

WEST MIDLANDS ADAPTIVE ROWING NEWSLETTER

2009 has been a busy year for adaptive rowing in the West Midlands, from having almost zero rowing activity for those with a disability, this has now grown to three rowing clubs in the West Midlands able to provide coaching, coaching support and training for this very "under provided for" group.

The West Midlands Disability Rowing Association (WMDRA) has been able to provide training, run events and purchase a range of equipment. This activity has only been possible with support from British Rowing, The West Midlands Rowing Council, Sport England, Awards for All, Youell Foundation, EFDS and N Power Active.

Stratford-Upon-Avon Boat Club has formed a dedicated adaptive squad consisting of scullers with varied disabilities, which include spinal bifida and acquired brain injuries. The members with these disabilities all have differing goals in rowing, with some hoping to follow in the footsteps of club member James Roe who has been included in the GB squad for the World Championships.

Evesham Rowing Club is in the early stages of building their section whilst Worcester Rowing Club has had a section for pupils from New College Worcester for the visually impaired operating successfully for the past ten years. This season the captain has tried to integrate some of the older pupils into the main novice section of the Club, and this has worked well - especially for two of the pupils that were in the successful winning novice squad that won at Worcester regatta in the summer!

Both clubs are now looking forward to expanding their adaptive numbers with input and ideas from Maddy Millichap, British Rowing's Sport England funded coach. In the past, the clubs had been using the mainstream club boats, but with successful grant applications submitted with the help of Maddy and British Rowing's local coaching and development officer, funding has now been received enabling the purchase of new equipment, which has enabled the clubs and athletes to have access to specialist adaptive rowing boats and blades.

Special Schools in the Birmingham area have also been making use of the indoor rowing seats and equipment purchased with a Sport England Awards for All grant, this has been very popular, and Maddy can now offer support and coaching sessions to those with disabilities in the schools, which in turn helps create a healthier lifestyle as well as fun for the children.

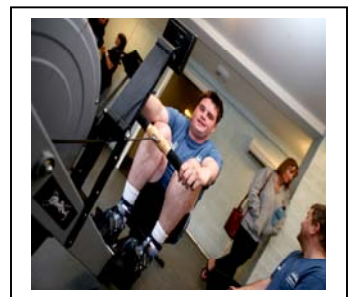
APRIL - The West Midlands Disability Rowing Association and the BSNSA (Birmingham Special Needs Sports Association) held a special needs indoor rowing competition. Schools from Birmingham and Stratford upon Avon sent 70 children to take part. The morning was a huge success and very popular with the schools taking part in the disability rowing initiative, and will be repeated in 2010 - hopefully on a larger scale.

JUNE - Stratford Regatta hosted their first adaptive sculling race sponsored by EFDS (English Federation of Disability Sport) and N Power Active. Liz Stone (Stratford) and Caroline McDonald (Tees) contested the event, with Caroline the victor.

Neil Smith had demonstrated Adaptive Rowing at the regatta in 2008 unfortunately could not take part in 2009 having just completed a charity adaptive cycle ride from Lands End to John O'Groats. [James Roe](#) (Stratford) was also unable to attend the regatta as he was on national rowing duty at the Rowing World Cup in Germany (where he won Gold in the LTA 4+ (legs, trunk and arms coxed four)).

JULY - Evesham Golden Mile. Scott Ridley (Evesham) completed his first competitive "row" at this event. This is an annual Indoor Rowing event held the Rowing Club. Scott had not broken a 2 minute 500m time prior to the day. But in the race he thoroughly earned his gold medal, by putting in a personal best and averaging 1.57 and completing the mile in 6 minutes 19.9 seconds

"Coaching adaptive rowers is a matter of finding practical solutions to problems," says Mark Dewdney. Scott's coach, "and at each stage of Scott's development new issues have arisen, we find answers - often by trial and error. The help of a number of ERC members and Maddy Millichap the ARA's Club and Coach adaptive coach has been invaluable in this"



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AUGUST - Disability rowing taster sessions using the equipment funded by Awards for All and the West Midlands Regional Rowing Council were offered at Topbarn, Holt Heath, near Worcester. Although the numbers that attended were small, the participants were introduced to their most local rowing club after the experience.



AUGUST - [LOOK](#) and [Action for Blind People](#) are both organisations that ensure blind and partially sighted people receive practical support in all aspects of their lives and run family activity days regularly. During August, together with British Rowing Coach Maddy Millichap, they held sessions at Edgbaston Reservoir in Birmingham.



Fifteen children took part in the rowing sessions, and many of the parents and carers had a go too when they saw how much fun their children were having. This is the second year Maddy has held these sessions and many of those taking part had returned from last year.

Maddy currently works with two visually impaired colleges Queen Alexander College Birmingham and New College Worcester to develop their indoor and water based rowing activities.

With only 1,000 days to go until the 2012 Paralympic games, Liz Stone, an adaptive rowing member at Stratford upon Avon was asked by Coventry and Warwickshire Sports Partnership to talk about her equestrian Paralympic gold and silver at Atlanta '96, and her new found sport rowing.



Round Oak School, Warwick was the venue, the school has children and young adults attending that might be interested in the news that the International Paralympics Committee is to allow those with an intellectual impairment to compete at the Paralympic Games in athletics, swimming, rowing and table tennis from 2012.

NOVEMBER - This year was the 19th British Indoor Rowing Championships (BIRC) and the ninth consecutive year hosted at the National Indoor Arena (NIA) Birmingham. The BIRC is Britain's largest participatory indoor sports event and what a fantastic day it was for West Midlands Adaptive Rowing.

Stratford upon Avon Boat Club entered two athletes and both won two medals in the trunk and arms category racing over the 1000-metre distance.

Neil Smith won a gold medal with a time of 3:46.9 and Liz Stone a silver medal with a time of 5:33.9. Kim Robinson (Stratford BC coach) coaches and trains Neil and Liz and assisted by Maddy Millichap, British Rowing. This is the second year running that the two athletes have entered the event and the second that they have won medals - a hard act to follow!

Scott Ballard Ridley from Evesham Rowing Club competed for the first time this year, racing 2000metres in the leg, trunk and arms category, and achieved a time of 8:04.0.

