

NZ Rowing News

NZ WOMENS EIGHT AT MUNICH ON MAY 16 2008

The following are emails we have received from Emma Twigg, NZ Rower, who is currently in Europe and who will shortly compete in the World Championships at Poznan, Poland.

April 2009

Hi Team, I have been thinking about writing this update for about four months now, in fact the last time I was in touch was November 08. It is now nearly May 09 and it feels like just yesterday that I was stepping off a plane from London and embarking on summer training. With winter at our doorstep I figure now it is time for a long overdue catch up! The summer has been a huge success. I spent my days training with five boys - the remaining heavyweight men's team from Beijing. Our group was coached by Dick Tonks and we spent almost every session pacing each other in singles. Being the only girl, I was considerably slower than the rest so became accustomed to being sent off ahead of the boys and being chased down every row. It was a nice change to be surrounded by a group of single scullers and we had oodles of fun along the way. I managed to survive the testosterone filled banter, and even surfaced with a new nickname. 'Big Cat'. I have chosen to take this as a compliment, as Mahe takes the mantle as 'Biggest Cat' I figure second best will do for now. This year's National Champs were held in Twizel. Every time we head south I am left stunned by the beauty of the Mackenzie Country and the glacial lakes and mountains that lead to Lake Ruataniwha. The week's racing was accompanied by some stunning weather and I happily left Twizel with all three sculling titles, the Single, Double and Quad and silver in the Eight. I can now finally say that I have won a National title in the single scull. A week after the Champs were our National selection trials. This year my trial was relatively straightforward. A 2km erg test, and a couple of time trials in the single scull. It was nice to see that the selectors still had faith in my ability following my disappointing year last year. It makes me hungry to do well this season. All of the selected crews did some pretty impressive times in favorable conditions and a fresh looking Elite team was named at the end of the week. It is a really great bunch of people and completely new look combinations in many classes. I am lucky enough to have been assigned Dick as my coach again and am training alongside Mahe, the men's pair and women's quad. (Note the slowest boat yet again!) Eight weeks into 'winter training' and the count down to the European Tour is on again. Shortly after trials we moved from the tin shed at the end of the domain into a plush new High Performance Centre at the 250m mark. We have been truly spoilt with this new facility. Brand new gym, boat shed, crew room, testing facilities and offices. There is a new and invigorated sense of professionalism amongst the team and with new faces and the right people in the right places, RNZ has a lot to look forward to! Speaking of things to look forward to, this year is filled with exciting regattas. First stop Munich and World Cup 2, Henley Royal Regatta in London, Lucerne for World Cup 3, training in Argare (Switzerland) for the build up to World Champs in Poznan, Poland all followed by some down time in Croatia before heading back to New Zealand and the Great Race and re packing for the end of year long distance regatta circuit... America, Switzerland, Italy, England. For now though it is back to the grind and precious time to make my custard colored skiff go as fast as I can make it. I look forward to keeping you all in the loop in the not so distant future! Em

July 2009 It is times like these that I remember why I spend day after day rowing up and down a stretch of water backwards. Every now and then I pinch myself and realize how lucky I am to be given such opportunities. The past few weeks have been a blast. Following our team success in Henley we packed our bags again for Switzerland, Lucerne and the Rotsee, a beautiful 2km natural wildlife reserve opened once a year to the rowing world for the third and final Rowing World Cup regatta. We always look forward to Lucerne, surrounded by Swiss Alps Lake Lucerne is itself almost as serene as the Rotsee. We were a little unsure of how we would stack up at this regatta having come off Henley the previous weekend. Many of the British team chose not to compete at Henley with the view of competing well in Lucerne, however this year was the year to try things and experience something different and it turns out that we didn't lose any speed. New Zealand again came out trumps in the small boat categories with a 6 medal haul, Gold's in the Men's and Women's pairs, Men's Single, Men's lightweight double and single, with the Women's quad picking up a well earned bronze. I managed another silver medal and am excited about the next four weeks as I feel I am learning a lot every week. This weekend was unusual for me. I am not usually renowned for my sprint finish, however managed to pull out perhaps the best last 500m of any race in my career - overtaking the Chinese sculler who finished fourth in Beijing and halving the lead that the Czech sculler finished with in Munich. All positive stuff. The next four and a half weeks are spent in Aegeri, a small Swiss town very close to Lucerne. This is perhaps the most intense period of training in our year. Preparation for the World Championships, the 'big one', the only one of the year that really matters. World Cups and Henley aside, Poznan will be the real test and every other nation has built their program towards this. Our results so far serve as a good indicator, however six weeks is a long time in rowing terms and many crews will make big gains. The past few days have been spent resting. We were given two days off, a two-day reprieve before being marched into battle. Funnily enough a group of us decided to climb a mountain in our

down time. Lake Lucerne is surrounded by a number of peaks. One of them is Mount Pilatus, a 2,100m high mountain that from the ground looks rather intimidating; Four and a half hours of climbing, sometimes wondering if I should be using a pickaxe and we reached the summit. Six kiwis, two poms and two dutchies conquered Pilatus on Monday. The views from the top were amazing and seeing the rest of the team at the top having taken a cable car up made the mountaineers of the bunch feel a whole lot more satisfied! Day two of the reprieve was spent recovering from day one, a little shop around Lucerne and an afternoon sipping lemonade on a paddleboat on the lake. Enjoying the sunshine, scenery and good company. And then the realization that it was back to training the next morning, short lived but worth every stroke taken to deserve it! August 2009 The sharp end of the season is upon us, with only two weeks until the 2009 World Rowing Championships begin.

The last three weeks have gone past pretty quickly, we have settled in to life in Aegeri and have become accustomed to getting up at 5:30 am to avoid rowing in rough water in the afternoon. Although I haven't had a sleep in for the past three weeks, it's not all bad. With a 10:30am second session it means that we are finished training for the day by lunchtime, which leaves the afternoon to keep ourselves entertained.

I think the New Zealand rowing team could become film and book critics with the amount of time spent watching DVD's and reading, trying to rest up for the next day's training. The local coffee shop has also seen a lot of the black singlet. Not much English is spoken, so it's not quite first name basis yet. The weather has been lovely and a dip in the lake is a daily ritual. The boys have been showing off with their syncro diving skills.

On a 'day off' and I write in adverted commas because we trained at 6am that day. We took the opportunity to head for the Highest point in Europe. The top of the Jungfrauoch. Interlaken is about a 2-hour drive from where we are so it would have been criminal not to go and check out the area and spectacular mountains. It made for some pretty cool photos and a nice break from Aegeri and training. This time we didn't attempt to climb the mountain, instead opted for the easy option and a 2 hour train to the top. The mountain is about the height of Mt Cook, and with a snow capped peak we couldn't resist a toboggan race at the top. If you are ever in this area, I would highly recommend a visit.

Training has been going well, we have entered the 'speed work' phase of our preparation, time to get the fast twitch fibres going and our lungs used to working under extreme work load. The km's aren't as high but we are working at a more intense level. Needless to say there are a few tired bodies around nearing the end of the week.

So with a week left in Aegeri we look forward to Poland, yet relish every bit of time we have in preparation for 'the big one'. Entries will be out soon and we will know what we are up against. I look forward to filling you in closer to the time.