Langridge excited by new challenge

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13.4.16.

.4.16.

Langridge sights on medal missing from collection

Olympian feeling strong as he prepares for European Championships in May

By Andrew Simpson

James Foad and Matthew Langridge, on trials duty, and in action with the men's eight at London 2012

MATTHEW Langridge is feeling good.

He is comfortable declaring this summer's Olympic Games in Brazil – his fourth as part of the British rowing team – will likely be his last.

There is a reason for that.

"I've just finished the best block of winter training I've had," he says.

"I set a personal best on the Ergo, and done well in all of our internal assessments.

"The timing is right to do well in Rio."

Langridge can put that progress to the test at the European Championships next month, when he will race as part of a men's eight.

It means the 32-year-old will not defend a men's pair title he won at last year's edition.

After crewmate James Foad was ruled out following back surgery, selectors shuffled the squad.

The former Hartford High School pupil returns to a boat in which he has won a medal – one silver, the other bronze – at the past two summer Games.

Five other Olympic medallists join him.

"Look at the crew – including the cox, there's seven previous world champions," he says.

"It's definitely the best chance I'm going to have to become Olympic champion.

"I want the medal that's missing from my collection.

"That doesn't mean I feel I've failed up to now, but there's disappointment that I've not got my hands on the one everybody is after.

"We've known for a few weeks we'd be competing together at the Euros, and have been thinking about how we can make the boat go as fast as it can.

"That's our first chance to race, and we're excited to see what we can do."

Langridge tells the Guardian he has left nothing to chance in his preparation, something even a disappointing result at last month's trials – when he failed even to make

things didn't go so well," he adds.

"But that's behind us now, and can be forgotten.

"There's a bigger picture, and that's what I've tried to remember all winter.

"The biggest thing I've changed is my consistency; in previous years I've been interrupted by illness or injury – rarely anything serious, mainly annoying niggles.

"This time I've not missed a session, and that's something I've learned is important.

"You can watch the guys around you and look at how they go about

"What you have to do is keep faith with what you're doing, not get carried away worrying about whether you should do that bit extra than you are."

Langridge formed the fastest British men's pair ever with Foad, finishing as runner-up at successive world championships behind Kiwi duo Eric Murray and Hamish Bond.

However they were further from the reigning Olympic champions last summer than previously.

Asked what impact Foad's injury has had, Langridge admits to

"Rowing can be ruthless, and the strength of this squad means you can't lose focus on what you need to do to get picked.

"From that point of view, I've had to make sure him not being around has not affected me."

For now, the focus turns to the final part of a build-up that started not long after London 2012.

And Langridge plans to savour every moment.

"I've travelled to the same places and done training camps over and over," he adds.

"But now I'm stopping to take it

ROWING

27.4.16

Grange boys win bronze

Hartford school's crew finishes third in final at regional junior regatta

By Andrew Simpson

GRANGE School Rowing Club celebrated winning a medal on the national stage at the weekend.

An under 14s boys' coxed quad, representing the North West, took third place in the final during the Junior Inter-Regional Regatta at the National Water Sports Centre in Nottingham.

Seb Paisley, Jack McGinn, Bradley Strickland-Baker, Harry Barker and cox Olly Andrew were on board, progressing directly to the final following a solid row in their heat.

"They made a nervy start in the final but showed maturity beyond their years to fight back and win a medal," said Graham Jump, head coach at the Hartford school.

Tom Swithenbank, from Northwich Rowing Club, and Queen's Park High School student Harrison Kendall were seventh in an under 15s boys' double scull.

The North West classified third in the Victor Ludorum.

They ranked in the same position in both the boys' and girls' categories.

Six Northwich Rowing Club members took part in the British rowing team's junior regatta at the same venue on Sunday.

Teenagers Kevin Dudley, Lucy Gillbanks, George Lawton, Greg Murphy, Harry Taylor and Beth Willford-Dutton now wait to discover if they will be invited for final trials in July.

Meanwhile Matthew Langridge completes his preparations this week for next month's European Championships in Germany.

Grange School's bronze medal-winning under 14s boys' coxed quad at Saturday's Junior Inter-Regional Regatta, from left, Bradley Strickland-Baker, Seb Paisey, Jack McGinn, Harry Barker hold aloft cox Olly Andrew

ROWING

TIME TO SHINE

Northwich duo represent Britain at international regattas this weekend

By Andrew Simpson

ONE Northwich rower takes his next step towards the Olympics this weekend at the same time another attempts to impress on the international stage.

Matthew Langridge races as part of the British men's eight at the European Championships, while George Lawton represents Great Britain at the International Junior Regatta.

Both events are in Germany.

"We're excited to see what we can do," said the 32-year-old.

"We'd known for a few weeks [before the squad announcement] that we'd be racing together at the Euros, and have been thinking about how we can make the boat go as fast as it can.

"Including the cox, there's seven previous world champions in the crew.

"It's definitely the best chance I'm going to have to become Olympic champion."

Langridge formed the fastest British men's pair ever with James Foad, finishing as runners-up at successive world championships behind crack Kiwi duo Eric Murray and Hamish Bond.

They won last year's European title too.

However an injury to Foad has prompted selectors to shuffle the squad.

It means Langridge, a former pupil at Hartford High School, returns to a boat in which he has won a medal – one silver, the other bronze – at the past two summer Games.

Northwich Rowing Club member Lawton, a student at Sir John Deane's College, made his debut in the British junior team during last summer's Coupe de la Jeunesse in Hungary.

He won a silver medal in the men's double with Rory Harris, who joins him in an eight-strong men's sculling squad in Munich.

"George was one of six athletes we sent to GB Rowing Team's junior regatta," said Rachel Hooper, a coach at Northwich Rowing Club.

"Excluding independent schools, that's more than any other club – which is evidence of the depth of talent we have here now."

4.5.16.

ROWING

Twin success

JUNIOR crews from Northwich Rowing Club celebrated a pair of wins during Saturday's Merseyside Regatta.

Charlotte Almond and Rachel Coffey, in an under 15s girls' double, defeated rivals from Warrington by a length in the final of their boat class.

Anna Carnell, Sophie Garlick, Honor Campbell, Bethan Coffey and cox Ariane Roucoule completed an under 14s girls' coxed quad that saw off close competition from their opponents in windy conditions at West Float in Wirral.

The squad heads next to Shrewsbury Regatta this weekend.

More rowing, back page

ROWING 11/5/16.

European bronze not a fair reflection, says Matt

MATTHEW Langridge admitted his emotions were mixed after Great Britain's men's eight had to settle for a bronze medal at the European Championships on Sunday.

Germany, the reigning Olympic champions, overhauled race-long leaders Russia – who took silver – to win the title on home water.

"It's frustrating because training has been going well and that wasn't a fair reflection of where we are," said the Northwich rower.

"We can also be positive though about how we performed in the heat."

As much of a factor was a strong cross-wind that caused waves along the Brandenburg course, making clean rowing impossible.

The British crew, also including Matt Gotrel, Scott Durant, Tom Ransley, Paul Bennett, Pete Reed, Andrew Triggs Hodge, Will Satch and cox Phelan Hill, had qualified for the final as victors in their heat on Friday.

However they, along with the rest of the field, trailed fast-starting Netherlands in the A final's early stages.

Russia had taken the lead by halfway, although Germany came through strongly at the close to finish first ahead of them.

Great Britain, gold medal-winners in the boat class at last year's event, edged out Belarus for third in a photo-finish.

"We did the best race we could in those conditions," added Langridge, a European champion in the men's pair in 2015.

The British team topped the overall medal table with four golds, two less than their total 12 months earlier.

Langridge and company turn

ROWING 11/5/16

Lawton takes on two finals

GEORGE Lawton contested two finals as part of a Great Britain crew during the International Junior Regatta at the weekend.

The Northwich Rowing Club member, in tandem with Nick Plaut (Westminster School), recorded a victory in a heat for the men's double in Munich on Saturday.

They finished fifth later on in the A final.

Lawton, a student at Sir John Deane's College, switched to a men's quad with Plaut, Josh Armstrong (Glasgow Schools) and Tom Digby (Abingdon School) on Sunday.

They won the third heat in 6.22.32 before narrowly missing out on a medal when they then placed fourth in the A final.

"I'm happy to have seen some of our potential world championship athletes racing against some of the other nations," reflected Robin Dowell, lead coach for the British junior team.

"That puts us in a very good position to moving forward."

Last weekend's edition of the annual event was the biggest yet, with 850 rowers from 15 countries.

Lawton and company turn their attention next to the National Schools' Regatta in London later this month.

"Overall we were pleased with the standard of our crews, and there was lots of promise," said team manager John Layng.

"It was important for us to see how they fared, and also for the rowers to gain more experience."

11.5.16

ROWING

Girls send out message

Northwich Rowing Club crews claim boat class wins at Nottingham City Regatta

By Andrew Simpson

TEENAGERS representing Northwich Rowing Club sent out a message to rivals across the country by recording wins at the Nottingham City Regatta on Saturday.

Lucy Gillbanks and Beth Willford-Dutton were emphatic victors in the under 18s girls' double scull final, finishing well clear of Thames Rowing Club in second.

The duo had finished second in their heat at the National Water Sports Centre earlier on.

George Crouchley and Rhys Coffey, in a men's IM3 double scull, held off the challenge of Northwich clubmates Lawrence Williams and Matthew Radford to win their A final.

A Grange School Rowing Club crew was fourth in the same race.

Kevin Dudley claimed another of Northwich's wins in the under 17s boys' single scull final, a race in which teammate Greg Murphy finished fifth.

In the afternoon, Gillbanks (under 18s girls) and Willford-Dutton (women's IM3) went on to win again in their respective singles categories.

Also in a single, Imogen Wolstencroft (women's novice) won her heat before finishing as runner-up in the final to Cantabrigian's Ellie Darlington.

"To come away with five wins from such a prestigious regatta shows the crews' hard work over the winter is paying off," said coach Rachel Hooper.

"They showed maturity to deal with incredibly tough opposition."

Northwich Rowing Club's Lucy Gillbanks, left, and Beth Willford-Dutton show off the prizes they won at Nottingham City Regatta on Saturday. After winning in a double, they both claimed individual honours at the same event

1.6.16.

Lucy Gillbanks, left, and Beth Willford-Dutton are all smiles after winning a silver medal for Northwich Rowing Club

ROWING

Silver for girls' crew at national regatta

Northwich and Grange School Rowing Clubs both win medals at schools' event

By Andrew Simpson

AN in-form girls' crew collected silver as Northwich Rowing Club returned from the weekend's National Schools' Regatta with two medals.

Neighbours Grange School won one.

Teenagers Lucy Gillbanks and Beth Willford-Dutton were part of a Championship double scull that was third fastest to complete the course at Dorney Lake in a time trial on Sunday.

The duo won their semi final, then classified second behind Headington School in the final.

They had prepared for one of the biggest events on the junior calendar by winning at Nottingham City Regatta a fortnight earlier.

Willford-Dutton had also claimed silver in a single scull at last year's edition.

Meanwhile Northwich's second men's quad of Lawrence Williams, Rhys Coffey, Matthew Radford and George Crouchley claimed bronze in their boat class.

The Championship quad, with Greg Murphy, Kevin Dudley Harry Taylor and George Lawton on board reached the A final, but missed out on a medal after finishing sixth.

They were third fastest in their semi final.

Lawton and Taylor joined forces to win the B final in a Championship double, ranking eighth overall.

Grange School's second girls' quad collected bronze in their category in one of the three-day event's final races at a venue used for the London Olympic Games four years earlier.

Sian Walker, Milly Glendinning, Izzy Highett and Poppy Howe were on board, trailing crews from Nottingham and Warrington.

An under 14s boys' coxed quad of Seb Paisley, Jack McGinn, Brad Strickland-Baker, Harry Barker and Olivia Andrew were sixth for Grange in their A final.

Archie Simpson, James Bell, Latchen Kinghorn-Perry, Tom Butler and cox Fabian Hickson were fifth in an A final for under 15s boys' second coxed quads.

Grange's Alice Barnett, Joanna Ravenscroft, Neve Bradshaw, Bree Livesey and cox Hana Patel won the B final in an under 15s girls' second coxed quad.

Archie Macauley, Patrick Lee, Thomas Clough, James Hawes and cox Ellie Shroeder were third in their under 15s boys' coxed quad semi final.

A busy regatta season continues at Bridgnorth and Marlow before Henley Women's Regatta and Henley Royal Regatta at the end of the month.

World Cup, back page

1.6.16

ROWING

Work to do before Rio for Langridge and company

GREAT Britain's men's eight, with Northwich's Matthew Langridge on board, missed out on a medal during Sunday's World Cup final.

After declaring themselves disappointed to only take bronze at the European Championships, they have work to do if they are to fight for gold at the Olympics later this summer.

A crew affected by the enforced absence through illness of Pete Reed, replaced by Alan Sinclair, finished third – behind the Netherlands and Olympic champions Germany – in a preliminary race on Friday to decide lane order for the final.

Langridge and company kept pace with the fast-starting Dutch in the Lucerne showpiece's early stages.

USA, who came through an Olympic qualification regatta earlier in the week, joined the leading crews by halfway.

The Dutch, winners at the season's first World Cup in Italy, kept their foot down to take gold ahead of Germany – crowned European champions last month – and the Americans.

Britain followed them in fourth place.

"We've had the frustration of illness before we even arrived," said Sir David Tanner, GB Rowing's performance director.

"We'll hope to get healthy again soon to be ready for our final pre-Olympic race next month."

The weekend was a better one for crews from Northwich and Grange School Rowing Clubs that won medals at the National Schools' Regatta.

Teenagers Lucy Gillbanks and Beth Willford-Dutton led the way by claiming silver in the Championship girls' double scull final on Dorney Lake.

Report, page 69

Langridge part of British eight seeking improvement

MATTHEW Langridge has been named in Great Britain's men's eight for the final World Cup regatta of the season before the Olympic Games in Rio.

The Northwich rower was part of a line-up pushed into fourth at Lucerne last month.

Pete Reed, a gold-medallist in London four years ago as part of a men's four, returns to a reshuffled crew after missing the trip to Switzerland because of a virus.

They will hope to mount a challenge to their rivals in Poznan during a regatta that starts on Friday week.

Meanwhile rowing's Team GB announcement is scheduled for tomorrow, Thursday.

Closer to home, a junior men's quad from Northwich Rowing Club finished as runners-up in their boat class during the Metropolitan Amateur Regatta on Saturday.

Sir John Deane's College students were victors in three categories at the Trentham Regatta on Sunday.

More rowing, page 75

8.6.16

ROWING

8.6.16

Back among the medals

Junior men's quad second in London, while college crews record victories

By Andrew Simpson

BOYS from Northwich Rowing Club put behind them the disappointment of missing out on a medal at the National Schools' Regatta when they raced again in London at the weekend.

Greg Murphy, Kevin Dudley, Harry Taylor and George Lawton made up a junior men's quad that finished second in their boat class' final at the Metropolitan Amateur Regatta on Saturday.

A second Northwich crew, consisting of Lawrence Williams, Matthew Radford, Rhys Coffey and George Crouchley, was sixth in their heat.

Three crews representing Sir John Deane's College recorded wins in their category at Trentham Regatta.

Mat Smith stroked an IM3 quad that included Max Leiser-Ford, Jacob Highett and Dan Lee to victory, while Callum Roberts and Lewis Stanley won in a novice double.

Stanley was also part of a mixed novice double, with Hanna Faulkner, that was faster than their rivals.

Former Northwich Rowing Club member Lucy Burgess, competing in Agecroft's colours, celebrated victory in an under 23s women's double during the Holland Beker International Regatta.

The 22-year-old joined forces with Ruth Siddorn, a student at Oxford University, on the water in Rotterdam.

They were fourth in their heat after switching to the senior category on Sunday, although their time – 7.25.23 – would have secured fourth place in the final.

Rowers representing Sir John Deane's College were victors in three boat classes during the Trentham Regatta in Staffordshire on Sunday

15/6/16

Grange School Rowing Club's victorious under 15s boys' quad, with cox Naomi Hall, at Bridgnorth Regatta

ROWING

Henley test for girls in green and gold

Northwich send three boats to compete at Henley Women's Regatta

By Andrew Simpson

NORTHWICH Rowing Club send three crews to contest the prestigious Henley Women's Regatta this weekend.

Lucy Gillbanks and Beth Willford-Dutton, silver-medallists at the National Schools' Regatta, will row the famous course in a double scull.

Clubmates Jess Swindells and Abigail Davies will do the same.

Meanwhile India Trigg, Imogen Wolstencroft, Anya George and Hannah Cooney make up a quad scull for the three-day event, which starts on Friday.

"It's a really exciting fortnight ahead," said coach Rachel Hooper.

"We'll also be sending two women's quads to qualifiers for Henley Royal Regatta next week along with our boys' crews."

Gillbanks and Willford-Dutton were part of a Championship double that was third fastest to complete the course at Dorney Lake in a time trial at the National Schools' Regatta.

The duo were first in their semi final, then classified second behind Headington School in the A final.

They had prepared for one of the biggest events on the junior calendar by winning at Nottingham City Regatta a fortnight earlier.

Northwich celebrated wins in two boat classes at Bridgnorth Regatta at the weekend.

Charlotte Almond and Rachel Cooney were fastest in their category in an under 15s girls' double, while Tom Swithenbank and Will Miles matched that feat in the boys' event for the same age group.

Neighbours Grange School claimed victory in three events.

Ben Barker and James Bell were victors in a men's IM2 double.

Bell was also part of an under 15s boys' coxed quad with Raymond Yau, Tom Clough, Jamie Hawes and cox Naomi Hall that took first prize.

Meanwhile Oli Goodman, Bradley Strickland-Baker, Harry Baker, George Oglesby and Morgan Gray saw off competition from their rivals in an under 14s boys' coxed quad.

"We sent mainly our younger crews," said head coach Graham Jump.

"They enjoyed lots of good racing and close finals in singles, doubles and quads."

Former Northwich Rowing Club member Matthew Langridge's selection for Team GB at this summer's Olympic Games was confirmed on Thursday.

The 33-year-old is part of a 12-strong sweep squad that will make up the men's pair, eight and two spares in Rio.

It will be the ex-Hartford High School pupil's fourth appearance at a summer Games.

22.6.16.

ROWING 15/6/16

Langridge's spot for Rio confirmed by GB selectors

MATTHEW Langridge, from Northwich, has been selected for his fourth Olympic Games.

He was one of 43 rowers announced by the British Olympic Association on Thursday that will represent Team GB in Rio later this summer.

The 33-year-old, who at London 2012 claimed a bronze medal as part of the men's eight after winning silver in the same boat class at Beijing four years earlier, is part of a 12-strong sweep squad.

That group will form the eight and pair, plus two reserves, in Brazil.

Sir David Tanner, British Rowing's performance director, said results at this weekend's World Cup regatta will help determine the exact line-ups in South America.

He added: "We think that's a pretty strong squad.

"We have been thrown a few curveballs the past few weeks, and had to row substitutes [at the World Cup in Lucerne].

"It's been challenging, but the test of a good team is how it responds.

"We're always ambitious, and winning gold is a priority when we pick any crew.

"I don't think it's disrespectful to say gold is worth several others."

Langridge, second at last year's world championships in the men's pair with James Foad, has switched to the eight this season.

They were third at the European Championships in Germany, but missed out on a medal at the most recent World Cup regatta in Switzerland.

However the crew will be boosted by the return of Pete Reed, a two-time Olympic champion, in Poland this weekend.

They take on their rivals in a five-strong field for the first time on Friday afternoon.

More rowing, page 67

ROWING

'Step forward' for Langridge and company at World Cup

GREAT Britain's men's eight, including Matthew Langridge from Northwich, produced their best performance of the season at a World Cup regatta in Poland on Sunday.

They took silver following a close encounter with Germany, the reigning Olympic champions, in the final at Poznan.

It marks a significant improvement on their result at Lucerne last time out, when they finished fourth.

"It wasn't quite the result we'd have liked," reflected Langridge afterwards.

"But it's a good step forward.

"The last race in Rio will be the one that really counts."

The British team could feel positive overall at the end of the three-day event – the final international regatta before this summer's Olympic Games in Brazil – winning two gold medals, three silver and as many bronze.

On Saturday Langridge and company had finished third, behind Germany and New Zealand, in a race to decide lane the order for Sunday's final.

They were more aggressive from the start, leading the way after 500m and matching the Germans stroke for stroke for the remainder.

The rivals were separated by little more than a metre by the finish, leaving the Kiwis to settle for bronze.

Scott Durant, Tom Ransley, Andrew T Hodge, Matt Gotrel, Pete Reed, Paul Bennett and Will Satch joined Langridge in the boat.

"We have really moved on since Lucerne, which we needed to," said Sir David Tanner, GB Rowing's performance director.

"That will give us confidence to go to our training camps and prepare for a strong Olympic regatta."

22.6.16.

Northwich's Beth Willford-Dutton, in the bow seat, and stroke Lucy Gillbanks in action at Henley Women's Regatta

ROWING

Pride at teenage duo reaching final

Northwich Rowing Club crew one of best in class at Henley Women's Regatta

By Andrew Simpson

LUCY Gillbanks and Beth Willford-Dutton added another chapter to the story of a fine season on Sunday when they contested the final at Henley Women's Regatta.

The Northwich Rowing Club duo could not prevent neighbours Warrington from capturing the junior double sculls title, but that did not diminish their achievement.

They are the first crew in green and gold to reach the final since Isabella Lindholt and Caroline Barrett set a course record for Northwich to claim first prize back in 2003.

After progressing from a time trial on Saturday morning, the Gillbanks and Willford-Dutton recorded impressive victories against crews representing Twickenham, Thames and Norwich.

Great Britain international Lucy Glover and Ellie Davies ended their winning run in the final by a four-length margin.

A second Northwich double, consisting of Abigail Davies and Jess Swindells, were beaten by Norwich in the first round.

Meanwhile India Trigg, Imogen Wolstencroft, Anya George and Hannah Cooney fought hard before bowing out against eventual winners Glasgow Schools' Rowing Club in the Bea Langridge Trophy for junior quad sculls.

Those eight rowers make up two quads hoping to secure a spot in the Diamond Jubilee Challenge Cup at next week's Henley Royal Regatta.

They battle against more than 30 rivals in a time trial on Friday, when there are seven places up for grabs.

A junior men's quad of Rhys Coffey, George Crouchley, Matt Radford and Lawrence Williams will join them on the famous course.

Their aim is to make the main draw of the Fawley Challenge Cup, for which clubmates George Lawton, Greg Murphy, Harry Taylor and Kevin Dudley have already qualified.

A Grange School boat, with Matt Strickland-Baker, Sam Hawes, Nat Antrobus and James Darbyshire on board, takes part in the same time trial.

Lawton, Murphy, Taylor and Dudley continued their preparation by taking sixth place in the A final at Marlow Regatta on Saturday.

The success of their older clubmates at Henley inspired younger girls at Northwich to victory at Saturday's Stratford Regatta.

Charlotte Almond won in her boat class, under 16s girls' single, while an under 13s girls' quad of Sophie Garlik, Honor Campbell, Bethan Coffey and Anna Carnell took first prize too.

ROWING

29.6.16.

HENLEY HOPES

Club record number of crews to contest Britain's pinnacle rowing event

By Matt Turner

NORTHWICH Rowing Club have been left cursing their luck after the draw for the Henley Royal Regatta pitted two of their crews against each other.

The junior men's quad scull 'B' crew of Rhys Coffey, George Crouchley, Matt Radford and Lawrence Williams came through a Fawley Challenge Cup qualifying event over the weekend, beating off competition from 40 other boats to secure their place in the main draw.

However, they must now face off against the club's 'A' crew of George Lawton, Greg Murphy, Harry Taylor and Kevin Dudley, whose form so far this season had seen them qualify in advance.

Despite the bad luck, Northwich coach Jed Barlow says everyone is excited to be heading down to the prestigious event and hopes his crews can cope with the occasion.

"It's a bit unfortunate that the two men's crews will face each other as both have the capability of doing well," he said.

"The guys have been working very hard since last September, all eight of them have trained over winter together.

"There's been lots of miles put in, weights lifted and rowing machines thrashed, they've all worked extremely hard.

"It's a shame one of them won't go any further but we believe we've put in the right amount of preparation.

"The occasion will be brilliant with a lot of hospitality facilities all over the course but that can add pressure on its own.

"We've done the right training to cope with it so we hope the guys can keep the focus inside the boat and cut out the numerous distractions."

The girls' 'A' crew of Beth Willford-Dutton, Lucy Gillbanks, Anya George and Jess Swindells have also qualified for the main regatta, making it a club record of three crews competing at the event.

"All in all, there is a feeling of tremendous pride in the club's achievement," Barlow said.

"Henley is the pinnacle of British rowing, everyone recognises that and we've been competing there consistently for a few years now."

ROWING

6.7.16.

Northwich slip to early exit

Junior men's quad beat clubmates before losing to Leander at Henley Regatta

By Andrew Simpson

NORTHWICH Rowing Club could not upset one of the favourites to win the Fawley Challenge Cup at Henley Royal Regatta.

A junior men's quad stroked by George Lawton, with Harry Taylor, Kevin Dudley and Greg Murphy on board, exited this year's edition in Thursday's second round.

They matched the speed and power of Leander Club – who included former Grange School Rowing Club sculler Ben Holt in their line-up – during the early exchanges but they were separated by three boat-lengths at the finish.

It brought to an end Northwich's involvement following first-round defeats for another junior men's quad – pitted against their clubmates in the draw – and a junior women's quad.

George Crouchley, Rhys Coffey, Matt Radford and Lawrence Williams halved a gap that had grown to two lengths during their head-to-head with Northwich A in testing conditions.

Later the same day the girls were involved in a dramatic encounter with Shiplake Vikings, racing on their home stretch of water, in the Diamond Jubilee Challenge Cup.

The Northwich boat stopped dead when Anya George's blade caught a crab during the early stages, but she recovered – along with crewmates stroke Beth Willford-Dutton, Jess Swindells and Lucy Gillbanks – to challenge their rivals in the contest's second half.

They eventually lost by a length after a heroic late fight-back.

Three Northwich boats fare well at Henley Royal Regatta

NORTHWICH Rowing Club were history-makers at Henley Royal Regatta last week.

For the first time, three crews raced in green and gold along the world famous course.

Most successful of those was a junior men's quad, stroked by George Lawton, that reached the last 16 of the Fawley Challenge Cup.

Harry Taylor, Kevin Dudley and Greg Murphy were also on board during a first-round defeat of their clubmates on Wednesday.

However they could not prevent one of the favourites, Leander Club, from progressing to the quarter finals the following afternoon.

A junior women's quad lost their opener against Shiplake Vikings in dramatic circumstances, recovering from a slow start to push their rivals to the finish.

"I'm fantastically proud of our junior athletes – they can all hold their heads high," said captain Stewart Plant.

"It was an incredible regatta."

6.7.16.

Report, page 69

13.7.16.

Teenagers turn attention to British Junior Championships

TALENTED teenagers from Northwich Rowing Club continue a busy regatta season at the British Junior Championships in Nottingham this weekend.

A total of 11 boats will represent the club at the National Water Sports Centre during a three-day event scheduled to start on Friday.

Greg Murphy, Matthew Radford, Matthew Roberts and Lawrence Williams, who competed at Henley Royal Regatta, form an under 18s boys' quad.

Meanwhile Lucy Gillbanks and Beth Willford-Dutton, who won a silver medal at the National Schools' Regatta in May, join forces again in the under 18s girls' double.

Two other Northwich crews will contest the same category.

Kevin Dudley, part of a Northwich quad that reached the last 16 at Henley, has entered the under 18s boys' single sculls.

Meanwhile Ellie Cushen, of Grange School Rowing Club, competes in an under 15s girls' single.

Follow their progress online at *northwichguardian.co.uk*

20.7.16

ROWING

GOLDEN GIRL

Grange School student wins national title on championship debut

By Andrew Simpson

A TEENAGER entered a national regatta for the first time to find out what it was like to race there – and returned home a champion.

Ellie Cushen, of Grange School Rowing Club, won a gold medal in the under 15s girls' single sculls at the British Rowing Junior Championships on Sunday.

She had only raced solo at one previous event.

"And she fell in that day too," said Graham Jump, head coach at the Hartford school.

"We talked about whether to give the nationals a try, and decided it would be a good experience for her with the intention on giving it a serious crack next year.

"She only went and won the thing – that wasn't part of our plan, I can assure you!

"Ellie sculled beautifully, adapting to testing conditions – as well as unfamiliar surroundings – with impressive maturity."

Cushen, 15, was almost two seconds faster than her closest rival – Isle of Ely's Freya Dingwall – during a time trial over 1,500m on Saturday morning.

She was an emphatic winner in the first semi final the following day, reaching the finish more than 12 seconds clear of Anna Buchanan (George Watson's College).

And Dingwall had to settle for second spot again in the final, trailing her rival by a longer distance than she had 24 hours earlier.

"She's a talented girl, and we're made up for her," added Jump.

Neighbours Northwich Rowing Club enjoyed a successful weekend too.

Rhys Coffey and George Crouchley made up an under 18s boys' double that secured silver – and with it an opportunity to represent their country – in their boat class.

They will now race in England colours at the Home International Regatta, which takes place in Cardiff, on Saturday.

Kevin Dudley and Lucy Gillbanks, both of them in a single scull for their age group, and a under 18s boys' quad also reached A finals.

Report, page 75

Clockwise from left, Northwich's George Crouchley and Rhys Coffey, Grange's Ellie Cushen alone and on podium

ROWING

20.7.16

England calls for Northwich double

Northwich Rowing Club crew to represent country as reward for success at nationals

By Andrew Simpson

NORTHWICH Rowing Club can add more names to a list of rowers that have been selected to represent their country.

Rhys Coffey and George Crouchley, who took silver in the under 18s boys' double sculls final at the British Junior Championships on Sunday, will race in England's colours this weekend.

A reward for their performance on the national stage is to take part in the Home International Regatta at Cardiff.

They were second fastest during a time trial over a 1,500m course on Saturday, stopping the clock at 5.47.9.

A victory in their semi final followed before they trailed outstanding Claires Court duo Jonathan Cameron and Alex Richardson to the line in Sunday's A final.

Three more Northwich boats contested finals.

Lucy Gillbanks qualified for the under 18s girls' single sculls showcase after finishing second in her semi final behind eventual gold-medallist Katy McDonald (Durham University).

She was fourth in the final.

Meanwhile Kevin Dudley took fifth in the under 18s boys' single sculls final.

A new combination in the under 18s boys' junior quad sculls, with Dudley joining Matthew Radford, Greg Murphy and Matthew Roberts on board, ranked sixth.

They battled testing conditions at the National Water Sports Centre on Saturday, when strong winds prompted officials to halted racing briefly in the afternoon, to take third in an eliminator.

"To see our home-grown talent doing so well on the national stage at the end of an incredibly tough season is testament to the commitment of our athletes and their trainers," said coach Rachel Hooper.

"We've again shown as a club we have real depth to our squads."

Charlotte Almond and Rachel Cooney classified 10th overall in the under 15s girls' double sculls after finishing fourth in the B final.

In the under 18s girls' double sculls, Jess Swindells and Abbie Davies narrowly missed out on a semi-finals place after ranking 15th in Saturday's time trial.

The fastest 12 crews progressed.

Meanwhile Leon Langmead, who represented Northwich at last year's Henley Royal Regatta, was a medal-winner in Croatia at the weekend.

The former Sir John Deane's College student was part of a men's quad from Durham University that claimed silver at the European University Games.

Cushen wins, back page

27.7.16.

Young rowing star gets GB call for international regatta

NORTHWICH Rowing Club's Beth Willford-Dutton has been selected to represent Great Britain in the upcoming Coupe de la Jeunesse.

The Sir John Deane's College student has been named as part of the squad for the junior women's eight for the regatta in Poznan, Poland, which takes place this weekend.

She has also been named as a racing spare for the GB squad travelling to the international regatta held every year for the best under 18s in Europe.

Willford-Dutton has been in fine form this year, partnering clubmate Lucy Gillbanks to finish as runners-up in the junior girls' double scull at the Henley Women's Regatta and in turn becoming the first Northwich crew to reach a final at the event since 2003.

They also won another silver medal in the same class at May's National Schools Regatta while Willford-Dutton was also part of the Northwich junior girls' quad that competed at the Henley Royal Regatta, where they exited at the first round stage.

HENLEY ROYAL

ROWIN

Victory with England

27.7.16.

NORTHWICH rowers contributed to an England victory.

Rhys Coffey and George Crouchley finished third for their country at the Home International Regatta at Cardiff Bay.

Selection was reward for the Northwich Rowing Club pair winning a silver medal in the under 18s boys' double scull at the British Junior Championships.

The point they earned contributed to England winning overall in the junior men's competition.

Rowing - Regatta.
August 2016.

BLAZERS! BY COURTNEY LANDERS

This is a brand new Bewl Bridge Rowing Club blazer. The club was established in 1977 and until this year there was just one blazer, for the captain. We wore the club bow-ties on a pilot for a TV cooking show once – it took us four tries to tie them properly."

James Tibbles – Bewl Bridge RC

In the early '60s Magdalen College Boat Club, Oxford, replaced its set of blazers for the men's first eight. They were going to throw the old set out so I asked to keep mine; it's from the late 1920s. The hat and bow-tie are Magdalen kit too."

Ian Gordon – Magdalen College BC, Oxford

I joined Thames Rowing Club in 1981 when I came back to rowing after raising my family. I was the first woman to captain Thames – in 1991 for three years. This blazer is only for captains or those who row at Henley or Henley Women's. I had the hat made specially."

Pauline Rayner – Thames RC

Jo and I are from Northwich Rowing Club – we're both umpires, and Jo also rows. I wear the blazer mainly in memory of my late husband, who rowed with the club. After he died I become the club's welfare officer."

Susan Benyon & Jo Rafferty – Northwich RC

My blazer is from Fulham Reach Boat Club, a community boat club established in 2013. This year we taught 600 kids from state schools to row, and organised a Thames 100 relay – Oxford to Fulham Reach in five days! Our goal is to be at Henley in 2020."

Tysh Hubbard – Fulham Reach BC

We're from RSVU Okeanos. My blazer belonged to Nico Rienks, the stroke of the Holland Acht that won gold at the 1996 Olympics. Our blazers get passed down and cannot be washed unless the club wins the Varsity Oude

Rowing & Regatta. Aug 2016

WHAT WAS IT LIKE RACING AT DORNEY?

I definitely found it pretty inspiring to think that I was racing on the same course as the best rowers in the world, especially those who I have always looked up to."
Autumn – Bedford Modern School

Having crowds of supporters all the way up to the 1000m-mark created an amazing racing atmosphere found at very few other venues or regattas in the country."
Alex – Windsor Boys' School

Dorney definitely had the Olympic atmosphere. The silence whilst waiting for starters orders at the top was slowly replaced by a crescendo of noise as we raced down the course."
George – Northwich Rowing Club
Lawton.

In one word: awesome! When the pain sets in, you can visualise yourself being part of one of the Olympic crews and I found that really helpful."
Angus – King's School Canterbury

ROWING

2.8.16.

HERE FOR YOU

Northwich rower remembers journey's start ahead of fourth Olympics

By Andrew Simpson

MATTHEW Langridge, who arrived in Rio on Friday ahead of competing at his fourth Olympic Games, says he will not forget where his journey started.

He still recalls sitting in a boat for the first time at Northwich Rowing Club.

"They're the main reason I'm here," he said.

"I wandered down randomly as a 14-year-old on day, and now I'm a four-time Olympian.

"Sometimes you pause and wonder 'What if?' Had the people there not set me on the path I followed since, how different would my life have been?"

Langridge, now 33, has won medals – one silver, the other bronze – as part of Great Britain's men's eight at each of the past two Olympic regattas in Beijing and London.

He races in the same boat in Brazil, where he hopes to add the colour that's missing from his collection.

The first round is on Monday afternoon, with the final scheduled for the following Saturday.

"I didn't think I'd reach this point," added the former Hartford High School pupil.

"When I first started to row, it was just a sport I wanted to do like any other.

"The enjoyment of being there kept me going. It was fun, and a great environment to be part of.

"Because it made me happy, I wanted to spend more time there and to train harder to improve.

"Those people that encouraged me, like my first coach Paul Rafferty, were volunteers.

"They made an effort in to make be better, which is something I'll always be grateful for.

"Guys like Paul give up their free time, and don't get the accolades for the part they play.

"Nobody will read his name anywhere if we win gold, but it's people like him I'll be thinking of."

Scott Durant, Tom Ransley, Andrew Triggs Hodge, Matt Gotrel, Pete Reed, Paul Bennett, Will Satch and cox Phelan Hill join Langridge in the men's eight.

Langridge interview, page 65

Lawton named in British team for world championships

GEORGE Lawton, from Northwich Rowing Club, has been confirmed as part of Great Britain's team for the World Junior Championships in Rotterdam later this month.

member Rory Harris, with whom he rowed in the same boat class at the Coupe de la Jeunesse last year.

The Sir John Deane's College student is the latest Northwich rower to earn international

performance with the women's eight at the Coupe last weekend.

Before that, Rhys Coffey and George Crouchley represented England at the Home International Regatta in Cardiff.

announced by British Rowing last week.

They are part of a larger 113-strong contingent that competes on the Willem-Alexander Baan rowing course

2.8.16.

Northwich Guardian

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Matthew sets his sights on gold at Rio Olympics

MATTHEW Langridge flew to Brazil on Friday ahead of his fourth appearance at an Olympic Games.

The former Hartford High School pupil, who tried his chosen sport for the first time at Northwich Rowing Club, is part of Team GB's men's eight.

It is a boat in which he has won medals at the past two events – one silver, the other bronze – in Beijing and London.

Langridge, and company, third at the European Championships earlier this year, are scheduled to race heats on Monday afternoon.

"We'll get it right in Rio," the 33-year-old told the Guardian in an exclusive interview before boarding a plane to South America. For more, turn to pages 65 and 68.

Matthew Langridge, left, with James Foad after they won gold at last year's European Championships.

ROWING

2.8.16.

My last chance, but we'll get it right says Langridge

Northwich rower will go for gold as part of Team GB's men's eight at Rio Olympics

By Andrew Simpson

Great Britain's men's eight, back from left, Scott Durant, Andy Triggs Hodge, Will Satch, Matt Gotrel and Paul Bennett. Front, from left, Tom Ransley, Pete Reed, Matt Langridge and cox Phelan Hill. Picture: Peter Spurrier/Intersport Images

MATTHEW Langridge is not easily fazed anymore by the challenges his chosen sport can present.

Instead he has spent the final year of his career, the lead-up to his fourth Olympic Games as part of Great Britain's rowing team, seeing familiar places through different eyes.

Each camp, race, regatta is one closer to his last.

"I've never really liked training that much anyway," he laughs when asked whether making an early decision he would retire after returning from Rio had led to any feelings of sadness.

"It's been nice to appreciate the places more, and I've made the most of that.

"In the past, I've hated the camps – particularly one we do at altitude in the Sierra Nevada.

"After 15 years going there, knowing I wouldn't again after the latest visit made it more bearable!"

After winning a bronze medal in the men's eight at London four years ago – adding to a silver one he brought home from Beijing in 2008 – the former Northwich Rowing Club member does not shy away from what he wants to achieve in Brazil.

If things to go plan, he will be sat waiting for the final to start on Saturday week.

Heats take place on Monday afternoon.

The British crew, reigning world champions in the boat class, will have to do something they haven't yet this season – beat their old foes Germany.

After finishing a disappointing third at the European Championships, Langridge and company were fourth and then second at World Cup regattas that followed.

"I haven't lost any confidence at all we'll get it right [in Brazil]," the 33-year-old insists.

"Look at Jurgen Grobler, our coach; I've watched his crews so many times. No matter how things look in the build-up, they pull a performance out of the bag in the final.

"I've every faith we'll do the same.

"There's definitely an added edge knowing this is my last chance, but that doesn't stress me out.

"The best bit of advice I've ever had is to worry only about being better than the opposition on the day.

"It's not important to be perfect, and that takes the pressure away.

"I'd be lying if I said my imagination hasn't wandered at certain moments and I've pictured in my head what it might be like to cross the line first.

"But when that happens, I quickly stop.

"I don't want to think about the result, just doing the right things to get it."

Langridge places a high value on know-how, particularly when remembering the younger version of himself – aged just 21 – that turned up in Athens in 2004.

The former Hartford High School pupil had been crowned a world junior champion three years earlier, making history as the first Briton to win single sculls gold at that level.

He raced a double, with Matt Wells, in Greece that failed to make the final.

"I didn't have the best time," admits Langridge.

"I'd built up in my mind that everything would be perfect, that everybody would be faster or different in some way.

"When I got there, it felt like an anti-climax; it's still a race in straight lanes against the guys you've raced all year long.

"When you're in your 20s, and you don't know where your career is heading, you don't appreciate what's happening.

"I'm more relaxed now, and have taken the opportunity to reflect.

"I've enjoyed myself more as a result, and last winter's training was the best I've ever had."

On the subject of social media – Langridge has joined Twitter after years of indifference – he suddenly sounds less certain.

"It doesn't come naturally," he smiles.

"I find myself forgetting to tweet for ages, then sit there trying to think of something to say."

He'll have plenty of time to perfect his technique once retired.

Before then, Rio awaits.

ROWING

2.8.16

Beth brings back gold from successful GB bow

BETH Willford-Dutton played a part to help Great Britain's juniors claim overall honours at the Coupe de la Jeunesse for the first time since 2013.

The Northwich Rowing Club member set the tone for her teammates when she helped the women's eight to victory in impressive style during Friday's opener.

A further 23 medals, 14 of them gold, followed over the course of the weekend.

"Watching Beth stood on the podium listening to the national anthem was a special moment," said Rachel Hooper, the teenager's coach.

"Her determination to succeed is evident and, with another season left as a junior, I'm confident she will be one to watch at next year's world championships."

Willford-Dutton, a student at Sir John Deane's College, was part of a 51-strong squad that travelled to Poznan for an annual event that attracts the best under 18s from a dozen European nations.

She also took to the water in a single sculls race for spares on both days, winning twice in times that were better than her rivals in the main event.

"Beth has ended the season with three of the best races in her career so far," added Hooper, who was also part of Great Britain's party as Willford-Dutton's coach.

Great Britain dominated in Poland, recording the biggest winning margin ever – 82 points clear of Italy in second – and topping both the men's and women's standings.

"We exceeded all expectations," said team boss Mark Wilkinson.