

Captain's report - AGM 2024

Introduction

The 2024 AGM marks two since I took the role of club captain, and it's been a hugely rewarding experience to be able to contribute to the club in this role. I believe that we have an enormous amount to celebrate, both on and off the water - I would like to take the opportunity to share some of those successes during this report.

Before doing so however, I must take a moment to express my deepest thanks to all of those who have supported the club and me personally over the last 12 months. Support can come in a number of ways and we shouldn't forget that, so if you've contributed a lot or a little, visibly or invisibly, I would like to pass on my sincere thanks.

I will go on to thank a number of key individuals later within this report - I would however like to start by thanking the committee, some of which will be stepping down. For those stepping down, please accept my gratitude for your efforts. For the new members that will be elected at this year's AGM, I would like to warmly welcome you into the committee.

Results

This year the club has posted an impressive 91 wins, which is an increase of 1 from the previous year.

There have been some notable results and performances this year which need to be mentioned:

- Lauren Henry had an exceptional Olympic campaign, winning the Gold medal at the first time of asking in Paris. That makes Lauren a European, World and Olympic champion. This is a landmark achievement and I cannot overstate how proud the whole club is of the success.
 - Whilst we have celebrated Lauren's amazing achievement, I believe that we should go one step further and create a permanent tribute at the club to commemorate the landmark achievement. As a discussion point for the AGM, I would welcome any ideas from our membership base on how this can be achieved in a fitting manner.
- Dave Smith continues to dominate the Masters circuit and really is a shining light of performance within the club. An outstandingly dedicated athlete with wins at British Masters, Henley Masters and World Masters.
- Molly and Sophie had a hugely positive year in the pair, coached by Howard Marsh. Crowning off their year with a quarter final at Henley Women's Regatta, a win at British rowing Senior Championships and going on to represent England at Home International regatta.
- Small Club Pennant for the senior men's 8+ at Head of the River race. This represents a true club success that we should be proud of.

Women's squad

Hazel Ward has looked after the senior women's squad for the past 12 months and has created an empowering, inclusive and friendly atmosphere amongst all athletes. Hazel is by far one of the most dedicated and selfless vice captains I can remember during my time at the club - her dedication to making sure everybody is included, happy and looked after is second to none as far as I am concerned.

Under Hazel's leadership, the senior women's squad have grown enormously, now boasting upwards of 20 members.

The senior women fielded a coxless quad this year at Henley Women's Regatta, missing out on qualification by just 2.5s - I know that they plan to improve on this position in the current year and have made a bright start to the new season with this goal in mind.

Coming into the new year, Natalia Wadowska will be taking over as ladies vice captain. Natalia is a bright and positive presence at the club and I am confident she will continue to develop the cohesive and close knit group we have enjoyed over recent times.

Men's squad

Ross O'Brien has been men's vice captain for the past 12 months, in that time he has overseen some of the highest performance in recent times. Ross is a keen rower and a universally well liked presence at the club - I am personally very grateful for his efforts and I hope that Ross is proud of the achievements during his time in the role.

The men's performance has continued its development over the last 12 months with the squad achieving a win a HORR this year with the small club pennant - I referenced on my annual dinner speech that this is not a result that grabs national headlines - but it is a bright indicator of the progress we have made within this squad over the last few years.

Moving Forward, Barnaby Allen will take over the leadership of this squad. Barney has been a member of this club for ~12 months now and is not only a high quality rower, but also a really personable character who I know has ambition to continue the competitive progress within the squad. Similar to the women, the men's squad is in a buoyant position in terms of members - I am sure under Barney's leadership we will continue to develop this engagement into improved performance.

Junior squad

Liz and Ang have continued to work together to run the junior squad this year. Supported of course by a number of keen coaches including Sally Horrocks, Howard Marsh and Tim Walton.

The Castle Mead Partnership is again something that we should be very proud of. In memory, 25 out of 28 scholars are opting to continue with the Castle Mead program which is a big endorsement to the quality of the offering provided.

Angela Holohan will be stepping down from the organisation of the juniors for the coming year. This is not Ang's first stint in the role and she has supported the juniors a couple of times during her time at the club. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Ang for her contribution, support and guidance.

I would also like to say thank you to Isaac Gosling, who has conducted his role of junior representative admirably. I am pleased and excited to see Isaac continuing for another year in his role.

Recreational squad

The recreational squad continues to be a hugely popular group within the club - boasting large numbers over our weekend rowing sessions. Anne, as squad lead for many years now, has done a great job of both organising and championing the squad in the club. Anne has also been a keen promotor of recreational rowing more broadly which I know will continue to have a positive impact on our sport.

It has been great to see more of the recreational squad out racing and I hope that this continues to develop throughout the coming years.

Leicester Rowing Club is a volunteer led club and the rec squad are key contributors in many aspects of that effort - they also form a large part of the committee. I would like to say thank you to the squad for their continued support and contribution to Leicester Rowing Club.

Performance squad

Howard continues to support performance athletes at the club with incredible dedication, purpose and impact. Under his guidance we have seen a number of athletes including Sophie, Molly, Hannah, Lizzie and Eleanor have successful seasons - with I am sure more to come in the coming year.

Howard should be commended also for the unselfish manner in which he shares his expertise with squad leads and coaches by way of advice and training plans which are adopted by many at the club.

It is true to say that this squad is a real performance benchmark for the club and set's a standard that all competitive athletes can aspire to.

Equipment

Equipment purchases and maintenance this year has been wide ranging, with notable purchases listed below:

- 5 x new Concept 2 ergos (additional to previous year).
- Multiple refurbishment projects
- Fixing of Simon Whittakker.

I am also aware that the committee is discussing a number of projects such as new blades, refurbishments and purchases which will go some way to maintaining and improving the quality of the equipment for our members.

I would like to thank anybody who has conducted maintenance or repairs on our fleet, it is invaluable to ensure that the equipment remains safe and water-worthy for use by the club members now and in the future. I would however, whilst I have the forum, like to make a request for club members to remain vigilant for new damage or repair needs. The sooner we are able to rectify these issues, the less likely they are to propagate into bigger issues.

Thank you's

I referenced earlier that contributions by our members can come in many forms, some of which are invisible to the general population of the club. It is as always very difficult to single out all of the great contributions, but please know that all are appreciated and welcomed.

Special thanks goes to:

- The squad leads for their work to ensure that all people in the club are supported and empowered to make the most out of their experience at Leicester Rowing club.
- Sally Horrocks for working closely with the committee to ensure that we're operating sensibly and safely in all activities.
- Brian Robbins for helping to generate funds for the club by volunteering to support the football car parks at the club.
- Howard Marsh for providing a great coaching example to follow, and providing many members at the club training plans, guidance and support.
- Liz Pulford for her tireless work as Club President. Liz has been instrumental over the years in shaping the club into a place we can all enjoy. Further to that, Liz has been a great support for me as Club Captain for which I would like to thank her whole-heartedly.

Moving Forwards

Unfortunately, I will be stepping down from my role as Club Captain this year.

When taking on this role, I had huge optimism for what could be achieved. My ambition primarily was to ensure that as each year went by, we would make a lasting impact leading to an improved experience for our members - I hope that as a membership base you think that we have achieved that task.

I have certainly found the role hugely rewarding and would like to thank all members for their welcomed and appreciated support during my tenure. I would ask that the same support, patience and kindness is extended to my successor once identified.

At the time of writing this report, we do not yet have a nomination put forward to replace me as Club captain. The role is important, and whilst challenging I am sure that it will be rewarding for whoever takes on the role.

I will continue as a committee member and offer my commitment to support the club as much as I can do from my new position.

Alex Wellings
Club Captain
24/10/2024