

# Curlew Newsletter

## Coach Special



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## To Fred

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I'll level with you, I'm struggling to reconcile the fact that I'm in my 30's, particularly as my work mentor recently told me that in your 20's it's the effort that counts in your 30's its results. The same could be said for rowing coaches, it defines that line between a rowing coach and a **good** rowing coach, so let's get that bit out of the way:

- Five crews qualified for Henley Royal Regatta in three years
- Quarter finals of Henley Women's Regatta
- The highest finishing position of a Curlew crew at HRR
- The highest finishing position of a Curlew crew at 4s Head
- Medium club pennant at WEHRR
- Category wins at Vets 4s Head and Scullers Head
- British Masters championship wins
- Countless pots at national regattas ranging from Nottingham Regatta to St Neots

I could go on but just that portion of the list shows the impact that Fred Badowski has had in his three and a half years as Curlew Head Coach. The club asked Fred to bring success and days in the HRR tent and WHR boat park back to Curlew after a few years of striving and just missing out, he delivered.

Just quoting the above list however does Fred a dis-service. First and foremost, Fred is a rowing man, it runs through his veins having been involved in the sport before most of us were a twinkle in our parents eyes. He is also a club man, I remember once suggesting that I was pretty tired after training and so might skip helping out at the club open day and just go home to relax, Fred wasn't having it. He calmly, but firmly, explained how important giving back more to the club than you take out was. He undeniably practiced what he preached, however he never did anything for material recognition. We know this from the multiple times we have tried to give him a club blazer but been abruptly rebuked. I'm pretty sure Matt is still pestering him to swap his red coaching outfit or pro-feminism t-shirts for Curlew branded attire.

Fred doesn't appear to coach for personal mementoes or material rewards. My view is Fred coaches because 1) he loves the sport and 2) he knows that you, as the athlete, can achieve more than you think you can. Session after session we strove to step out of the boat or off the ergo with a win or a PB and see that wry smile on Fred's face and a comment along the lines of "see, I told you" or "that was almost good". Whilst his techniques were sometimes old school or eccentric, many of us have been fitter than we've ever been and achieved more than we ever thought possible. The intensity of the training plan and the ruthlessness of the crew selection meant that squads and crews were bound together in a certain kinship, we were all in it together and, whilst competing for seats, we all wanted each other to succeed. The roar that lit up the Henley boating area when the Wyfold four qualified in 2017 epitomized this. These bonds were not an accident. Fred knew what he was doing. The adage of 'Fred knows best' grew ever stronger.

There is one thing more important than rowing to Fred, his family. The pride and love for them emanates from him as he talks about his latest grandchild or Penny. He re-enforced this in his athletes, he asks for full commitment to the sport, but if you had a family event that needed your attention a friendly arm would come round your shoulder and steer you back to your bike or car to go home and not think about rowing.

So as Fred makes the difficult decision to spend less time at the boathouse and more time in his house on a sunny cliff in Crete overlooking the bay, what can we give him to mark his achievements and what he's given to the club and its athletes. A blazer, we've tried that multiple times. A t-shirt or other memorabilia, good luck catching him to give it to him. A boat name, he's more than happy with his silver tub launch at Thames Tradesman. A new loud hailer, we bought him one of those three years ago....never saw it again.

How about this. Thank you, Fred. Thank you from all of us at Curlew Rowing Club, hopefully a part of you is now blue. Thank you also from me, for making everything I dreamed of doing in rowing, come true.

Words by Club Treasurer John Stewart





## Introducing Alex

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In February at pretty much one of the only senior head races we've had this season we met Alex, Alex came down to meet the crews and spend some time with Fred. Luckily, he started at the right time, getting to know all the squads and take over from Fred. Making sure we've had circuits planned and sent out everyday during the lockdown. So, let's meet Alex Brown in stroke above, the new Head Coach of Curlew;

### Where did you learn to row?

I learned to row at the age of 16 at my school in Durham (Durham School). Prior to that I was a swimmer, water polo player, runner and rugby player.

Whilst training I was spotted for my generic fitness and anthropometrics; and then thrust straight into ergs and wobbly boats at 7am! Coming from a background of playing/competing each weekend, rowing was very different in that you train for weeks (or months) at a time before actually competing. It certainly taught me more about patience, planning and resilience.

Within a year I was put on the junior high-performance programme at Durham University whilst as school. This definitely opened up my world to elite rowing for the first time. From there I rowed at HRR twice and at British Championships, narrowly missing a medal.

### When did you start coaching, and what coaching have you done before Curlew?

I started coaching at George Heriot's School in Edinburgh during my second year at Edinburgh University. I did this for two years. Prior to this I'd helped out at summer camps and training camps.

In terms of coaching a Club at this level, this is certainly a first. In fact, I've had more training and training to coach from other exploits in other sports and military pursuits. Much of my knowledge derives from my own experience. That said, I'm working with British Rowing to go attain the certification of Coaching Levels (when Covid passes).

## **You came to Curlew at an interesting time, what's been the biggest challenge so far?**

Yes, well nothing like a challenge! The hardest thing has definitely been trying to lead a highly motivated group of rowers through a 'Quarantine Training Plan', in such an uncertain time.

As rowers, you need a boat and water to row on. In quarantine, we (like most other clubs) are deprived from both. There's not been a time (in our lifetime) where these circumstances have been so prevalent; so, there is no 'guidelines' as to how to go about training in these conditions. We are literally writing the rule book – this is both exciting and scary.

## **What can people do to keep rowing ready while off the water?**

The best thing to do is to keep fit, either by doing the training I set or any other physical activity that you enjoy, as much as possible. Secondly, keep motivated, stay positive. Although we're not sure what the future rowing season will look like or when it will start, it's important to keep in mind that eventually it WILL start again. So, to keep training at home in the knowledge that it will count towards your rowing in the future is really important I think.

## **Can you sum up your coaching philosophy?**

My coaching philosophy would involve tailoring the athlete to the training as much as possible in the way of individual coaching. In terms of broad fitness and conditioning, it's simple: 'miles makes champions'. This applies to both in the gym and on the water.

Albeit utilizing these ideals and applying them can be difficult when we are a club of working Professionals first, Athletes second, I would argue that it is because our members are so motivated to come down and train around their professional working hours, that when they can, they will put in the quality work and focus to become the best rowers and all-round athletes our members can be.

## **What would you like to do first when we finally get back onto the water?**

Quite simply, get back out and remember how to row! Honestly, go for a fun paddle, put some distance under the belt without pressure. I firmly believe that after being off the water for so long, it's important to reconnect with training and rowing in the right way, and without risking the chance of injury (as many muscle groups won't have been used in the same way for a while).

# A word with Nick and Julian

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We spoke with the Development squads Head coach Nick King and Coach Julian Johns.

## Firstly, where did you guys learn to row?

**NK:** I learnt to row as an undergraduate in Oxford. I rowed for my College 1st 8 and did a little bit with the University Lightweight Squad. It is currently hard to believe I was ever that light!

**JJ:** A bit at school (Monkton Combe). Very agriculturally at University (ploughing the water!) And properly at Curlew. I was very lucky to have had Rick Geer & Ray Cassidy coach me at Curlew. Rick was an exemplary cox/coach for the men's 1st VIII who also generously spent hours & hours coaching from the boat & the tank. Ray was incredible at cementing the basics (50 pence pieces on the wrists, straws etc) while Rick could tell from your blade (while I was at Bow!) what I was doing with my shoulders, seat & hands..! I was never the best technical rower but I pushed myself physically as hard as I could to ensure I never slowed the boat down. It's very difficult to row at the top level. But the patience that both Ray & Rick had to guide & develop me has stayed with me to this day.

## When and why did you come to coach at Curlew?

**NK:** I started coaching again because injury put a stop to me rowing. That must have been around 2012 ish.

**JJ:** I was an active member of Curlew & felt that I needed to give something back to the club. I wanted to introduce other adult learners to the beauty & power of rowing & so I started to get involved with the learn to row programmes. Anne who was instrumental at the time in building the club from the Novice upwards was a huge influence & support. Plus I really enjoyed it!

## Any curlew coaching highlights?

**NK:** Mostly it is the smiles and fun. Curlew manages to maintain a positive outlook and if people enjoy the sport then that is a clear reward in itself no matter their level of ability. There are three women who I have taught to row who have raced at Henley and four more who have competed at qualifiers. These are the quietly satisfying moments. As a coach one can never take too much credit. It is the athlete who has to put their body through the ringer.

**JJ:** Yes! Crews winning their 1st races. And helping rowers find their internal strength & competitive spirit that perhaps they didn't know they had & seeing them push themselves to victory or PBs again & again. And a few have even rowed at Henley.

## What's the main struggle coaching a development squad?

**NK:** There are two challenges with any dev squad. 1 is to make sure they are taught to row correctly from the start. This is something we are better at now. Teaching rowing at a club is very different from at an Oxford College. At Curlew we have people 2 maybe 3 times a week. There needs to be a lot more recapping and the messages need to be super clear. At College we had crews out most mornings. It is of course so much easier when everyone lives in the same place and the river is literally round the corner. This means trial and error tends to result in much quicker initial development. It is more like when you learnt to walk. The second challenge is to align everyone's ambitions and ability to commit. There is no easy answer to this as adult life is complicated and rowing can suck up a lot of time.

**JJ:** 2 things

- 1) I wish that I could spend more time to help our rowers & crews train & row to the best of their ability!
- 2) Building that squad mentality - you can only win as a crew / squad. We are all in it together from cox to the crew to the coach, so getting everyone to train & succeed for each other is sometimes hard! Especially when the weather, training, ergs & race results don't quite go as we'd like!

## What can people do to keep rowing ready while off the water?

**NK:** Did someone say cardio and core?

**JJ:** Build internal physical & mental fitness. How far can you push yourself when no one else is around. for eg can you do 100 sit ups. Not necc in one go but over a session can you be patient enough to push yourself to do 30, then 20, then 10, then 5, 5 more then 2, etc. Then the next time try and do 100 with less blocks. Essentially can you take the time & patience to push yourself! ps. I am trying this now & I promise you it's not easy...! For mental fitness using visualisation - slowing down the rowing stroke as much as possible so that if anyone saw what you were doing they'd be a bit confused! Seriously it works - Elite tennis players & violinist have been doing this for years. It's all about muscle memory!

## Do you have any plans for the Dev squad when we finally get back on the water?

**NK:** Frankly at the moment I am not looking much beyond just getting back on the water. Once there we can work out what we can set about doing. I would love to get another boat of people we taught to row at Curlew to Henley qualifiers. It is a big ask but doable I reckon.

**JJ:** Yes - rebuilding that cohesion & synchronicity of moving the boat together! If you can't row together as a crew even with lots of power you'll never win. We'll be building the short twitch muscles needed for sprinting too. Hence heavy weights in winter are important to build the lighter but more reps in summer. You need to build power & strength over winter & spring to then build the explosive strength needed for summer sprints & Henley!



## Alumni Coach

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In the mid 1970s, when the regatta season finished at the end of August we switched to land training on Tuesday and Thursday evenings in the basement at the clubhouse. This could get pretty crowded! In 1976 I think it was, we were delighted to accept an offer from the Commander of the Royal Naval College allowing us to use the college gym for a couple of hours on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and to provide us with a Royal Marines PTI to lick us into shape.

We turned up at the gym with some trepidation and met PTI Mick Newstead, a battle hardened Royal Marine, thick set with the face of a boxer. It was clear from the start that he would accept no nonsense. He explained that he was happy to train people of varying levels of fitness but insisted that anyone entering his gym was expected always to "GIVE 110% OR CLEAR OFF"! Our aim at the time was to get the first eight into the top 100 at the head of the river race which we just succeeded in doing.

The training was very well structured with plenty of variety and was mainly tough circuit and weight training. Given his boxing background there was strong focus on abdominals involving a huge number of sit-ups and V-sits, but also star jumps and burpees. We had been warned that the passing out test on the final session was to lie down side by side while each person in turn ran across the stomachs of the rest. We didn't really believe it, but it did focus the mind and sure enough we all had to do it. It was not so bad when 10st Gordon Sanders sprinted across us but pretty terrifying when it was 14-15st Cliff Nichols' turn.

Mick was a great guy who identified with our objectives and worked us incredibly hard, which made us pretty fit and also developed a strong team spirit. I think he trained us for 2 or 3 years and became a good friend of the club.

At the time the Royal Naval College was fulfilling its intended purpose of training senior Royal Navy officers. This was at the time of the IRA bombings and security was a very tight indeed. There was no access to the public. One of our members, the late Martin Swan, worked in the college as an engineer on the small nuclear reactor on the site. It was used for training nuclear submarine officers. Its existence was not widely known and ironically the Borough of Greenwich was ringed with signposts proclaiming itself as a Nuclear Free Zone whilst hosting the only nuclear reactor in any city in the UK.

Martin persuaded the college to offer facilities to Curlew rowing club as part of their local community engagement project. In addition to the gym and the PTI we were given access to the college squash courts at specific times. Martin was a lovely man and together with his wife Dorothy did a great deal for the club. Martin built and donated the club's first trailer and together they organised great fund racing events.

Words by Paul Maloney



## Bewl Bridge Regatta

### Results

Giorgio MAS C 1x 9th out of 13

Steve Matthews MAS D 1x 7th out of 23

John A MAS D 1x 8th out of 23

Ken Hutt MAS E 4th out of 18

Steve/john MAS 2x 7th out of 37

Ken/Giorgio MAS 2x 13th out of 37

MAS 4x 3rd out of 14

## Who wants to be social!

Members have logged on for three socials so far, first up the social committee ran a pub quiz, the next saw us all shouting over the zoom call BINGO! And lastly, we've been put on the spot with Who wants to be a Millionaire. A great turn out for all three, thanks to the Social Committee for putting them on. We'll be seeing the next quiz back later in May. If you have any ideas of socials, please get in touch with a member of committee.



# British Rowing

We made it on to the British Rowing website for our “Online Clubhouse” Slack. We spoke with the editor Wendy about how we’re keeping the club running during lockdown.



## Dates for the Diary

Join Slack for Socials, Regattas, training plans and more.

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