

The deception of a Gold Medallist or how the world keeps going as if nothing has happened.

Sammy, our racing mascot

Sunday September 24th was the day, Cambridge Canoe Club has made it into the Finals for the Hasler series. There was a little bit of a buzz around this in the weeks before, some serious training went on. The kids got some extra support to show their best side. Thank you very much for all the extra time being put in by Pete, Netty, Paul, Ceri, Lucia and supported by many others. The whole club was not only focussed on themselves but certainly to give the juniors a massive push and it worked for some parents as well as they got more on the water to not fall too far behind.

As the day came closer Will and I even started doing the time-trials on Thursday evening, a 10km race from the club house through Cambridge up to the railway bridge and back. We practised our starts, did a swim. Tried some new things by turning the K2 with a firm stern rudder and decided to not do that again anymore.

Then in the week before the big race, the entry list was published. Oomph, now we knew the competition and the competition was fierce. Div. 7 K1, 55 boats, Div. 7 K2, 30 boats. They came from all over the United Kingdom. Linlithgow, close to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, Stafford, Tamar in Devon, just to name a few locations.

We were used to only max. 10 boats in a race during the Hasler, sometimes only 3 or even 1 in the class/division. This promised to be a real competition and also we had no idea about the speed differences between the regions.

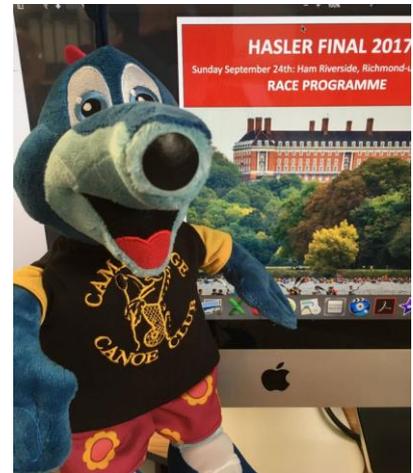
The race was split into two starts;

Div. 4, 5 & 6 doing 12.2km with 2 portages followed by the lightnings 3.5km at 10.30

Div. 1, 2 & 4 doing 20.4km with 2 portages followed by Div. 7, 8 & 9 7.2km at 13.00

This allowed us to watch each other's race. In Div 4 K2 we had the most participants from the Cambridge Canoe Club, 3 boats K2 and 1 boat K1. Div. 1, 2, 5 and 8 were not represented by us at all.

We could shout at all Cambridge Club members, especially the juniors in their lightnings. It is amazing how they have come up in this season. In the local races always claiming very good positions and even here at the finals. Great to see Louis, Theo and Rupert putting in all they had to get the best possible result. There was a great fight for the 2nd position by Louis which was great to watch.



The start line for Div. 4 K2, foreground Oli & Ceri, background at the back Pete & Andy and hidden in the start line Lucia & Netty



It was nice to have a bit of a catch up with the other paddlers before we had to go on the water. What is the good race line, where are the shallows etc. etc

Rupert overtaking the U12's in his victory race



At 13.00 it was our time and we started a few minutes after the Div. 7 K2 with Colin & Sebastian. We had to wait for a swimmer who felt victim to the wash produced by these 30 K2's.

We had a great start, at least we were at the head of the pack, although our timing and stability was miles out but we survived and even had some good moments where Will and I were even thinking that we had applied the right technic. Timing, stroke rate, upper body turns, a little bit of leg movement (sometimes) so we were on the right way. No idea where our competition was as we did not see anybody until we turned and we saw that they were a few hundred meters behind us as a close pack. Towards the first turn we could see that Colin & Seb were with the first 3 and were looking very strong as well. Then back to the start line, facing the encouraging screams, shouts and whatever was thrown at us. Thank you, supporters, well appreciated! Then passed the Richmond canoe club, see that Seb & Colin were in 1st place, that really made us go faster as well. Turn and finally we could get some company by overtaking a C2 from Div. 7. Up to the finish it went and we really went for a good finish fighting about the position with a trailing Div. 7 K2 who were quite pushed by us to give it all they had as well.

We were first, eager to hear the results for the boys we went quickly to the get out where we learned that they finished 2nd, excellent result as the winner had definitely saved their energy by hanging in the massive waves produced by our two juniors. Then we realized that we won the race and had to wait now for the official medal ceremony in order to get honoured for our hard work.

The organisation was really putting in all the effort they could to make sure that our result was valid and so we had to wait from 16.00 to nearly 18.00 before the results could be published and that we could start with the official ceremony. By that time, unfortunately the Mayor of London and his team of cheerleaders had left already but the organisation found a good replacement in Tim Baillie, the 2012, Men's C2 Slalom Gold medallist.

Penny had taken Sammy with her so we could do Cambridge proud in showing our mascot to the world.



So how are we going about this, we feel a bit taller, our steps have a bit more of a spring. Smiles all over the place. Travelling back in the traffic jams from Richmond didn't bother us, all good spirits in the car. Congratulations from the people at home, a bit of bubbly and some oh's and ah's seeing the medals (we have them in two colours at the Brunstings). A nice hot shower which was desperately needed after waiting so long for the medals but we were in good company and no shortage on free bees as they through all cakes and bananas etc. at us to keep us quiet.

And then to bed with lovely dreams about the future as gold medallist.

06.30 the dogs started to make their usual noise to let us know that they were ready to go out. I just turned myself around in bed fully expecting that somebody would take care of that and then would serve me a lovely breakfast etc. No, it was like a cold shower. I had to get out of bed as usual and walk the dogs. Ok, whilst walking I was expecting to get recognised on the street but only one neighbour showed up and we had a bit of a chat but he did not mention with one single word that he had seen the race and the good result we achieved at the race. So, I was getting worried.

Later, shopping at the Morrison, expecting to be recognised, people offering me their place in the queue for the tills but really really really nothing like that. I do not know how it is with Rupert if he can still get in the class or that he is hindered by hordes of fans getting in the way to get this autograph but for me it was a pure disappointment. Why did we work so hard to get to this finals and why did we put so much effort in to get this result if all stays the same?

But does all still stay the same or have we just grown a bit stronger, being more able to handle a boat I could not sit in upright one year ago. One year ago, I thought that a racing boat would not be suitable for me, you can't even look around at the wild life but how things have changed. I can now sneak up on a kingfisher quietly and follow it along the river. Something you would not be able to do in a white-water boat due to noise, waves etc. I also met many new people who have been member in the club for a long time but were just part of that other segment of the club. And you know, they are quiet a bunch of nice people too. Like with the white-water you always find people willing to support you, to motivate you, to coach and buddy up. It is a wonderful community.

Thank you very much all members of Cambridge Canoe Club to be so supportive!!!

I could not have done this without the support I got from all of you.

Wim Brunsting

Official results can be found here;

<http://richmondcanoecub.com/race/hf-2017-results/>

Results for Cambridge Canoe Club;

U10	Rupert 1st
U12	Louis 3 rd
	Theo 8th
Div 9	Penny 13
Div 8 K2	Wil & Wim 1st
Div 7 K2	Seb & Colin 2nd
Div 7	Emily 20th
Div 6	Andy P 5th and promoted
	David 18th
Div 4	Ryan 21st
Div 4 K2	Netty & Lucia 9th
	Pete Clark & Andy 23th
	Oli & Ceri 27th
Div 3 K2	Alice & Paul retired due to technical problems