

My Life in Rowing

Vaughn Bollen

1955

Well, looking at my first ever trophy, it all started in about 1955. I still have it, a cup about 140mm high with two lug handles. The inscription "Winter Rowing Competition, 1955, Winning Coxswain, Vaughn Bollen". I can only gather that was for coxing races for the club's Walsh Shield event, as I do not recall any winter competition held by SARA back in those days. I do remember vividly an occasion about this time in my life of being woken up whilst sleeping on a slatted bench in the secretary's office (now where the bar is located) during an evening event at the club and being presented with a trophy. It must have been this one. So, as I was born on 1948, I was in my seventh year when this was presented to me.

1956

My only recollection around this time was coxing a four consisting the Morrelli brothers, Peo (normally stroke) and Ray, Doug Sanders and my father, Jack, on Sunday mornings. Now, this was definitely 1956 or a bit later as I recall my father instructing me on how to use the French language used to start international rowing events which was "Etes vuos prêt?, Partez!" The addition my father made to that French start for me was to add the word 'Messieurs' at the beginning. Simply in English it would be 'Gentlemen, are you ready? Row'. Not knowing any French, my phonetic adaption was to say 'Manures' instead of 'Messieurs' which cracked the crew up. I say this happened in 1956 or shortly thereafter as my father was a rowing umpire official at the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne where the French start was used.



There was also a time when the club had its first coxed pair which was constructed from the remains of a coxed four. It may have been Ray Carter that did the conversion at the time or maybe Peter Blank. I do recall coxswaining my father and Peo Morrelli in it one time (stern coxed obviously) and capsizing down near the weir. The skills in small boat rowing back then were somewhat minimal!

1957 – 1960

This era is a bit of a blur and nothing comes to mind apart from the club's fund raising barbecues held at Laurie Baulderstone's house at Croydon. The dunnies were named 'Stallions' and 'Fillies' for the blokes and women respectively. The occasion also allowed Laurie to play his flatulence competition record (yep on vinyl!) where the comp was between Lord Windesmear(!) and Paul Boomer.

There is nothing indelible as far as personal coxing achievements during this period, suffice to say I was only steering junior crews at the time. I do remember spending a lot of time at Port Adelaide whilst my father ('JB' to be used from now on) was coaching an eight. It seemed like endless hours idly amusing myself on the pontoon at the Port Adelaide Rowing Club which was then located in Jenkins Street, Birkenhead on the western side of the Birkenhead Bridge and on the north side of the river. Virtually next door was McLay Laurie the salvage diver who rowed for the TRC at some stage.

Somewhere during this period, I decided to take the club's tub scull out and see how I went. The boat had a clinker hull (probably built by Harold Lounder) and the oarlocks were brass with no gate locking mechanism. It was really, really(!) heavy. I recall just sitting in the fixed seat position and trying one oar at a time and then

gradually the two oars, followed by the same procedure using a bit of slide. It seemed quite natural for me and quite often took the boat out and paddled up the top end of the Torrens past the Zoo. I enjoyed the solitude of rowing alone. I found it more natural to row right over left, which was against the convention, and kept that practice when I began competitive sculling later on.

1961

This was my first year at high school and I was fortunate to cox the TRC eight that ultimately won the senior eight championship, coached by JB.

Graham Cuell was the club's senior coxswain for several years and coxed several SA Kings Cup eights, but gave up the sport altogether after 1960. I had high regard for Graham as a coxswain and his decision to quit was my gain in coxing my first Kings Cup crew at the age of 12 years old. I got the gig purely by default and knew I did not have the smarts that Graham had. Nonetheless, I persevered, much to the frustration of Bob Russell who was stroking the eight that year.

One particularly embarrassing event while I was the young cox of the Kings Cup crew occurred just prior to the regatta. In full view of other interstate crews and visitors, the eight was doing a final sprint into Snowden's Beach when I steered the boat over a submerged anchor of a stationary yacht which ripped a long strip off the bottom of the boat. It was repaired within a day or so and we came fourth in the race.

1962-1964

During these years, the club secured the state senior eight championship each year which I coxed and also the Kings Cup 8 crew. As I was now growing into my teens I became aware of how average the preparation was by the state crews. This was not casting dispersions on the crew's actual effort, but more that there was a lack of knowledge from the coaching and rowers perspective on the biomechanics of the sport. Certainly there may have been differences in physical strength between SA and the other dominant states such as Victoria and NSW at the time, but I felt we were lacking in the finer rudiments of the sport. I held this viewpoint for many years, and to a large extent, that perception was confirmed when I joined Melbourne University Boat Club (MUBC) in 1978 where I learnt to row more effectively.

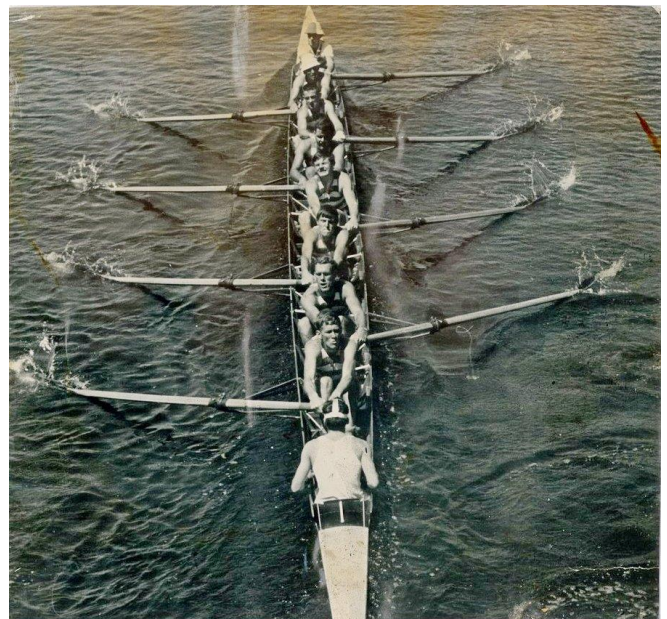
1965- 1966

In 1965-66, TRC won both the state Maiden and Junior eight championships. I rowed in the bow seat and the crew was Don Edmonds (2), H Winter (3), B Stone (4), Jim Yates (5), B Geue (6), Wilf Otten (7), John Treloar (stroke), coxed by Dennis Penglis and coached by Slim Lawrence.

That same year saw the start of my career as a lightweight (LW). I was the reserve for the Penrith Cup LW4+ crew, which I thought was a reasonable achievement for my first season of rowing.

In 1966, I did not get selected for the Penrith CVup four, but ended up rowing in an AUBC/TRC composite LW8+ that went to the National regatta at Lake Wendouree where we came second in the championship. It was essentially an AUBC crew with Bob Cooper and me. During the selection trials I recall a time at Murray Bridge whilst Bill Wallace and John Ellis - who were the joint coaches for the crew- were trying to finalise the seating,

I was tried in the stroke seat and the boat ran beautifully. At the end of a piece Bill asked me what I was doing regarding education, i.e. was I at Uni or some other tertiary course. I remember the surprised look on his face when I said I was still at high school. I finally ended up in the four seat of that crew.



It was during this period Bob Cooper moved to Adelaide from Murray Bridge and joined TRC and the start of a successful rowing career with him.

Roger Moore had also moved from Melbourne to Adelaide and coached AUBC - primarily the lightweight crew. His approach and technical knowledge certainly advanced the performance of the SA Penrith Cup crews with a second place in 1965 and what was ostensibly an AUBC four but with Bob Cooper in it. Roger also coached in 1966 for another second place.

Bill Wallace had also relocated from Melbourne to Adelaide and had an impact on the coaching of Kings Cup crews for a while. He teamed up with John Ellis from Adelaide Rowing Club as a joint coaching duo

In 1966 Slim Lawrence was coaching the TRC lightweight four for the first time and I had just finished high school. Alfie (Warwick) Bowen had joined the club straight from Prince Alfred College in 1966, which bolstered the lightweight numbers.

1967 – 1969

The 1967 TRC lightweight four comprised me in the stroke seat, Bob Cooper (3), Alfie Bowen (2) and John Knispel (bow) with Ian Tuckey as cox. The boat was tandem rigged on the bow side. Slim Lawrence was coach.

This was to be the start of many years of TRC lightweights dominating Penrith Cup crews.

Slim converted a standard 6x4 trailer into a boat trailer that could carry two fours and gave us the freedom to train at Murray Bridge on weekends. We would go up on a Friday night and sleep on the river bank outside the Murray Bridge Rowing Club, have three rows on the Saturday, consisting of a morning technique row to White Sands and back followed by shorter high intensity session around midday and closing off with a mix of high intensity and technique work on the final afternoon row. The Sunday row would follow the same format, except with only two rows of one in the morning and the other around midday.

We won the LW 4+ state championship in 1967 beating the more experienced AUBC crew. The Penrith Cup crew ended up being the TRC four except with Rob Gordon (AUBC) in the bow seat; we managed a second place to the much stronger (and older) NSW crew.

I do recall the Penrith Cup four doing a paddle to White Sands and back during the week prior to the Kings Cup Regatta at Murray Bridge that year. On the way back there were several interstate eights also paddling back and we caught them just at the south end of Long Island. The four decided to stay with the eights and clicked along rating around 26 for several kilometres to keep up with them. The boat just ran so easily and it was an exhilarating feeling. I guess it's one of those masochistic things about rowing, where you can be absolutely exhausted, but loving the moment.

This was also a busy year for me personally, as I won a bag of state titles comprising the LW4+, LW2+, M2+, MLW1X, MLW8+, Junior 8+, Junior 4+. I also won the SA Amateur Sports War Memorial medal for rowing.

1968 – With South Australia getting a second place for three consecutive years in the Penrith Cup, clubs were starting to concentrate more on developing their LW fours. Apart from TRC, the AUBC, Mannum and Adelaide Rowing Club all had reasonable fours. Bob Cooper stayed out of the TRC four that year due to work commitments. The Penrith Cup crew was made of me (stroke), Tas Binder (3 - ARC), Alfie Bowen (2) and Graeme Footer (bow - AUBC) with Mark Higgs (Riverside RC) as cox. The boat was again tandem rigged on the bow side and Slim was the coach.

The NSW and Vic fours were fast and it was a close final, with NSW winning by 0.6 seconds. The NSW four was also the first crew to be seen doing the pause at the finish and accelerate up the slide into the catch whilst paddling. This was seen as revolutionary stuff. I recall it was a bit more brutal than done by the Australian M4- of recent years and now adopted universally. Interestingly, the theory why the NSW four was doing the acceleration into the catch was to prevent the slowdown of the boat as the crew was coming into the catch and

the study of biomechanics now shows this does actually happen. The theory for the pause at the finish in recent years is to allow a more dynamic feeling of a crew's timing of the releasing at the finish of the stroke. This pause has now been adopted widely in training.

The national championships for men were held at Murray Bridge this year. Bob Cooper (bow) and I (stroke) won the LW pair with cox. Rob Potter was the coxswain and we were coached by Slim. This was our first national title.

During the early 60s through to the early 70s, TRC was dominant in the state lightweight premierships winning the MLW4+ and MLW8+ championships over multiple years.

It was not uncommon for some of us lighties to have to lose weight to comply with the class requirements i.e. 10 stone 10 lbs crew average (68kg) with a maximum of 11 stone (70kg) for any crew member. With the introduction of the metric system into Australia in 1970, it was revised to 70kg crew average with a 72.5kg max for a crew member and is also the maximum for a single sculler (which still applies today).



The photo shows a winning TRC MLW8+ championship crew David Neall (bow), Bill Carey (2), Mick Eastaughffe (3) Peter Cooper (4) Warwick Bowen (5) Vaughn Bollen (6), Bob Cooper (7) Luigi Lippis (Str), Geoff Worth (cox).

To achieve these weight restrictions, just prior to the regatta weigh in, we'd put on our trackies, go for a run and sit in a car in the blazing hot sun! If there was no sun we would turn the engine on and crank up the heater. I doubt this would be recommended for athlete health these days. The weigh in was in 'minimal clothing'.

At a Ballarat regatta Bob Cooper and I were so frantic trying to get down to weight for a race that we resorted to doing squats in a sauna at a gym close by. Must have fried the brain at that point as I can't remember if we made the weight and won the race or not!

The Penrith Cup crew for 1969 was me (stroke), Bob Cooper (3), Alfie Bowen (2), Henry Newland from AUBC (bow). Lui Lippis was the emergency. The cox was Bob Potter from TRC with Bill Wallace as coach. Bill experimented with Bob in the stroke seat (on the bow side) and me in the three seat. I quite enjoyed it, but Bill ended putting us back in the original seating. This year we could only manage a third place.

In 1970, Bob Russell became the new coach of the TRC LW four. Lui Lippis came in as stroke with Bob Cooper (3) Alfie Bowen (2) and me in the bow. The boat was tandem rigged on the bow side again. Our cox was Geoff Worth who had just joined the club. I do recall it was difficult to follow Lui at the beginning as his paddling was always up tempo. Light paddling was half pressure, firm was hard and hard was well ... hard plus! It was to be the start of a slightly different approach, which I needed. Bob was a breath of fresh air as a coach and greatly appreciated.

I remember one training session at Murray Bridge where Bob Russell got us to row to Taillem Bend and back. Now in anyone's language that's a really, really long way in a coxed four. When we got to Taillem Bend we put the boat on the bank and traipsed up the hill to the local pub sinking several glasses of lemon squash before the long row back. The only achievement from that exercise was acute tiredness, blisters and a sore behind!

We won the state title comfortably that year and were selected as the crew to row in the Penrith Cup. However, Alfie withdrew to pursue his passion and eventual career in flying. His seat was taken by Colin Smith who was floating between clubs at the time.

With Colin in the crew, Bob switched the seating back to the conventional arrangement with me in the two seat and Colin bow.

We won the Penrith Cup by 2.8 seconds from NSW with Victoria and WA a dead heat for third.

The photo shows the crew – Colin Smith (bow), Vaughn Bollen (2), Bob Cooper (3), Lui Lippis (stroke) and Geoff Worth (cox). The left inset is of Michael Eastaughffe (emergency), Bob Russell (coach). The right inset is of Peter Cooper (emergency).



This success made us the first crew from SA to win a national title since the 1937 Kings Cup crew.

It was also during this period I served on the TRC committee as a general committee member for a few years.

1971

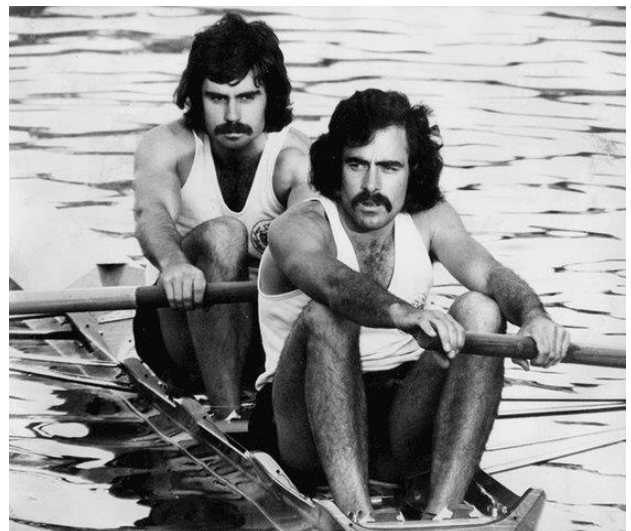
Colin Smith joined TRC, so it was the same crew that represented the state in the Penrith Cup as in 1970. In Perth we came a close second to Victoria by 0.3 seconds with NSW an even closer third place. Lui came off his seat just after the start and with some quick thinking by Bob, he grabbed Lui's seat and held it aloft for the umpires to see declaring it a 'breakage'!. Fortunately the umpires agreed and the race was restarted. Once out of the blocks again it was a strange race and we never seemed to have the dominance that we had in 1970, even though we were still in touch of the lead. It wasn't until the last few hundred metres when Bob made a frantic call that the boat sprang to life, but unfortunately it was too late as we were pipped at the post by half a canvas.

1972

Graham Caldwell was coaching the TRC senior eight for the 1971-72 season in which Bob Cooper and I rowed in the bow and two seat respectively. I'm pretty sure we won the state senior eight championship that year. I do remember arranging my marriage so that it was after the eight championship race – as most rowers do !!! But somehow it ended up being the same crew as for the past two years to represent the state in the Penrith Cup. The result in Huonville in Tasmania this year ended with a third place and in some way, it signalled the end of the same crew that had been together over the last three years.

Bob and I won the state Senior pair championship in 1972. The photo shows me in the bow seat and Bob Cooper in the stroke seat.

The national regatta was held on Lake Kurwongbah in Queensland this year. Bob and I entered the lightweight coxless pairs but never got past the repechage.



1973

This year the Interstate Regatta was held at Murray Bridge. Bob Cooper and I decided to concentrate on our pair rowing and were selected to represent the state in the inaugural interstate coxless pair race with Graham Caldwell as our coach. It was a strange arrangement, as each state could enter up to two pairs. The other crew from SA was the duo of Chris Prescott and Ian Paton who were the reserves for the Kings Cup crew. It was a prerequisite if more than one crew was entered by a state that one had to be the reserves for the eight oared race. We came second in our heat to the NSW no1 pair and beating the other heavyweight pair from SA. In the repechage, we won the race but were disqualified for crossing lanes and so relegated to second place and missing out on the final. It was disappointing, as we knew the boat was going quickly, particularly for what was essentially a lightweight crew.

1974

It was a great privilege to be nominated for and awarded TRC life membership this year.

Ken Bertram who had been rowing with Colin Smith in a coxless pair prior to Colin joining TRC in 1970, joined TRC. Bob Cooper and I concentrated on the lightweight four again as well as the pair. The Penrith Cup crew was again made up entirely from TRC members comprising Ken Bertram (bow) David Yardley (2) me (3) and Bob Cooper (Stroke) and Geoff Worth (cox) with Bob Russell coach. SA managed (again).

This was the first year that the interstate regatta and national regatta were combined and was held on Lake Wendouree at Ballarat. Bob Cooper and I entered the lightweight coxed pair event in the nationals with Geoff Worth as cox, winning the final by about a length from the Drummoyne pair.

This year was also the first time a men's LW coxless four race was to be included in the FISA world rowing championships. At the conclusion of the national regatta, the squads were announced that would trial for the crews to go to the world championships in Lucerne. Bob Cooper and I were a bit surprised when our names were announced along with the MUBC LW four crew (winners of the national lightweight coxless four and the Penrith Cup) as the squad for the Australian LW coxless four trials. The trials took place the day following the nationals. Knowing full well that the MUBC four would essentially form the majority of the crew, it was an outside chance that Bob or I would be successful in getting a seat. It was interesting rowing with that four, but at the end of the day, the selectors decided to keep with the MUBC four, which went on to become the first Australian crew to win a gold medal at the world championships.

1975

Apart from the TRC LW four comprising me, Bob Cooper, David Yardley and Ken Bertram, AUBC had a formidable lightweight four as well. It was a surprise to all that the selectors did not include Bob Cooper in the SA Penrith Cup crew which ended up being me (stroke), David Yardley (3) Ross Widger (2 - AUBC) and Scott Young (bow - AUBC) with Tony Goldsworthy cox and Bob Russell coach.

The interstate/nationals were held on Lake Kurwongbah in Queensland. Prior to getting there the four had experimented with less body angle and higher rating. In our heat, we executed that by rating forty plus out of the blocks and still rating around 39-40 for the first 1000 metres. By that stage, we were well in front of the other crews and cruised home at a lower rating to win by a long margin. Unfortunately, despite rowing the fastest heat time, we could not replicate that in the final and came a disappointing third some 8 seconds behind the victorious Victorian four - the same MUBC four that won the LW coxless four gold medal at the world championships the previous year. We did hear later on that the Victorians were a bit worried by our heat row and knew they had to get out of the start very quickly – which they did and were never headed. The MUBC four not only won the Penrith Cup but also LW coxless fours at the nationals and consequently were selected as the crew to represent Australia at the FISA world championships in Nottingham where they gained a bronze medal.

1976

Bob Russell had put a crew together which was the nucleus of the club's senior eight. I eventually joined the crew, rowing in the six seat. I had put on quite a bit of weight and was getting close to 80 kilograms!

The eight started out with Bill Dankbaar in the stroke seat and our main competition was AUBC and Adelaide RC. The earlier regattas, we were well beaten, but seemed to improve as the season progressed. It was a diverse bunch of guys where, after a training session on the Torrens, we regularly refuelled at the Queens Head Hotel in Kermode Street, North Adelaide. At a regatta on the Port River before the championship regatta, we came a close second to AUBC. Bob then put me into the stroke seat with Bill back in the six seat.



Above, the winning Senior M8+state championship TRC crew (from left: Bob Cooper, Vaughn Bollen, Steve Mann, John Quigley, Frank Quigley, Bill Dankbaar, David Wallman, Sandy Donald, Mark Underhill (cox)

On the day of the championship at the new West Lakes course, the race was postponed until the windy conditions eased. As to day drew on and the water was still quite rough, Rod Elleway, who was coaching the AUBC eight, suggested to hold the race as soon as possible. It was agreed and the race was rowed in very rough water. TRC handled the conditions better than the other crews and gained an early lead which it held. We were rating only in the low thirties due to the very rough conditions, but towards the final 500 metres, the water calmed and we raised the rating into the high thirties winning by clear water with AUBC second and Adelaide third. I must say this win is one of the most memorable for me, given AUBC were expected to win and we at TRC were a motley bunch ... but with a lot of heart.

1977

This year there were virtually no lightweights rowing and John Blank, who was captain, wanted me to row with younger chaps to try to mentor them. I declined to go down that path, which led to a bit of an impasse and my decision to row with AUBC lightweights.

The AUBC four comprised me stroking (and setting the training program), Scott Young (3), Andrew Beal (2) and Bill Moody (2) with Geoff Worth as cox. We won the state championship comfortably and were selected as the state Penrith Cup crew. Ross Widger and Alvin Ranson who were rowing as a LW coxless pair were named emergencies. Bob Cooper was the coach. Our performance at the Penrith Cup in Perth was disappointing, with a second in the heat, winning the repechage and a poor fourth in the final.

We entered in the MLW4- event in the nationals and came third in a straight final, but a long way off the pace. The winning MUBC crew also won the Penrith Cup comfortably and was the beginning of a remarkable national and international rowing career for Peter Antonie and Simon Gillett both of whom were only nineteen years old at this regatta. The MUBC four was selected to represent Australia in the MLW4- world championships and went on to win a silver medal at the worlds in Amsterdam later that year.

The result from Perth left me somewhat frustrated and not sure what to do next. Towards the end of the year (which was getting onto the 77-78 season) I rowed in a club tandem coxed four comprising Bill Dankbaar (Stroke), Bob Cooper (3) Ray Harris (2- originally from the Railways Rowing Club) and me in the bow seat (rowing stroke side). We went to the Dimboola sprint regatta and won the coxed four event there. Shortly after, Colin Smith told me that he was going to retire from rowing due to work commitments and perhaps I would like to think about going to MUBC and trying out for their LW four. I took up that offer and went over to Melbourne and spent a weekend having a paddle with them. This lifted my enthusiasm and I made the decision to transfer to Melbourne.

1978

Melbourne University Boat Club - I began rowing with MUBC at the start of the year and experienced a very quick learning curve in the sensitivities of the sport.

Another introduction was the twice weekly gym sessions at Stan Nichols home gym in Armadale that catered for only the MUBC lightweight squad of approximately twenty rowers. It was rumoured Stan had the best rose garden in Armadale which was fertilised regularly by the guys throwing up around base of his precious shrubs!! I can vouch for that as I too was a contributor. Stan's sessions were legendary and a major contributor to the success of the club. I can remember trying to walk up some stairs to my office in Melbourne after the first session or two and found it excruciating. I was fine after that. Sessions at Stan's also highlighted the incredible strength of Peter Antonie and Simon Gillett for two guys who were still in their teens. I was almost ten years older than them and considered myself strong in the gym, but I could not match the weight those two could squat with a bar bell. It was phenomenal.

The club's no 1 LW four was Geoff Rees (stroke) Simon Gillett (3) Peter Antonie (2) and me (bow). The coach was Peter Philp. The Penrith Cup was still rowed as a coxed four event so the primary training was done in that boat. Cox at the time was Adrian Maginn. Some training was also done in the coxless four and the eight.

At one regatta on the Yarra we rowed six 2000 metre races (all open events comprising heats and finals) over a three hour period, winning all the races.

The Victorian Champion ships at Lake Wendouree were a doddle which stamped our credentials to represent Victoria in the Penrith Cup in Huonville, Tasmania. Our four made up half of the MUBC LW eight that came a close third in the open eight championship. The Penrith Cup race was won comfortably. I recall at the crew dinner that night Philpy (Peter Philp) made a quip at how quiet we all were. The fact was we were all just tired and wanted to focus on our events at the nationals in the next day or so. Our four won the M LW4- event and with the MUBC No 2 crew won the MLW 8+ event.

So, I asked myself, why was there so much difference between Victoria and South Australia? The answer lies on several fronts. Firstly, the fact that an MUBC four had, since 1974, won a gold, bronze and silver medal at the World Championships had bred an incredible sense of professionalism in the club and consequently positiveness. There was an expectation that you had to perform, but it became natural. There was no arrogance. The second point - more with regard to the four itself - was the coaching and the relationship Philpy had with the crew. It was very much a level playing field and Philpy relied heavily on feedback from the crew on how we felt the boat was running. I recall one particular day when I was asked how the boat was going and I said it was 'shxxhouse', at which point he asked me 'well, what does that mean?' So, I then had to analyse why the boat was not running like it should. It was also the first time I had been given a training program set by a coach which had also been discussed with the crew. In my mind, we had trained just as hard back in SA as we were in Victoria. The primary difference being in SA we were not as knowledgeable of the finer technical aspects of rowing. The training sessions on the water were no longer than in SA but had more intensity and quality.

National Selection Trials - Selection trials were held at the Footscray Rowing Club. On the first day there was much discussion about what Colin Smith was going to do and whether he was prepared to row - even though he had not rowed the entire season. I recall us all standing around for quite a while waiting for some announcement from the selectors about what combinations they were going to try out. Eventually, and without even getting on the water to trial out, they resolved to name the MUBC four as the MLW4- to represent Australia at the World Lightweight Championships in Copenhagen. The LW eight had a few trials on the Maribyrnong River after which Bob Cooper was named in the Australian MLW8+. Colin Smith did finally commit to row and ended up stroking the boat.

Gambling Night - In those days getting sufficient money to go overseas— in addition to a standard seat fee – required the respective crews to raise funds. The world lightweight championships this year were to be held separately to the heavyweights which were held in New Zealand. The lightweight contingent consisted of the coxless four, eight, a sculler and the emergencies for the eight who rowed as a double scull. In addition to other forms of fund raising, a gambling night was held at the Mercantile Rowing Club. The night was extremely well attended, but during the night, word had got around that the vice squad had planted some of their personnel in the crowd and were about to stop the event. Geoff Rees who had just finished his articles for a law degree could not afford to get charged if the police did stop the event, grabbed a majority of the money raised and stealthily left the event and hid in bushes across the road. The police did raid the event and took everyone's name. Little did they know there were some very high profile Melbourne identities included in the patrons. The event was reported on the front page of the Age the following morning with a photo of four of us grinning from ear to ear. The matter eventually went to court only for the magistrate to question the prosecutor why he was not aware that this was an event to raise money for Australian crews to compete in the world rowing championships and subsequently dismissed the case!! Not sure if that would happen today!

World Championships, Copenhagen –In the lead up to the worlds, we had a training camp in Bern, Switzerland for two weeks. We raced at a regatta in Lucerne which had several crews representing their country (today this would be equivalent to a World Cup series). We entered the open men's' 4- and won our heat. In the final the instruction from Philpy was to blast the first 1000 metres and see what happens. We were leading by that stage but could not sustain it and ended up coming third. This race gave us the confidence leading into the worlds that the crew was going quite fast.

The Australian squad also had a week's rowing camp at Meschede in Germany. During that camp Philpy put Peter Antonie into the stroke seat and me in the three seat with Geoff Rees in two seat and Simon in the bow. It was just to break the monotony of training, but I was surprised how well the boat ran despite Peter's wayward foot in steering the boat!

At the lightweight world champs were held on Lake Bagsvaerd just outside of Copenhagen. We came second in the heat and second in the repechage. In the final we got out of the blocks like a rocket only for the umpires to call a false start against us. In the re-start we led the race again up to the 1500 metre mark when a strong head/side wind blew across the course which favoured the Swiss four who were more protected in lane six on the other side of the course. They were sitting about third a couple of lengths down at that stage and I recall seeing them just accelerate from nowhere. We managed a third place (bronze medal) and were satisfied with that, but not jubilant. Peter Antonie mentioned some years later that he had heard a rumour the Swiss had assistance with some 'medication', but we will never know.

On reflection, I guess it was a pretty good achievement given it was my first full season rowing on bowside.

1979

Feeling unsettled back in Adelaide, I decided to go back to Melbourne and row with MUBC again. We kept the same four that won the bronze medal at the world championships in 1978.



Members of the lightweight four after last night's raid ... from left, Colin Smith, Phil Gardiner, Vaughn Bollen and Simon Gillett.

Picture: JOHN KRUTOP

From page of the Age 25/5/78

Gaming police raid rowers' fund night

By SIMON NASHT

About 30 police made one of their biggest ever gambling raids last night at a fund-raising function to send the Australian rowing team overseas.

About 300 people were at the Mercantile Rowing Club near Princes Bridge, when police raided at about 11.30 pm.

Police seized two roulette wheels, thousands of dollars worth of chips and other equipment from about 14 gambling tables.

Police said about 150

Among the crowd were all 13 members of Australia's rowing team to the next world championships at Copenhagen in August.

They hoped to raise about \$5000 from the night to help the team which needed \$60,000 to go overseas.

The team still needs about half of this.

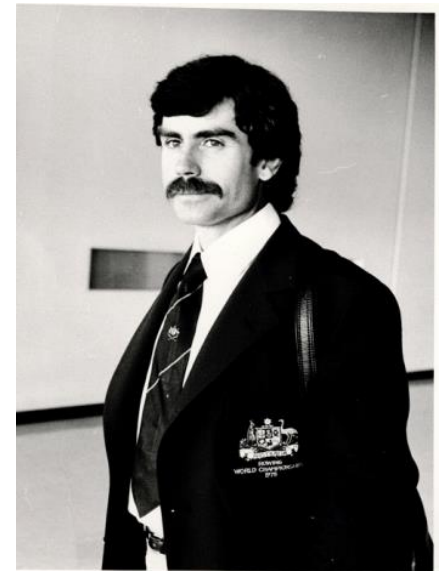
Coach of the former world champion Melbourne University lightweight-four team and this year's team leader, Peter Philip, said last night's function was virtually his team's only way of raising enough money to

merely handing over money to sporting teams. At least this way they get a little in return," Mr. Philip said.

Former world champion Colin Smith, 28, now a member of the eight hoping to go to Copenhagen, said there was now very little chance of the team getting the necessary build-up in Europe before the championships.

"We had hoped to race in Switzerland and Germany beforehand — but now I guess our chances are just about ruined."

Early this morning police charged a 28-year-old uni-



MUBC also had a second coxless four comprising:

- Colin Smith who at that stage had won a gold, silver and bronze medal at the worlds in the ML4-
- Andrew Michelmores who rowed in the 3 seat of the Australian ML4- which won gold in 1974 and bronze in 1975 with Colin. Andrew was also a Rhodes scholar and stroked the winning Oxford eight in the Oxford Cambridge boatrace in 1977 and 1978.
- Denis Hatcher. Denis was formerly from AUBC as a heavyweight rower and had stroked the SA Kings Cup crew in 1976. He moved to Melbourne in 1978 and decided to row as a lightweight. He was also in the Australian LW eight that won a bronze medal in 1978 in Copenhagen.
- Phil Gardiner who had won a bronze medal in the lightweight eight in 1978 in Copenhagen.

So, from the two MUBC crews everyone had won at least two medals at the world championships over the past four years except for Denis and I who had only one. Bummer! Peter Philp coached both crews. Colin's four was struggling at first and we were lengths ahead of them during the early regattas. Our four was going faster than the previous season and I certainly felt more relaxed in the bow seat. Our four won the MLW4- at the Victorian Championships, with Colin's crew second although they had improved significantly and were only a length or so down on us at the finish. Both crews were selected to represent Victoria in the Penrith Cup to be held at West Lakes, Adelaide. It was a crazy system back then, as states could enter up to three crews in the Penrith Cup. This was also the first year the Penrith Cup was rowed as a coxless four event.

In our heat, Simon got his oar caught on a buoy relegating us to second and making us row through the repechage to get into the final. Colin's crew won its heat. The final was a close race with Colin's crew beating us by 2.3 seconds and NSW 0.5 seconds behind us third. I was a bitterly disappointed as the four was not rowing as well as it was earlier in the season. I guess there was some redemption with both the A and B lighties combining as an eight to comfortably win the MLW8+ at the nationals. There was no MLW4- race at the nationals that year.

Australian Selection Trials – Selection trials for the lighties were held in Geelong on the Barwon River. This was the first year of Reinhold Batschi's appointment as Australian Rowing director. The crews were announced in Melbourne, where I was named emergency along with John Hawkins from Mercantile Rowing Club. We trained as double scull, which was going rather quickly and I enjoyed the training. Peter Philp who was coaching the Australian lightweight eight was having problems with the combination, so put me into the eight in the two seat (on the bowside as the eight was stroked by Simon Gillett on the bowside). The eight did improve, so I cemented my position in the eight and was later put down into the four seat.

The final Australian Lightweight contingent comprised the MLW4- (a NSW four coached by Rusty Robertson) and ML8+.

Preparation for Bled – We had a race in Vichy coming second to the Spanish eight. It was the first race in our new Empacher eight; we were satisfied with the result and the crew confidence was growing. A training camp was held in Unterageri, Switzerland. In one particular session, the eight did 5 x 6 minute pieces with 5 minutes rest in between. Each piece was done at race pace and the boat was flying. Reinhold Batschi who was the new head rowing coach at the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) was certainly impressed.

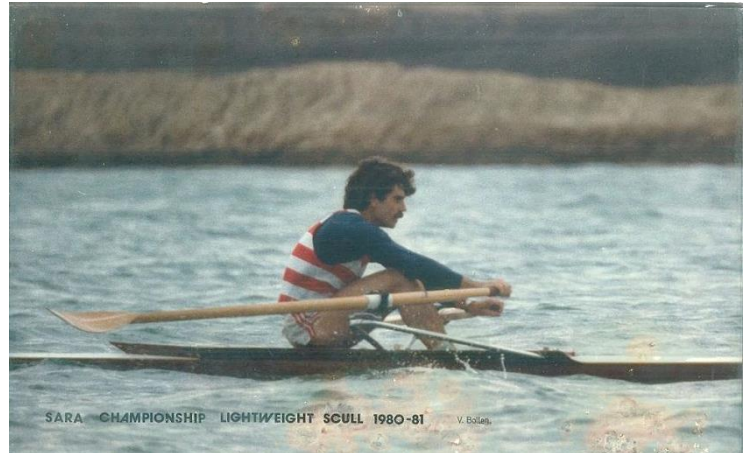
Unfortunately, during that camp I sprained both ankles badly when I jumped sideways up some steps on my way back to my room and resulting in my return to Australia. Mike Smith, who was the emergency for the MLW4-, replaced me. The eight could only manage sixth in the final in Bled and to this day I still feel a great deal of guilt through that stupid action.

1980 - 81

A return to Adelaide and life was in some way back to normal. I bought a new single scull built by Sykes and started competing for TRC again.

I recall my first race in open sculls was at Taillem Bend and raced against the likes of John Bentley (AUBC) *et al* and won the race easily. I think that race put the others on notice and a more concentrated training and subsequent improvement ensued as the races got closer. John Bentley beat me in a lead up to the championships at West Lakes. In the actual open sculls championship race, there were about six entries in a straight final. John Bentley was next to me and I saw him as my main opposition. Whilst concentrating on him, I did not notice John Bolt (AUBC) on the far side who had slipped away to win the race by a couple of lengths from me with John Bentley third. As Bolt was not available to represent SA in the President's Cup at the Kings Cup regatta in Ballarat, the selectors offered the position to me. My view was that I was not going fast enough and as I was essentially a lightweight I considered I would be unable to compete strongly against the other scullers from interstate. So they ended up selecting Ray Harris from Railway Rowing Club.

In 1980-81, I won the lightweight single scull championship (photo), but forgot to weigh in! The stewards notified me only after the race, but let it be as I was a natural lightweight and easily under the 72.5 kilogram limit for a single. Not sure if that would happen today.



I entered the MLW1X at the 1980 Victorian championships. It was windy conditions the day prior to my race. I put the scull on small trestles to rig it only to have the wind blow the boat off them bending the fin 90 degrees to the hull. I put an urgent call into Sykes who repositioned the fin but could not guarantee it would be water tight. Sure enough, it wasn't and in my heat, by the end of the race, the stern section of the boat had several litres of water in it. I did come second to Peter Antonie, who I had beaten earlier in the season at the Dimboola sprint regatta. He had improved ten-fold and, as we now know, became a world champion lightweight sculler in 1986, as well as the 1986 Commonwealth Games MLW1X and 1992 Barcelona Olympics M2X gold medallist.

At that point, I decided to retire from rowing and sold my scull to Geoff Hunt from the Murray Bridge Rowing Club. Geoff sold it back to the club after his rowing career finished which is now hanging from the ceiling in our Torrens clubrooms.

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1982

Restless again, I decided to take twelve months off work and go overseas. Marc Furrer, who was the Swiss liaison from previous world rowing championships, organised employment for me with Stampfli Boats in Zurich to earn a bit of extra money. On my first day, Melch Burgin, who had just taken over the Stampfli business, asked me to cut timber logs into cords for their factory heater. They gave me a chainsaw which worked for the first hour or so and then died. By that time it also started to snow. I resorted to using a blunt axe but it was slow going. A salvage diver was idling past the pontoon where I was working, saw my dilemma and gave me a metal wedge that I used with a sledge hammer to split the timber. I now know in hindsight that putting me to cut the timber into cords (especially whilst it was snowing) was to test my resolve. Melch Burgin was a wonderful person and later offered a small flat to stay in which was in the basement of the building where his apartment was located. The flat had been his father's studio when he was a practicing architect, but after his death, Melch used it as accommodation for visiting rowers who would work at the Stampfli factory.

One weekend, Melch invited me to his holiday house on Lake Zurich which was approximately forty five minutes south by train. He had two sculls with sliding riggers stored there which we tried out on the lake. It was a weird sensation, but I did notice the advantage it gave over the conventional sliding seat. There was a lot of research and development on the sliding rigger during this period and not surprisingly FIFA banned them altogether in 1983.

Apart from making rowing boats, the Stampfli's business also hired boats to countries at international regattas. After an enjoyable three months at Stampfli I decided it was time to move on. There happened to be up and coming international regattas at Vichy, Mannheim (Germany) and Nottingham, which were the lead up regattas to the World championships in Lucerne Switzerland. So I accompanied Bern (senior hand with Stampfli) taking the boat trailer stacked with over twenty boats to these regattas. We no sooner got to the French border when things went a bit pear shaped. The gendarmerie asked Bern for the papers required to transport the boats into other countries. Unfortunately, he did not have them; an urgent phone call to Melch in Zurich followed. Some six hours later, Bern got the necessary clearance to proceed through the border and on to the Vichy. Apparently, it had been known for new boats to be bought without paying the appropriate import duty by smuggling them on boat trailers going to regattas! That is not to say that was the case in this instance, but I never found out for sure.

At the Vichy regatta I caught up with Bob Cooper and the Australian (all South Australian) coxed four and later in the following regattas at Mannheim and Nottingham.

A few days before the Nottingham regatta, I ran into John Bentley (AUBC), the reserve of the Australian M4+ at that time- but in a rather unfortunate way – when we collided whilst paddling in our single sculls. My boat capsized and John had to help me get upright, as my feet were stuck in the shoes. To this day, John and I have the occasional banter over who was at fault.

I finally arrived at the Lucerne regatta to see the very impressive New Zealand eight win the M8+ gold medal. I remember that eight rowing squared blades during a training session and the clearance they were getting was phenomenal.

1983-89

Resuming life back in Adelaide yet again, Graham Caldwell contacted me to see if I was interested in helping out at Prince Alfred College, where he was the rowing director and teaching. The first year was looking after a very young lightweight coxed four and progressing the following year in 1984 to assist Graham with the first eight where the boys won the first eight at the Head of the River.

During this period I took on coaching the club's MLW8+ which performed well for such a young group. In 1988, I was given the job of coaching the boys PAC first eight. Sadly, one of the boys died in a car accident at the rowing camp in January 1989. It was difficult to maintain the momentum after that, but the crew finished a credible fourth on the day of the Head of the River.

1986 (I may be corrected in the year here) I coached a SA youth eight in a trans-Tasman regatta held at Wanganui in New Zealand. The eight was principally Prince Alfred College graduates which included Hamish McLachlan s and AUBC rowers such as David Belcher and Mathew Mayne. The manager for the crew had to defer due to ill health, so I was both coach and manager for the entire trip. There were three test races which included a Victorian eight. We did not win any of the races, but the result was as expected as the boat we given was really shoddy. It was a good experience for many of the crew as most of them had never been overseas on a rowing trip before.

1987 - I coached an AUBC lightweight coxed four that won the state lightweight four championship; the same four represented the state in the Penrith Cup. The result (a fourth) was disappointing, but Bill Natt and Richard Wiseman rowed as a lightweight coxless pair at the nationals. They were leading into the last 500 metres only catch a crab on a buoy and came in fourth.

1990

In late 1989, Andy Miller (former Adelaide Rowing Club oarsman) contacted me to see if I was interested in coaching the Scotch College girls first eight. I accepted the offer with the crew winning the Head of the River in 1990.

1994 – 1995

In 1993 Andy Miller contacted me again asking if I would take on the Scotch boys first eight. Whilst we won virtually all of the races during the 93-94 season, we could only manage third on the day of the Head of the River.

I continued with the eight the following year and changed the training program slightly. I split the crew into two coxed fours; all the boys also trained in single sculls. I put Jake Farrell in the stroke seat, who set a lovely rhythm and was an excellent swimmer, which meant he had a very good aerobic capacity. Training continued in earnest over the Christmas holidays with ergo sessions supervised in a vacant house at Belair which was owned by one of the parents. This crew meshed extremely well including the parents and it was a delight coaching that year. The eight went undefeated all year and won the Head of the River in 1995.

1996-1998

I continued coaching Scotch College boys first eight the next two years and the girls first eight in 1998 with average results

I did have other stints as state selector for the women's Queen's Cup eight one or two years in the early 2000s.

That, in effect, was the conclusion of my active rowing career. It was followed by what one might term a hiatus from the sport, but I never forgot it and kept a keen interest in it, especially with regard to the international competition.

Currently

At the start of the new millennium, I took up a new challenge in playing the piano (which was something that was always in the back of my mind since I was very young) and progressed through the various AMEB grades. I still enjoy it to this day, albeit experimenting with more improvisation (In other words lazy at reading music!). My life-long love and involvement in the arts and architecture continues to this day.

However, the urge was always to get back into the boat (particularly sculling). This did occur in 2018 when – as someone from TRC so eloquently put it – “I came back into the fold”. People have often asked me why I don't race in the masters comp. My personal view is that I don't need to compete to enjoy the sport once more. My ethos is mastering the technique of rowing and rhythm that is critical to getting a boat to move effortlessly. Achieving this either in a crew or a single scull is commonly called hitting the 'sweet spot'. Anybody can row hard if they want to, but combining it with rowing smart wins races.

I am happy to provide coaching to anyone at anytime should they ask or to simply discuss technique issues. There is an old adage that “rowing is a simple sport messed up by experts” I think still applies today and is often made overly complicated by many coaches.

Rowing is a fantastic sport for anyone at any age. Not only by the fact it is a non-contact sport, but the very action, rhythm of it and camaraderie is hard to beat. As they say, “rowers never die, their strokes just gets shorter”!