

### Summary:

Excellent weekend for Weybridge Junior squad at National Championships with the girls excelling themselves and improving every race to make the FINALS and finishing in 4th (Katy) and 5th (WJ14s) place. Boys performed well with a semi finalist in J16 singles, the J14 double had a great race to get through the first round, the J2- and J16 1x put in good attempts but didn't proceed in what is a challenging competition.

### Report:

Weybridge rowing club juniors loaded boats on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July in high spirits and travelled up to the national water sports centre in Nottingham for their first major regatta on the 2000m lake. The inexperienced but hard working junior team included boys and girls between the ages of 13 and 17. The National event was the culmination of a hard and successful years training and racing at local events. All the boats going had emerged from the selection procedure as being fast enough to be competitive despite limited experience and the juniors were very excited to be attending such a prestigious event.

The first to race were the boys J16 (year eleven) singles in the time trial which would decide the fastest twelve scullers from twenty five entries. Both competed gamely with Josh Foulkes managing to make the top twelve and the semi finals despite only learning to row last October! In the semi final Josh lost some time at the start due to inexperience but his endurance and determination showed as he powered past two of the opposition to get fourth place, just missing out on a final spot. James Ballard put in a good effort in the time trial but unfortunately did not proceed further in the competition.

Josh Foulkes then teamed up with J17 Zac Cole to compete up an age group in J18 pairs. This was the boy's first race in a pair but they have shown their strength and speed in training. The boys prepared well and were very nervous before the race, knowing the opposition would be good. They started well and were in third place with 500m gone but slowed through the middle of the race after a minor injury flared up in Zach's arm, the pair finished fourth just missing out on progressing further. However the crews that beat Weybridge beat some of the opposition by much bigger margins so the pair were certain that should they have raced in a different heat the result may have been different and they could have progressed further.

The next Weybridge junior in action was Katy Denham in the equivalent girl's event. Katy also learnt to row just last October but her times during training and success at local events had shown she was a serious contender in this event. She fought her way through each round and qualified for the last final spot where she put up a brave fight to keep in close to the top three for most of the race, finishing in a brilliant fourth place by beating two girls that had beaten her

previously in the competition. The final demonstrated just how hard Katy has worked over the year and how much the experienced has helped her learn how to race in big regattas.

The boys J14 (year nine) double of Fillippo Carrozzo and Ben Brisco were up next and excelled themselves to qualify third in their heat which allowed them to progress to the next round. In the next race the boys put up a valiant fight but were beaten by much bigger and more experienced crews to miss out on the final.

The girls J14 quad of Beth Jenkins, Megan Pickering, Emilia Cole, Elena Foulkes and cox Joe Marchington were outstanding in this competition. They went to the event having been beaten all year by local rivals Staines, who were successful in the finals at another national event earlier in the year. So the Weybridge girls felt confident they could progress to the semi finals, which they did in third place thirty five seconds behind Runcorn and thirteen seconds behind Henley. The Weybridge crew was pleased but felt they could do better and after a discussion of the race and a change in tactics the girls attacked the second race with fervor. The girls were six seconds slower than Staines in the first round so knew they had to improve to get through to the final. In an exciting race Weybridge and Staines were level at the 500m marker, Weybridge then put in a huge amount of energy and effort to pull away to a slight lead by halfway which they extended in the second half responding well to calls from their cox Joe. Weybridge crossed the line with delight at their performance having also closed the gap to the Henley crew. On Saturday the crew prepared well for their final, knowing it would be a tough race and all the other crews had beaten them in previous rounds. The plan was to put everything into the first half in the hope it would put off some other crews, Weybridge put the plan into action effectively and got to 500m in 5<sup>th</sup> place just half a second ahead of Henley and one second behind Runcorn who battled with Weybridge all the way through the race with Weybridge even managing to take half a length lead at one point. Weybridge finished exhausted but overjoyed with a close fifth place a conclusive nine seconds ahead of Henley.

The weekend was a huge success thanks to the competitors who represented the club excellently in behaviour and performance, the parents who supported the racing the weekends racing with vigour and enthusiasm, and provided nutritional supplies, and of course the coaches for trailer towing and advice throughout the weekend. Plans for the juniors next year start with Boston rowing marathon (52km) at the end of September to raise money for the club and charity, so if you see some tired looking teenagers training on the river in September wearing Weybridge blue give them some support!

Katy Knowles 17-7-11