page who still has two more years at the University. Debbie has nothing but praise for the University and is extremely thankful for all the support from the RUBC:

"Studying at Reading has been great," she said recently. "It has allowed me to follow my Olympic dream and come away with a very well-respected degree qualification. I have had a great time at the University, especially the Boat Club, where outstanding facilities and support make for an atmosphere of hard work and success that is infectious.

"It has allowed me to follow my Olympic dream and come away with a very well-respected degree qualification" Debbie Flood

The University should be proud of its boat club. It has great tradition, and the members and staff are very dedicated and really help strengthen the reputation of the University."

The club organises the renowned 'University of Reading Eights Head of the River Race'. Every year eights from all over the country come to the town for one of the biggest events in the river rowing calendar. The race has been run by the students of RUBC since 1935. It is not only the largest student-run public sporting event in the country, but also the fourth oldest and largest head of

the river race. This year a record of 196 crews entered, including the Oxford crew that competed in the University Boat Race in London.

This year's British Universities Sports Association (BUSA) Rowing Championships in Nottingham was a landmark event for the University. The RUBC came away with a fantastic medal tally confirming Reading's status as the second ranked rowing university in the UK. A truly wonderful achievement.

Will Rand, the University's Director of Rowing is proud of the club's history and believes everything is in place for further success:

"To be involved with RUBC at present is very exciting. The boat club is in its strongest position for years. Recent results have been fantastic and are a testament to everybody involved. James and Debbie are just two examples as we have many members with a bright future. Talented rowers Alex Gregory and Sam Townsend look like genuine prospects for the London 2012 Olympics.

The upcoming plans to extend the boathouse are indicative of the increasing number of members. Extensions are to be made to the main building and boathouse so more boats and equipment can be stored. The ladies should see a big improvement to their facilities as well."

London being awarded the 2012 Olympics is terrific news for rowing in Britain. We hope to make the most of it by pushing the club to new heights and inspiring university students to follow their dreams. We are very grateful to the University, its alumni, Friends of the University and Students' Union for their continued support."

Are you a past Reading Rower? If so we'd love to hear from you – contact Trish O'Neill at t.oneill@reading.ac.uk / write to us at the Development & Alumni Relations Office, The University of Reading, Whiteknights, Reading RG6 6AH.