

The National Schools' Regatta, established in 1947, took place from 27th-29th of May at Dorney Lake, home water of Eton College. A booking error (!) had forced the event to move from its usual venue of the National Watersports Centre at Holme Pierrepont, situated as it is conveniently in the centre of the country; coaches also complained of high accommodation and daily parking costs at the event. Nonetheless, the regatta hosted more than 5000 athletes aged 14-18 from over 150 Schools and Clubs, who took part in a total of 253 races.

Dez Atkins, Martin Kay, Ian Wilson, Declan Gamble and Nicola Benavente were some of the Nottingham coaches looking after crews and scullers over the weekend.

For the first time, Nottingham Rowing Club entered the Championships Girls' 8+, where the crew of Priya Jenkins, Megan Pepper, Siena Hayes, Hannah Stocks, Rachael Heap, Charlotte Brown, Katie Swales, Ella Kay and cox Eliza Cox performed admirably in picking up the silver medal. Saturday began with a time-trial, in which the girls were second, sandwiched between Headington School in first place and Lady Eleanor Holles (LEH). Nottingham then won their semi-final, with Headington winning the other. Coach Declan Gamble takes up the story: "In the final the crew had an awful start, and were lying 7th at 250 m. However the girls began to claw their way back into contention and by 500 m were lying joint third with Marlow Rowing Club, LEH were second and Headington were out in front. The race was on for silver. Marshalled by Eliza Cox the crew, having dropped Marlow, made ground on LEH. With 250 m to go and in the 'red buoy' zone the crew continued to fight, with Priya upping the rate to mount an all-out sprint finish. The boats were level 100 m from the line. A photo finish was on but Nottingham took silver by a foot! A fantastic achievement for scullers who had taken up sweep-oared rowing last December. Many thanks to Ian Wilson for his coaching and advice".

On the same day, "Start" coach Nicola Benavente noted: "Matt Haywood came out of the National Schools' Regatta as the most successful GB Rowing Team "Start" athlete. He had a brilliant day in the Championship Single Sculls, the pinnacle of National Schools' Sculling events. He finished 5th in the initial time trial and 3rd in the semi-final, giving him a place in the A final. That final was a great battle with athletes from previous GB Trials, in which Matt kept his cool, stayed with the pack and at 1000 m made a move to break the Ely sculler. This brought him into the bronze position but he then took on the Pangbourne competitor and powered into silver. Last year's World Junior gold medallist from Glasgow Schools won the race". She continued: "Matt Haywood and James Mawby boated on Sunday in the Championship Double Sculls event. The time trial placed them 8th, showing a very strong overall field; they then went out and succeeded in winning their semi-final. The final was, as expected, a bloodbath with a high standard of junior sculling. The powerful Nottingham double kept with the pack and began a move at 1000 m to pass all the boats but Windsor Boys' School who took the gold. So it was

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Matt's second silver of the weekend".

In the Championship Girls' Second Quads, the crew of Megan Pepper, Aerin Thompson, Hannah Stocks and Charlotte Brown won gold and became inaugural champions, as this was the first time the event had been run at National Schools'. The girls rocketed out of the blocks and were well in the lead as early as 250 m. This caught the attention of Regatta Radio, who commented: "This is an example of perfect sculling technique, beautiful square blades, no undue layback, quick catch. The Nottingham girls are giving a great demonstration of ladies' quad sculling. They are really bossing this race". The final verdict was "easily", with Warrington Rowing Club in second place and Grange School third.

Nottingham Rowing Club returned to Trentside with a haul of one gold, three silvers and an enhanced reputation for high quality junior rowing and sculling.

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Below: the silver medal winning Championship Girls' Eight

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Below: medallists from the Championship Double Sculls, with Matt and James on the left

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