

## Royal Flying Doctor Services Rowathon

**Sunday - Race day minus 6** – a 20km training row completed and the only question is what's the forecast for race day? – 38 degrees – there's no good news there.

**Wednesday - Race day minus 3** – a good technical session but not too long – two questions – what's the forecast and what's our fundraising total? Down to 32 degrees and up to \$2.5k

**Friday – Race day tomorrow** – forecast 33 degrees and funds total \$9.5k – leading the fundraising - first time I can recall any club out in front of Hawthorn

**Race day** – 0600 – leave early for Trentham Cliffs, the new departure point for the boats – it should be a great first leg – 18kms then off the clock in front of Mildura Rowing Club before we head for the lock. Still in front on the fundraising.

In the meantime coxless quad, boat 31 – ours, sets off – 0726 - Richmond ladies boat 32 right behind us; with almost all others in front of us. Just the way we like it; it gives us plenty to chase. And chase them down we do. Straighten the lines on the wide Murray River and one by one we reel in the other boats.

Two seat, Guy, calling the rating and splits we sit on 22 and under 2.15 until bow seat calls the Mildura Bridge 1000 metres out. As usual we sit up, jack the rate and cut the split – have to look good as you cross the timekeeper's line. Turns out it was 75 minutes flat – that's competitive calls out time keeper Roger Wilson. But I'm surprised we haven't caught the two Octo's – that's unusual.

But still there is more – slowly we nose up into the marshalling area until we're call into the lock. There is another little psychological advantage to be had here – quietly push forward till you are the closest to the lock exit – it always lifts the confidence when you are the first boat that the morning tea crowd sees arrive.

Amongst great good humour between the crews, 19 boats raft up and enjoy the sinking 3 metres down to the new river level. The lock keeper confirms history is being made today.



Get straight to the scones and jam and cream – it's hard to hold more than three at once but worth trying. Scones and jam and cream never taste as good as this. Catch up with the support crew, refill the water, grab another scone – it's time to go.

Next is a big leg 25kms.

Again run good lines, reel in boats, encourage those we pass and try to hold that split. Don't tell the others in boat we're catching another boat – they just respond when the call comes to jack the rate to 25- down goes the split to 2.00. Spirits lift as we put another boat behind but damn it's hard to drop some boats.

The temperature is climbing (so is the split), the thirst is growing, the butt is hurting now it's getting hard to hold the technique – same for everyone I guess – each in their private world wondering why they're doing it. We'll know but 9pm tonight but right now focus!

Looking over my shoulder for the thousandth time I reckon I know that landmark – the pumping station just before the Golf Club – we're really close now! Sit up guys last 500 metres for our day.

Luckily the Golf Club Bar manager is accommodating to rowers in grungy zooties – he understands the importance of immediate rehydration.

Boat on the trailer; see off the Richmond ladies as they tackle another 25km leg to Wentworth and it's time to get ready for the celebration dinner. Another quick check of the fundraising totals.

And so to dinner – another outstanding effort by Wentworth Rowing Club – what a community of tremendous supporters!

Tired, hungry and thirsty rowers are impatient to get through the speeches and the auction until it's time for the awards.

The first one we're keen to hear about is the Wentworth Perpetual Trophy for fastest boats without a crew change over the first two legs; won by Richmond men in 2018. And yes worth a mini air pump; Richmond men win again with a 43km time of 194 minutes. Good reason to celebrate.



Next is the Jack Joel trophy for the Club that raises the most funds; again Richmond in association with our colleagues at Latrobe! Over \$13,500 putting us more than \$4000 ahead of the nearest Club Hawthorn!



And finally, the Lee Mann Fundraising Medal for the highest individual fundraiser goes to Richmond's Guy Ayres with a total of more than \$4500. An absolutely outstanding effort.

What a weekend for Richmond Rowing Club.

And so it's thanks to the rowers, donors, supporters, volunteers and the Club for providing the fastest boats and trailer.

Next year promises to be just as exciting with a new route heading down the Murray on the cards. Be there!