

Christchurch Nationals (*Maelene Brake*)



Well, what can I say; we work hard and play even harder – that was evident by the 2pm-start drinking session upon landing and booking into our accommodation. A mission to buy alcoholic beverages was top of the list when everyone arrived, and a small crew set out to complete the mission returning with ample supply (so we thought), although there was some disappointment when middle-of-the-boat-Tama could not secure a discount and had to settle for a few bags



of chips and a couple of peanuts. This low point was forgotten when middle-of-the-boat-Tama and a band of somewhat merry men set out to find some limes and lemons to supplement our Tequila and returned triumphant – harming no fences or cats nor alerting neighbourhood watch in the process. True bonding session with cheesy nicknames being developed (none I can remember off-hand sorry), pizza and chips and later a spot of dancing at the town's hot spots – ARC were also out stocking up their liquid levels and hip hopping around the dance floor so a bit of banter was exchanged. All in all an adequate warm up for the main racing that was to follow.

The venue was well set up and tents and food galore – apart from the rowdy school children and hot port – a- loos the place was ideal. The first practice race was a wake up call with the mere distance of the course clearly providing a challenge, and the realisation of what coach Jimmy had been pushing for in practice (distance and reach) hit home.



Saturday night was rather quiet with most the group heading into town for a quick dinner and then to the rugby at Jade Stadium before bussing home to bed.



Sunday was the big day and although we had a tough schedule with 3 races in close succession everyone seemed determined to better yesterday's effort. At the back of the boat you see a lot that goes on from the corner of your eye and it seemed the boat was not working as a unit, and it was evident in race finishes and more importantly times. Of the 4 races that day we managed enough to qualify for the Corporate B finals and were seeded 5 out of 5 – just scraping in. Even if it was ahead of ARC the disappointment was evident. Tension in the tent was high and people began voicing their disappointment. After a well-deserved serious team discussion we had our warm up and ventured out to show our team spirit in supporting ARC, who won gold in the C Division Final.

It was now our Final - it seems we must have got all the tension out of our systems as on the start line we were dead quiet and focused— paddles were in the water and we were off – great start, and from the positive comments coming from Ross – we were doing well. The water was easier to paddle in – which for me was a clear sign we were getting it right – I could see to the right all boats were close. We passed halfway and the cheering crowds (ARC and the faithful EW-boat supporters) and then the ¾ mark where the rate increased along with everyone else's! Ross was getting hysterical, I was even yelling– We cross the line, Ross adamant that we had won! The row back this time was one of pride and there were no heads bowed like in previous races – EW had finally done what they had come to do and that was race our race and of course win and have fun doing it! "EW Rocks EW Rolls" never sounded so good;)

