



South Island
Rowing

Newsletter

Issue No. 10

Date: May 2010

Principal Sponsor



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The above picture was taken in early May. It may seem quite unbelievable that the lake could look like this after the “washing machine” like conditions that we experienced at MAADI. Trevor assures me that conditions like this have been the norm over the last month and those who have gone on the lake for training or recreational rowing have enjoyed it immensely.

It is quite amazing just how long it takes to get all the loose ends tied up after the season is complete. This season has been no different. Even at this late stage we are still receiving payments and getting invoices for work carried out at the MAADI regatta. This does have an bit of an impact on a number of our activities. The end of year accounts (at 30 April) have to go to the Auditors and these glitches act to defer this work. It also impacts our cash flow and ensures that the Management Committee have a continuing workload for some time after the end of the season.

ECAN Bylaw

It is the ECAN Navigation and Safety By-law that operates on this lake and that Bylaw is under review. One particular aspect that is being reviewed is the temporary rule that separated the powered boats from the non-powered boats on Lake Ruataniwha.

Submissions were called for input on this temporary rule change during April and those who have a view on this were encouraged to respond. It is most encouraging that ECAN are undertaking such a review and there are significant benefits to all passive water sports including rowing if the temporary rules are embodied in the new law.

As an aside, some of us noticed the return of swimming in the bay and a number of young people enjoying the “safe” water conditions. Given the need to encourage young people to learn to swim and be confident in water, this is a very positive sign.

SIR is grateful for the assistance and advice from ECAN representatives. As a result, we have had better buoy placement and more comprehensive signage. Looking to the future, we are hopeful of a continuing relationship that will benefit all passive watersports. We encourage all rowers to understand the ways that the bylaws effect their activities and how they can benefit the total passive water sport with conforming to the requirements of these bylaws.

Course

As a result of the Maadi Cup Regatta a few issues with the course have been identified. There continues to be some stretch in the Kevlar lane wires. They are also susceptible to some vandalism. But the most serious issue is that didymo can work its way into the outer braiding and significantly increase the tension and lateral forces on the wire.



We are now investigating the use of a stainless steel derivative for the lane wire along with the associated techniques to minimise electrolysis and other chemical corrosion.

There are some wave action issues along the course, especially at the start. We are investigating some serious work here to try and minimise these effects but they are costly and time consuming.

The 1000 meter start facilities also need improving. It has been considered as relatively unimportant and while that may be true most of the time, it became very important with the issues we had at the MAADI and given the increasing numbers of "Masters" regattas and races, perhaps it is time to do some serious work with the 1000 meter start. While not particularly expensive, a few changes will make a big difference here.

Tent Sites

The picture on the right shows where the tent sites were during Maadi. As can be seen, there are a large number of rocks left on the sites. Until they are removed we are unable to use the motor mower to cut the grass. Also, we cannot distribute any soil either to promote the additional grass growth. Unfortunately the cost of repair is significant but we are reluctant to increase the costs because of the few who are unable to show to courtesy of leaving the sites as they found them.



Regatta Dates

Many people will have heard that the National Championship Regatta for 2011 will be in mid February. This will mean that we can only have two Championship Regattas in the period between Christmas and Nationals. While it is possible to contemplate holding regattas on consecutive weekends and not closing the Lake, many have considered this is too great a risk and we should try and come up with other alternatives.

It seems that more and more of our rowers are undertaking tertiary training and Rowing New Zealand considers it appropriate to adjust the dates of nationals to accommodate this. Such changes will affect regattas on Lake Karapiro just as much as Lake Ruataniwha and the complexities of developing a calendar for the season at both venues will need to be addressed early.

One likely outcome will likely see more pre-Christmas regattas. It has been noted that three of the four Local South Island Associations voted for this change and we understand that they are diligently working out how this can be made to happen. From a SIR perspective we need to retail a full compliment of regattas to ensure the impact on our cost structures and hence entry fees are minimised. It will be very interesting to see what comes out of their deliberations.



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Reporters Diary

MAX SMITH is a hero in Twizel. They even named a road after him. The Mackenzie Country town might have ceased to exist but for Smith. Twizel sprang up in the desert during the 1960s and '70s to house workers and their families on the giant Upper Waitaki power scheme. It was to have been dismantled when construction of dams, canals and powerhouses was complete. But Smith, as a Ministry of Works boss in charge of the project, had other ideas. He saw an opportunity to create an international-scale rowing course on the buffer lake that would be formed from the Ohau Creek, 2km from Twizel.

More than a visionary, he got things done. Twizel's rowing course is the best in the South Island. It shares with Waikato's Lake Karapiro the honour of hosting national club and secondary school championships in alternate years. I remember driving through the Mackenzie Basin before a sod was turned. The vast and arid plateau of rock and tussock was the nearest thing to a desert in the South Island. Anyone who suggested it as a premier watersports venue would've been laughed at.

Smith suggested it. And no-one is laughing now. Lake Ruataniwha, as it is called, has become a magnet for rowers and other boaties. The green lawns and modern facilities it offers are an oasis in the desert. A legend has grown up around Smith's actions. People say he overrode orders from political masters in Wellington to build the course and was sacked for it. The reality is not quite as dramatic. The MOW had orders to beautify the edges of waterways created by the project and money was budgeted for this. Through careful use of this money, and the diversion of earthmoving equipment to straighten the north bank of the newly formed lake, a 2000m championship course was developed. A shingle weir was built as an anchor for the cables holding the buoys that mark the rowing lanes. Structures were installed and landscaping provided at the start and finish areas.

The MOW was scaled down after the power project. Smith moved to North Canterbury and took up farming. But he still attends events at Lake Ruataniwha, where he is greeted as an honoured guest and invited to hand out winners' medals. The rowing course is his fabulous legacy. No longer do top rowers have to compete in the inadequate confines of Christchurch's Kerr's Reach, or on the choppy, windswept waters of Dunedin's Lake Waiholo.

Twizel owes much to him, too. A town to serve rowers and their supporters was needed, so its sentence of execution was commuted. Its 40-year-old trees in full flourish, it has grown into an attractive and bustling place. Many visitors use it as a stopover or a base for explorations and adventure activities in the nearby Aoraki - Mt Cook area. Preparations are under way for the Maadi Cup when I call at Lake Ruataniwha. This week-long event attracts 2000 secondary school rowers from 114 schools all over New Zealand and three in Australia. They book out accommodation from Lake Tekapo to Otematata.

The national inter-school competition began in 1947. It took its name from Maadi Camp, in Egypt, where thousands of New Zealand soldiers were based in World War 2. The soldiers arranged rowing races on the River Nile to help fill the time. The 2010 Maadi Cup was launched with a dawn remembrance service at the lake's edge, with RSA and defence forces involved. The defence forces were involved in another way, as well. Neil Burrow, one of the organisers, tells me they use the Maadi Cup each year for their major recruitment drive.



They hope to attract some of these youngsters who show the self-discipline and stickability that the sport of rowing demands. Burrow rowed in the Maadi Cup in 1958. Five members of his Dunedin King Edward Technical High School senior-8 crew went on to row for New Zealand. He knows how tough the sport is. He gets angry at people “bagging” the youth of today as shiftless and irresponsible. He has total admiration for the kids who commit themselves so fully.

Some Otago Boys' High School crews are training on the course. A boy tells me the Maadi Cup is “the big one of the whole year” for them. “It’s what we train for; it’s what we get up at 5.30 every day for.” The boys do most of their training on Otago harbour. That alone requires dedication. Burrow looks across the attractive course and comments on the huge change from the days when the Ohau Creek trickled past. Soon it will be further transformed, as competition gets under way. Then it will sprout a village of tents, stalls and stands. And Smith’s dream will be reality.

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SIR AGM

The end of the year for SIR is 30 April. The usual time for the AGM is around the 30th June. Unfortunately some of our key people are away on other duties and this has led to a change of date. The first day that everyone will be available is 31 July 2010 and this will be the date of the AGM. Coincidentally, this is the last date allowed according to the constitution. It will be hosted by the Timaru Rowing Club and the details will be distributed in due course. Let us hope for good weather to travel.

Buildings

There have been some rumours circulating about some more buildings for the Lake Ruataniwha Complex. SIR have negotiated the purchase of some buildings that will replace Saul Hall and provide some much needed improvements to the training facilities at Lake Ruataniwha. Representatives for the four Local Associations have been briefed on this development and more details will be given in the next newsletter.

Next Regatta

The next regatta will be the South Island Masters Regatta at Queens Birthday weekend. This is being organized by the Mercer Rowing Club and the Twizel Rowing Club. A lot of preparation work has been done for this and from a SIR perspective, it will allow us to have a trial run of our equipment set up in readiness for the New Zealand Masters Regatta in November. Judging by the information so far released it appears this will be a most enjoyable occasion for all attendees.

Rule Comment

Unfortunately our experts have had a month off. But they should be able to provide an update for next month.

If you have a Gem to share, please forward it on to the Secretary.

