



An armada of men's doubles fights to stay upright on San Remo's eight-kilometer course.

## 2008 WORLD ROWING COASTAL CHAMPIONSHIPS FOR CLUBS

*French crews dominate at second-annual open-water event.*

BY CHIP DAVIS

THE SECOND ANNUAL World Rowing Coastal Championships for Clubs featured all the elements of extreme rowing, drawing on athletes' surfing, sailing, and swimming skills to make it to the end of Italy's eight-kilometer San Remo course. The venue attracted both experienced coastal rowers and big names in international flat-water rowing from 16 countries.

Rough water and big waves made for exciting heats on the first day of racing. A number of rowers found themselves jettisoned from their

shells. One rower attempted to climb back into his boat four times, only to have his shell capsized on each attempt. The skilled made use of the waves by surfing along the tops. The unskilled were sent back to shore. Among them was Olympic bronze medalist Igor Boraska of Croatia.

Finals began with 15 clubs competing in the women's quad with coxswain, where a Swiss club overcame equipment breakage to win their first coastal championship medal. The crew from Lausanne Sport lost their steering

during the race, but an innovative coxswain grabbed the spare oar and used it to steer the boat. France finished second. "We train on Lake Geneva, where waves can be two meters high when the wind is blowing," explained Lausanne Sport rower Bettina Schaeffli. "We trained well for these championships and did a lot of erging."

The women's double followed with the finishing order established early in the race. The reasonable distance between each boat meant positions did not change. Hungary's Mohacs Torna Eglyet club finished first, powered by two current members of the Hungarian national team.

A close race between seven boats in the women's single produced close finishing times. France's AC Gouet club took the top two spots. Winner Marie Le Nepvou finished 10 seconds ahead of second-place Charlotte Culy of SN Avignon Club. The

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men's coxed quad featured 24 entries and a field rich with coastal rowing specialists and its fair share of flat-water talent. France's Saint Malo club jumped out to an early lead, followed by Italy's Ravenna club. Both crews managed to put significant distance between themselves and the rest of the field. Poland's Bydgoscia club overtook Murcarolo club of Italy just before the line for bronze.

The men's double proved to be the closest race of the day with five boats finishing within one minute of each other and a photo finish for spots 14 and 15. French clubs dominated this event, taking the top five spots with Chablais Aviron Thonon club grabbing first. The finals wrapped up with the men's single. Twenty-two clubs lined up for the mass sailing-inspired start, a race in which the leading order was established early on.

The winner, Matthieu Le Nepvou of France's Gouet club, entered the final as a clear favorite after dominating his heat the day before. “I'm more of a flat-water rower, but I like both,” said Le Nepvou. “Coastal rowing is a good way to finish the year and flat-water training helped me perform well here.” French rowers wound up leaving Italy with the most hardware, picking up four gold, four silver, and two bronze medals in six events. **F**

## FORWARD PITCH

**Fear not, college-bound high school seniors:** The December 8 SAT may mark the beginning of the end of the long and agonizing college search process.

**What to bring:** Snacks—hunger makes you dumb.

**What it feels like:** The worst part of the holiday season.

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

**The 41st Annual Bill Lockyer Christmas Regatta** (December 7), hosted by the Long Beach Rowing Association, gives you a guaranteed workout before the endless string of buffets and open bars that define the holiday season.

**What to bring:** The fortitude required for 850-meter sprint races.

**What it feels like:** Rowing's earliest holiday party.

[www.longbeachrowing.org](http://www.longbeachrowing.org)

