

The weather promised to be perfect for our race day at Nottingham last Sunday, so everyone was on top form as we set about the first task of the day- getting the boats on to the water down the almost vertical steps which line the banks along the stretch of the River Trent in front of County Hall. With the boats safely launched, and miraculously nobody being launched unintentionally with them, they were paddled across to the opposite banks where the eager crews were gathering.

Then it was time for the first BA pow wow and Captain Dave was careful not to overuse his now legendary mantra, but insisted that although this was not the most important race of the day, it was still a very important race. We set off enthusiastically, but we didn't have as good a start as we would have liked, and this would explain why we came third despite being, as Jim insisted; the fastest boat in the race!

Suitably refocussed on getting a good start, we set off for the next race with slight tactical changes to positions. Dave being strategically placed - on the bank at the start. This proved to be a sound decision as the new crew configuration blasted the opposition with a fantastic effort to finish first, 1.3 seconds ahead of Powerhouse.

This got us into the semis, (I'm beginning to understand the system now), in which we put a good effort, but which was won by Amathus, who went on to win the final. (Always a good face-saver that one).

Lunch next, and time for some r & r. To soak up some rays, chat, read and enjoy tea and cake from our very own Tea and Cake stall, caterers to all and sundry in aid of the GB womens' trip to Prague. There was also relationship advice available from Aunt Louise, and a stunning display of extreme body contortions held in the main BA pergola.

Trips to the distant public conveniences (or should that be Inconveniences?) were a highlight. The portaloos being as portaloos are, our crew were allowed infrequent forays across the bridge to the well preserved Victorian facilities that graced the far bank. Distinctly superior, indeed, these loos had won the 'Best Nottingham WC' award as recently as 1996/7 and still proudly displayed the certificate within.

Back to racing and the 500m. Well, we were reminded, the 200m are the 200m, and we can do those, but we're *good* at the 500m, so, full of confidence we launch off for the first of the heats. This was a fantastic race, very close, very intense, we were neck and neck with Thames Taniwas all the way, battling it out to the very end to come second by just .05 of a second - we were fired up!

The confidence boost paid off in the repechage, another close race, very exciting to watch, BA giving it their all to snatch the victory from Powerhouse and Secklow. Great work guys!

In the semis we were in lane four. Now, being new to all this, I had noticed that this seemed more often than not, the lane occupied by the slowest crew, (I think there is a reason for this but don't fully understand just yet), anyway, we kept up this tradition, but that's not to say it was a bad race, far from it. It was fantastically fought out, with only five seconds between the four crews at the end. With barely time to

warm down and catch breath, the tail race was still to do. We got off to a great start eventually battling it out for second place with Powerhouse. We gained steadily on them until their bow was in sight of our helm, but they pulled ahead making it a fight to the finish. BA held on by .21 of a second. A great end to a fabulous day's racing. The reward for the last crew...to take the boat over to those near vertical steps and haul her up them!

Personal post script;

Many thanks to everyone who made my first event so enjoyable. Especially Dave and Jenny for taking me, (sorry about the snoring on the way home guys). Also, I have not stopped eating since I came home! Is it just me??