

sports

Dal crew a big success

by Leith Blachford

Dalhousie's rowers pulled hard at the Connecticut regatta over Thanksgiving weekend. They amazed both themselves and the Americans with what can be expected from Canadian university rowing.

The Dalhousie Rowing Club sent seventy eager and robust rowers to the regatta. The results were exceptional. With obsolete equipment and exhausted rowers, five crews secured outstanding positions in races. The light-weight women's crew rowed to a medal for Dal, winning the bronze in a race with 38 boats. The novice light-weight and heavy-weight crews came 8th and 7th respectively, from races with 42 crews, while the heavy-weight women placed 7th out of 38. The varsity light-weight men also placed 9th out of 36.

"The results couldn't have been better", says John Maloney, president of the Club. "With limited

funds, and out-of-date equipment, the results were fantastic. Far beyond what I ever expected."

"We went down to Connecticut not expecting very much and we were invited to the college championships. We represented Dalhousie and Canada really well," says Struan Robertson, a novice heavy-weight rower. "No one had ever heard of us before, and we showed them what good sportsmanship is."

"The Dalhousie Rowing Club, which is in its second year, tries to create not just rowers, but also dedicated athletes who know how to combine sports with fun and co-operation", says Maloney.

"Rowing is a great experience. There's a lot of mental and physical concentration. I loved everything about it", says Justin Levy, a heavy-weight rower.

With practices beginning at 5:45 am, the sport may seem less than ideal to some, but rowers are a special breed in themselves.

"Even though the early morning

practices aren't that easy, I just thought being on the water and seeing the sun rise was incredible. My crew was amazing and it was the best experience of my life, it really was", says Monica Stroink, a novice light-weight rower.

Todd Hallett, who rowed for Canada in the Barcelona Olympic, coaches the men's novice heavy-weights. "Coaching was a completely new experience for me. I loved it the first day, thought it was hell the second, and then loved it from there on in. It's incredibly fun taking a crew from scratch and building them into rowers."

All of the coaches are faithful volunteers who actually end up paying money for the privileges of crawling out of bed at 5 am, and then stand freezing to death in the frigid morning air. Some even get to experience the pleasure of swimming in Lake Banook before sun rise. What a wonderful sport.

Lack of funding is a major obstacle faced by the club, and without up-



Members of the Dal crew smiling in Connecticut PHOTO: LEITH BLACHFORD

dated equipment, paid coaches and organizers, Dal rowing will be hard pressed to reach its full potential.

"This club is larger than any one team that Dal has and yet we get the minimal amount of club funding", says Maloney. "We paid close to \$15 000 of our own money, and we've represented Dal and Canada more successfully than any other second year programme has ever done."

With over 200 people coming out to try for the crews, and with incredible results at regattas, the interest and the talent is certainly there, says

Maloney.

Halifax is also a prime location for rowing, he says. The water and the facilities are excellent. The Halifax Rowing Club is also a prime spot for future regattas.

"Rowing is an up-and-coming sport in Canada", said Gill Barbour, a varsity light-weight rower. "It is getting stronger and more popular, and it would be great to get more funding for Dal rowing."

Although the fall rowing season is over, the crews plan to continue training and fund-raising through the winter in preparation for a prestigious regatta in Philadelphia this spring, the invitation to which was confirmed after Dal's impressive result in Connecticut.

"Without doubt, Dalhousie rowing is here to stay, and with financial support it will certainly become a force to be reckoned with", says Maloney. "What we accomplished with no money was amazing. Imagine what we could do with proper equipment and a little funding."

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they entered the box. While Pignatiello flirted with the keeper, Sedgwick took out a defender and then crossed for Pignatiello to knock it into the net, and Dal went up 2-1. Such brilliant offence was countered by brilliant defence when Chisolm put on a show of acrobatics for a World Cup save in the 23rd minute. But that was the last show of anything nice, because the remainder of the game was marred by dirty play and atrocious arbitration.

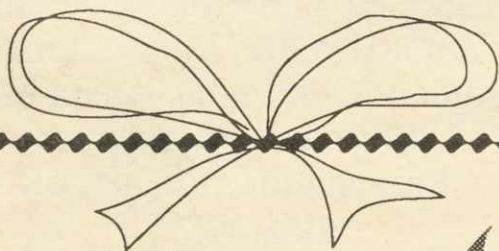
"They were pretty slow in their tackles," said Sedgwick after the game, who was quite frustrated with the game's development. "The ref let them get away with a lot. If he would have done something, they would have slowed down and perhaps not have kicked us as much. But I think we worked really well despite this."

Pignatiello agreed. "They slowed us down every time we got ahead of them. Any time a team gets an early goal and they just defend by kicking, then its going to be a close score, but if you look at anything but the score-sheet, you'll know we dominated the game."

Entering the final stretch of the schedule, Dal plays Saint Mary's on Wednesday, October 21 (just as the Gazette goes to press) for the most crucial game of the regular season, and then hosts the University of New Brunswick on Saturday, October 24 at 3pm, followed by Mount Allison on Sunday, at 2 pm.

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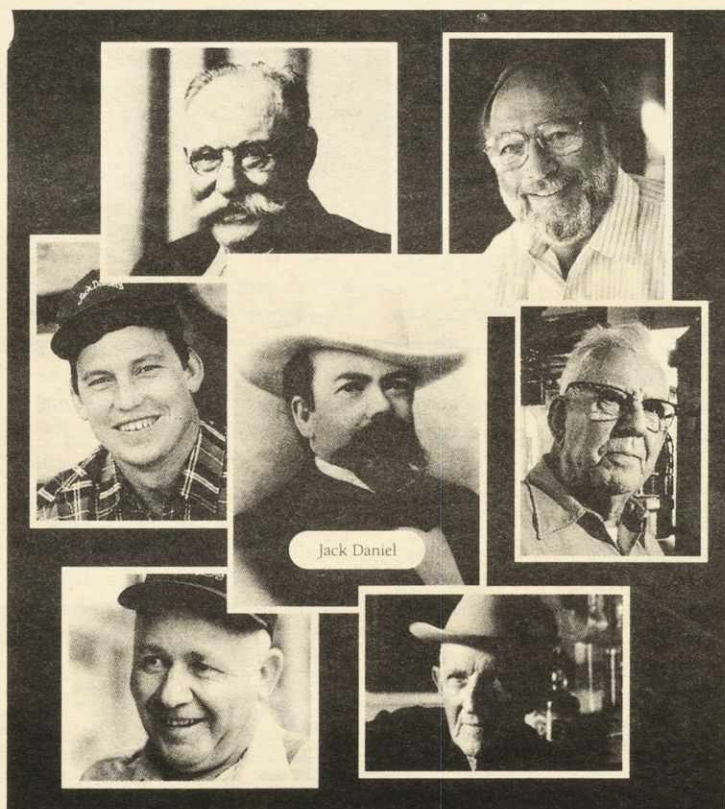
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