

SPORTS DIGEST

ST MICHAELS ROWING

BUSY: SMRC's large group of rowers have been busy in recent weeks, attending the twin events of the Limerick Regatta and the Rowing Ireland Schools Regatta being held on successive days in April at O'Briensbridge, followed by attendance by some of our juniors at their first international event in recent years, with a trip to Queen's Uni Regatta at Castlewellan, Co Down last weekend.

LIMERICK REGATTA: This attracted a big entry this year, with the local venue also hosting schools from around the country the following day, resulting in a great influx of junior crews in particular giving hot competition for all titles. But it was a more mature crew, in the shape of the Master's 8, who garnered the club's first medals of the day, taking the honours over Fermoy's crew in a 1,000m race. A good row by Mark O'Brien & Robert Sheehan brought them the Men's Senior Pair title, and that duo combined with John McDonald and Killian O'Shea to defeat Skibbereen in the Senior 4-. Our Intermediate 8 finished 2nd to St Joseph's, and Stuart McDonnell captured the Masters Single Sculling title. In the Women's events, Alice O'Sullivan won the Intermediate Singles, and although our Junior 18, J16 & J15 girls competed well in a range of events from doubles to 8's, a few second-place finishes were the best they achieved. In the Junior Mens events, our crews made it through to most finals of the day but with many strong clubs such as Portora (Enniskillen), Commercial (Dublin) and the best Galway and Cork clubs all in attendance, we had to settle for second or third places in many events. Our J18 8 couldn't match the experienced Portora crew who specialise in that event, and our J16s also found their Northern Ireland rivals too strong. In the coxed quad, our J16s had a great battle with Cork Boat Club and Lee Rowing Club, with the latter taking the verdict by a quarter-length from SMRC, and our J15s lost narrowly to local rivals Castleconnell in their coxed quad final. However Dylan O'Byrne and Peter Furey from that crew made amends in capturing the J15 Double Sculls title to complete the club's medal haul.

QUEENS: A group of 18 scullers & coxes from our J15/J16 squads made the long trip to Co

Down for Queen's Regatta, and together with parents and coaches Joe Cantillon & Niall Ahern enjoyed a splendid day in Castlewellan. Our Junior 15 Doubles pairings of Jessica Devereaux / Cara Lowe and Jennifer White / Lara O'Malley competed in the first final of the day, and from early in the race they left their Portora opponents trailing and went head-to-head for the medals. Jessica & Cara seemed to have the edge but in the last 100m Jennifer & Lara made a surge and almost won it, a mis-timed stroke just before the line possibly costing them the win over their club-mates. Three of those four then had a long wait to combine in the quad with Suzie Smith, with Alison Kiely coxing for another medal chance, but despite leading at half-way in that final they tired in the closing stages and were beaten by Bann RC. Three scullers competed in the MJ16 1x heats, with Matt Keating making it to the final but he didn't make the podium there. It was a similar story for Jason Kiely and Mike Guilfoyle in the J16 Double-Sculls, where they easily won their heat but not the final. In the MJ16 4x+, our crew of Keating, Pat McGowan, Sam Keely and Aaron Craughan with cox Jack Kelly were comfortable in their heat, but came up against a good Methodist crew in the final and had to settle for second place, beaten by one length. In the J15s, it was a similar story as the quad of Dylan O'Byrne, Peter Furey, Ryan Spelman and John Christie with cox Evan Kiely, had to also settle for 2nd to Commercial RC, with the margin of defeat just half-a-length. These boys also competed in two doubles, both crews making the final where Dylan & Ryan had a clear-water win to collect another brace of medals and complete a good days racing, where all our scullers made it to at least one final.

SCHEDULE: Next on the timetable for our various crews will be Metro Regatta (Blessington), followed by Carlow and Castleconnell, and a couple of trips to Cork as the regatta season