

WOMEN IN COACHING SPOTLIGHT



WOMEN IN COACHING INTERVIEW

Name: Jo Aungiers

Club/Crew you are currently coaching:

Enniskillen Royal Boat Club



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with Jo Aungiers

How did you get involved in coaching?

I started rowing by accident when I was at university in Coleraine in the '80s. A friend asked if I'd cox their four, and three days later I was coxing my first race. I did pick up an oar briefly but much preferred coxing and coaching. At that time the university shared Bann Rowing Club's facilities, and while we didn't have a coach of our own, we had a lot of help from the late Pat Irwin and Bobby Platt, who took me under their respective wings and taught me how to coach from the cox's seat.

Rowing wasn't my first sport – equestrian sport was, and I coached professionally for many years. Many of the principles of coaching apply whatever the sport, and there are a surprising number of similarities between teaching someone to row and teaching them to ride a horse. One big advantage of boats though is that you can leave them on the trailer at the end of a long day of competition, which you can't do with a horse!

When my son joined Portora Boat Club in 2014 I had the chance to get back into coaching rowing. We have an incredible junior rowing programme here, and a diverse team of talented and dedicated coaches, parents and fundraising volunteers who put so much into enabling our young athletes to develop and grow and be so successful in the sport.

Your coaching highlight:

We are known as a competitive club, and it is lovely to share in the competitive successes of our athletes, which is a testament to the hard work they all put in, but being involved in a programme which enables so many young people from across the community to become involved in the sport and achieve so much, in their individual development and not just competitively, makes every day a highlight.

We often talk about the ERBC family, and it really is one. We would not be able to do the things we've achieved without the enormous support from parents and the amazing fundraising work carried out tirelessly by Gaye Conway and Clare Wilson, who have also somehow found time to join the coaching team over the last season and boost our number of female coaches.

On a more personal level, seeing my son Sam develop as a rower and win a Coupe medal for Ireland was wonderful, but I can't claim any credit for that as I haven't coached him since J14 (much to his relief I imagine!).

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE THE POSITIVES FEMALES BRING TO COACHING?

About a third of our coaches are female. Coaching diversity is so important – on the permanent team we have two former Olympians, several former junior rowers, and parents who have transferred from coaching in other sports to rowing. We also have club rowers who come back to coach during gap years or combine coaching with study. Every one of us brings something different in personality and coaching style, which keeps things fresh and balanced for the coaches and for the athletes. I'm a firm believer in developing coxing skills so that coxes can coach their crews effectively on the water, and since many coxes are female, I would love to see them continue in the sport in a coaching capacity. They already have many of the skills needed for coaching and it's always interesting for them to see from outside the boat what they feel when steering it.

I don't think that rowers necessarily respond best to a coach of the same gender. We tend to mix the coaching up between us, with the numbers of rowers we have these days making the logistics of getting everyone out on the water and into the gym quite challenging. I'm sure individual rowers prefer some coaches to others, but that's normal when learning any skill – they'll pick different things up from each of us.



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW COACH OR SOMEONE CONSIDERING GETTING INVOLVED?

We actively encourage people to become involved in coaching within the club. Even if you know nothing about rowing, you will be welcome to come out with a coach and find your feet. It's fun and fulfilling, and you get to spend time outdoors on a beautiful stretch of water.

I am hoping that the recent RI announcement that parts of the coaching qualification programme will soon be available to complete online will tempt more people qualify – we are all busy, and if elements of the training can be done from home and the practical sessions can be carried out more locally, I am sure it will be a great encouragement for people to do them.



PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY:
ROWING IRELAND, WOMEN IN SPORT

If you would like to highlight any of your female coaches as a role model for this interview series, contact Claire at claire.lambe@rowingireland.ie