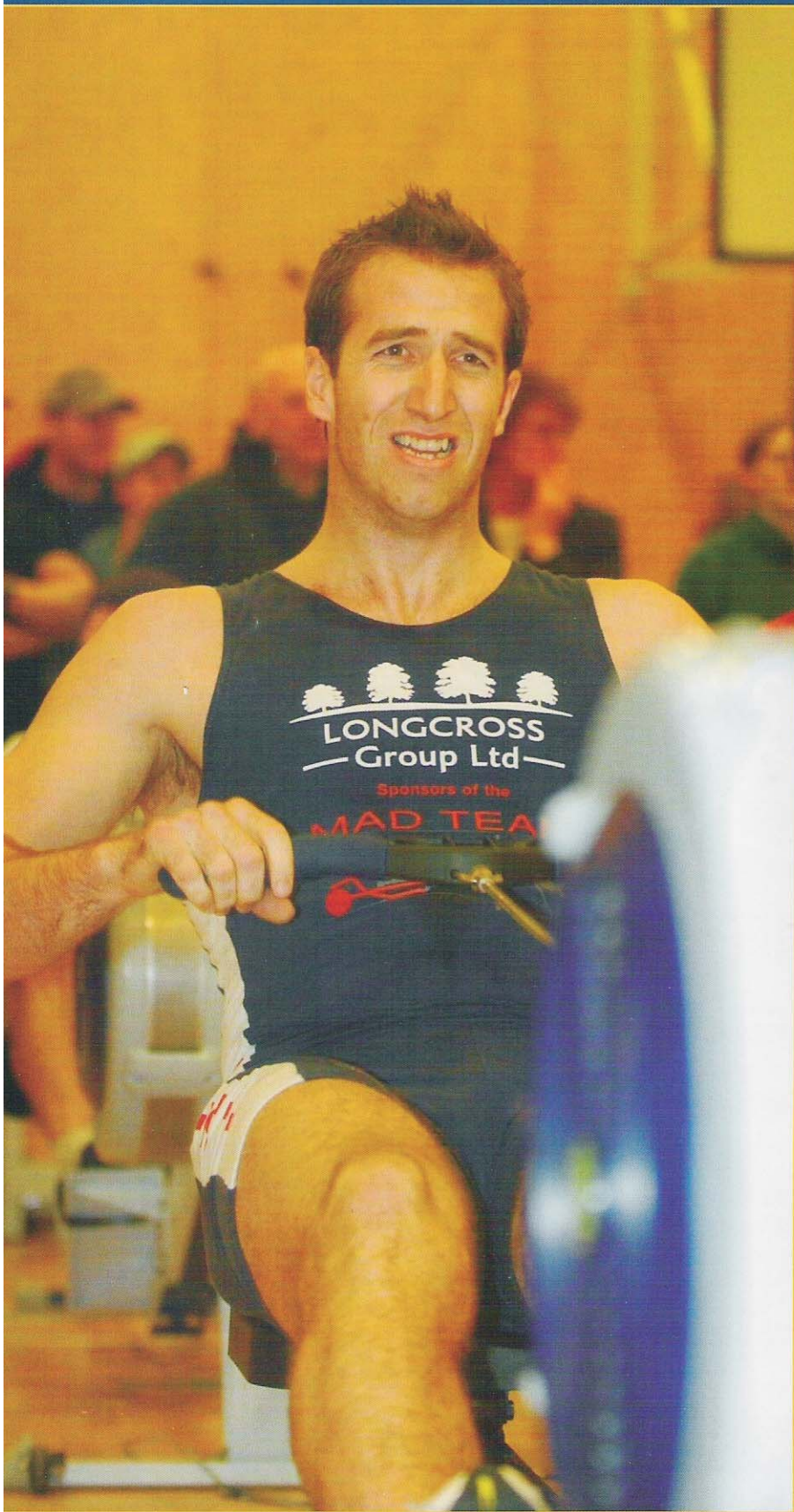


World Indoor Rowing



Reading University's Graham Benton (left) – a late developer in the sport – continued on his march towards a place in the Olympic team at Beijing with a stunning performance to become the first Britain since Sir Steve Redgrave in 1991 to win the World Indoor Rowing Championship.

The race was held on Concept 2 rowing machines and first run 25 years ago to provide rowers in Boston, USA with their competitive fix when the River Charles froze over in the winter months.

Benton (32) – a former smoker and cricket fanatic but now on the Amateur Rowing Association's *World Class Start Programme* – blitzed a world class field over the Olympic distance of 2,000 metres to win in a time of 5 minutes and 46 seconds.

Currently training out of Reading University under the skilled eye of *World Class Start* Coaches John Keogh and Mark Earnshaw, Benton is currently developing his water skills in a coxless pair boat. With team-mate Bradley Whale, the idea is to compete in some top class pairs races during the summer and aim for a strong performance in late season trials.

A two-times Overall British Indoor Rowing Champion, Benton has upped his training from approximately 125km to over 700km per month in a bid to beat the odds and make the Olympic team when he will be well into his thirties and without a long rowing CV to his name.

"It's great to win, and a nice reward for the extra training I'm now putting in," he said. "The training programme is 2-3 sessions per day with 1-2 water sessions typically, an indoor rowing session and twice weekly weights. Coping with the massive increase in training has been OK and my power per stroke is in a different league to what it was. I'm in the best shape of my life and in that sense, my age doesn't matter at all."

Nottingham-based Phil Turnham (right) – a former elite swimmer and another on the ARA's *World Class Start Programme* – also excelled with fifth place in the final in a personal best time of 5 minutes 54 seconds. More than 2,500 took part in the World Indoor Rowing Championship, known locally in Boston as the CRASH-B Sprints (Charles River All Star Has-Beens). ■

results

1. Graham Benton (GB)	5.46.4
2. Mark Flickinger (USA)	5.47.3
3. Dario Dantala (Italy)	5.48.1
4. Wyatt Allen (USA)	5.48.8
5. Phil Turnham (GB)	5.54.2