

THE FUTURE OF LIMERICK ROWING

(By "ASPIRANT")

LIMERICK Regatta, held on Saturday week last, terminated the 1963 competitive rowing season, more or less. The fixture proved a resounding success and all concerned are to be congratulated on a job well done. But though we may bask momentarily in the laudatory comments and reassurances that Limerick is still one of the top centres in Irish rowing, it cannot be denied that the season past has been a very disappointing one for local clubs. Despite the fact that there was no serious shortage of oarsmen in evidence generally in Limerick, the performances of crews at regattas throughout the country was poor.

When a season such as this draws to an unsuccessful conclusion, it would be the easiest thing in the world to dip one's pen in vinegar and castigate crews for not training honestly or captains and coaches for not doing their job properly. We do not intend to do that, nor, indeed, can we. Crews generally, appeared to give of their best during the season and captains did all they could to turn out winning crews for their clubs. What, then, went wrong this season past, which started off so promisingly and ended so dismally?

From the tone of this column, so far, one might be inclined to think that rowing in this city was finished. It is far from it. The amount of crews on Limerick waters disproves such a theory. The only trouble is that our crews are not winning as they should.

Let us face a few facts for a moment. Wins are essential in a club to keep interest alive and to keep oarsmen moving up from maiden to junior and senior class. In the last five or six years, the number of local crews qualifying in any class could be counted on one finger. If this lack of wins continues indefinitely, in years to come there will not even be senior oarsmen around capable of coaching or taking over the captaincy of a club.

We maintain the standard of rowing in Limerick has not deteriorated to any alarming extent as yet. The trouble is that it has risen considerably in other centres, such as Dublin. That is why Limerick crews are not winning.

For instance, the final of the I.A.R.U. Senior Championship at Limerick Regatta was won by Old Collegians. Also in the final were Garda (a maiden eight at the beginning of the season) and Neptune (a junior eight). Collegians time was a fantastic 6m. 13s. for the mile-and-a-quarter course, and both Garda and Neptune were only a few seconds behind the winners. That was the sort of competition local crews had to face this year.

COMPARISONS

While it is dangerous to draw comparisons with crews of yesterday, we maintain that some of our former local winning crews would not have beaten either this Garda maiden eight or Neptune junior eight. The times they set up on a neutral course should prove that.

But let us get back to the main points of this article. It is quite easy to find the reasons why we are not winning trophies. It is a different matter finding remedies and putting them to action.

One thing that is seriously wrong with local rowing is coaching. The standard of coaching has remained sterile for many years now. Methods handed down from generation to generation have become hazy and outmoded. We want an experienced coach in Limerick clubs to rectify that and clear away some of the cobwebs that have gathered with years of diligent but unimproved application.

That looks very well in print, did I hear someone say? It is hard enough for a club to keep the wolf from the door these days, without even thinking of hiring the services of a coach for a season.

Yet, the next few years will tell a big tale as to the future of rowing in Limerick. If our crews do not win, there will be serious repercussions all round. The services of a coach was never so badly needed, even if he was only to stay in a club for a few weeks—it would be something.

This could be arranged by clubs coming together and pooling resources to bring a man here for a season. This suggestion is not a new one, but we have yet to see constructive attempts made to bring about something of this nature.

The Garda have had the services of no less than six coaches this season—many of them ex-blues of Cambridge and Oxford Universities. What chance have we against that? Maybe the services of one of these men could be procured next season?

MUNSTER COUNCIL?

While on the subject of clubs pooling resources, it might be an idea if all the commercial clubs in Munster got together during the season in an attempt to devise ways and means of bringing up the standard of rowing in the province.

One of the first things that could be discussed is the extraordinary strange hold the Garda crews have gained over maiden and junior classes since 1956. Whether we like it or not, serious thought will have

to be given to the dominance of this Metropolitan club. They have even surpassed the universities in ruling the roost in both junior and maiden events.

With the ideal type of build for oarsmen so readily available in their ranks, and first-class coaching and training facilities at hand, they will continue to dominate as long as they compete to the detriment of clubs such as ours all over the country. All these are concrete facts and not "sour grapes." We wish them the best of luck, however, and all we can say is, "more power to their elbows."

We cannot see any obvious solution to such problems as these at the moment. But clubs down south will have to come together and try and thrash out their difficulties in general.

There is no doubt about it, but we in Limerick rowing will have to put on our thinking caps if the sport is to prosper and flourish. Methods and systems that were good enough fifty years ago will have to be dispensed with if the sport is to stay viable.

Methods such as training pools are now a "must" if a club intends to stay ahead. St. Michael's will have their super-de-luxe model working this close season and should prove of immense benefit. Athlunkard also have their tank, but much more use could be made of it than has been up to this. Shannon and Limerick, also should think strongly of installing such pools on their premises.

INNOVATION

An innovation tried out by A.B.C. this year was an early in the season "At Home." This gave oarsmen the vital competition early in the year and proved a great success. Maybe next year more of our city clubs will follow suit and run similar fixtures even earlier still or on vacant Sundays during the rowing season.

Plans for the formation of a rowing League were also mooted during the season but never got off the ground. This league was to take the form of a points award system to winners and runners-up of races.

Here again, the services of past-oarsmen would prove of great benefit to harassed captains in the running of such leagues. It is hard enough for captains and vice-captains to look after the welfare of crews on the water besides looking after such innovations.

Indeed, we must say the lack of past oarsmen taking an active interest in the sport gets more apparent with each passing year. If the interest goes at the top, then we have grave qualms for the future of the sport.

THE OARSMEN

And to wind up this resume we turn to the people in whose hands the future of the game mainly rests—the oarsmen. Let us quote what Harry Doyle—the stroke of the Collegians eight, said when we asked him how local clubs are going to beat the Garda and the universities: "If eight or more oarsmen keep fit during the winter months by weight-lifting, etc., and are ready to step into a boat in early March; if they are prepared to give unstintingly for five nights of the week for the rest of the season and have the right spirit and will to win, there is no reason why they should not succeed."

Of course, some of our crews, C.B.S. and Limerick B.C. in particular, were out very early in the season but did not succeed to any great extent. Yet we are sure they did their best—no one is asked to do any more.

NEPTUNE'S SUCCESSES

The fact of oarsmen playing rugby football during winter months is a big drawback to the planning of an early start to the rowing season. Yet, if lads involved in this game could pay a visit to their respective rowing clubs maybe twice a week in the winter, and indulge in a spot of rowing in the tank and indoor training, the results accruing would be of immense benefit to them in both sports. On top of that, if conditions were suitable, a weekly spin could easily be arranged in an eight or four, if oarsmen were keen enough to do so.

The first-class Neptune junior crews of this season proved that commercial clubs such as theirs can hold their own still with the top clubs in the country. Neptune trained all through the winter—twice a week in-door training and a spin in the boats on Sunday. Are the parents of Limerick prepared to do likewise?

LIMERICK REGATTA

One consoling feature of the season past was the return of Shannon R.C. to competitive

Great international wrestling programme

WORLD-CLASS STARS AT ST. JOHN'S

(By DES HANRAHAN)

GREATEST wrestling treat ever in Limerick will be presented at St. John's Pavilion next Monday, August 5, first bout 9 p.m. World champion Gentleman Jim Lewis, the greatest welterweight in the business, and seven other international stars complete the programme.

There will be four ten round contests, and easily the most colourful attraction will be the appearance of Randolph Turpin, ex-middleweight boxing champion of the world, who beat the fabulous Sugar Ray Robinson. Turpin has been wrestling for the past 18 months in cross-channel and continental rings, and during this period is unbeaten. At the moment, he is the highest paid wrestler in Britain. His opponent is Syd MacManus, of London, who is recognised as one of the toughest men in the light-heavyweight class, so that the matching of these two should provide Limerick fans with a thrilling fight.

NOTED STYLIST

The other top-line attraction is, of course, the pairing of Gentleman Jim Lewis, welterweight champion of the world, with Peter Linwall who is considered in England as the finest stylist in the game.

Jim Lewis wrestled in practically every country in Europe and is just back after a tour of the United States and Canada where he put his title in stake in over 70 contests. His most famous hold is the "Boston Crab." Lewis became world champion in 1961, when he defeated the French and world champion, and in 200 fights since has beaten all-comers.

Lewis' opponent, Linwall, is one of the busiest wrestlers in Britain and has given Lewis two great contests during the past year and the third meeting should be a thriller.

HEAVYWEIGHT BATTLE

The heavyweight clash between 16 stoners Jack Riley of

Helfast, who is now resident in Manchester, and has been wrestling for the past three years in England very successfully, and "Black Mask" promises to be equally entertaining. Black Mask actually wears a mask over his head which he removes at the end of the contest, provided the opponent defeats him. The black mask has only been removed twice in the last two seasons despite the wearer's appearance in the ring, often four times a week, during that period.

Completing the programme will be a middleweight battle between Tom Sedgley, of London, and Eric Falkes of Liverpool. Both of these wrestlers are noted for their all-action tactics, which always provide the fans with an exciting bout.

The tournament is promoted by the famous Ted Gallagher, who is also a world renowned boxing promoter. Ted recently tried to stage a fight between Sugar Ray Robinson and the Cork-born British middleweight champion, Mick Leahy. This fight was to have been held in Galway, this week, but he was refused the use of the G.A.A. Stadium.

Never before has Limerick had such a star studded wrestling line-up, and a full house should be the result for Mr. Gallagher's efforts.

In an interview with a "Limerick Leader" reporter, (to-day, Mr. Gallagher said:—"This is without a shadow of doubt a programme that should not be missed. It is about the best to be seen anywhere."

Admission prices are 5/-, 8/- and 10/6, and the first bout is timed for 9 p.m. Doors open at 8 o'clock.

ASTOR ATHLETIC A.G.M.

Officers and committee for 1963/64 season: President, Mr. P. Quilty; Vice-President, Mr. M. O'Donnell (Snr.); Chairman, Mr. W. Kennedy; Vice-Chairman, Mr. J. O'Farrell; Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. James Kelly, 42 Sexton St. North, Thomondgate, Limerick; Assistant Sec., Mr. T. Cronin; Press Reps., Mr. P. Higgins, Committee: Messrs. J. McNamara, C. Mottell, J. Coughlan, C. O'Mahoney, M. O'Halloran. Team captain, T. Wallace; team vice-capt., J. Coughlan; Team Secretary, Mr. C. O'Mahoney.

DEATHS

ALLEN—July 31, 1963 (suddenly), Leo Allen, Evergreen, Farranshone, Limerick, and late of Elm Park, Carina, and O.E. Road Passenger Service, Limerick. Deeply regretted by his sorrowing wife, son, daughters, brothers and relatives. R.I.P. Remains were removed from Regional Hospital to St. Munchin's Church last (Thursday) evening. Funeral arrangements later. (c)

McGRATH—August 1, 1963, at Regional Hospital, Patrick McGrath, 79 New Road, Pennywell. Deeply regretted by his sons, daughters, son-in-law and grandchildren. R.I.P. Remains will be removed to St. John's Cathedral this (Friday) evening at 8.15 o'clock. Requiem Mass to-morrow (Saturday) at 7.30 o'clock. Funeral at 2.45 o'clock same day to Mt. St. Laurence Cemetery. (c)

Limerick sportsman dies in England

The death has taken place recently in Birmingham of Mr. Michael J. Hurley, formerly of Limerick. In his youth, deceased took an active part in sport. In July, 1919, at the Limerick Regatta, he rowed No. 2 in the Athlunkard, maiden four, which died-headed with Limerick B.C. In the re-row the same evening A.B.C. won by a length.

He rowed No. 6 in the maiden and junior eights which won several trophies. In the rugby season 1923-24, he won a Munster Junior Cup medal with Shannon and also a Munster Senior Cup medal with Garryowen. The interment took place in Birmingham.

Accused of stealing boat

Three labourers appeared at Limerick City Court to-day charged with the larceny of an aluminum boat, value £25, and the property of the Minister for Finance.

They were James Ryan, 21 Hennessy Ave., Killeely; John Ryan, 146 St. Munchin Street, St. Mary's Park; and Patrick Hickey, 84 St. Munchin Street, St. Mary's Park.

Mr. George Conlon, engineer, employed by the Board of works, said that the boat was an official issue to him and he moored it with a chain at the river bank below Sarsfield Bridge.

Defendants made statements in which they said that they found the boat in the mud below Barrington's Pier and turned it over and cleaned the mud out of it. They brought it upstream and moored it, and later used it on the Shannon when the boat they had been themselves got broken. One of them painted the boat red, as he was afraid it would rust. They didn't report the matter to the Garda.

Garda Patrick Carmody gave evidence of taking the statements from the defendants.

After submission by Mr. M. B. O'Malley, solr., for two of the defendants, that they should have been charged under the Act dealing with sea wrecks and not under the Larceny Act, Justice M. de Burca adjourned his decision in the case until later.

Mr. D. Funch, solr., appeared for the third defendant.

A6 inquiry

In the British House of Commons to-day, a Labour member, Mr. Fenner Brockway, has called for a public inquiry into the trial of James Hanratty, who was hanged in August, 1961, for the murder of Michael Gregson.

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