

WOMEN IN COACHING SPOTLIGHT



WOMEN IN COACHING INTERVIEW

Name: Kathryn Wall



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Club/Crew you are currently coaching: Carlow Rowing Club – I've been coaching the J18s women since they were J12s. It's brilliant to work with a crew from their first outing through to their first national championship wins and international competitions. I'm currently Lead Coach in Carlow Rowing Club.

No of Years Coaching: I have been involved in rowing for over 30 years. I began rowing at 14 in Carlow Rowing Club. I also rowed with Belfast Rowing Club, Queen's University, Belfast and Neptune Rowing Club, before returning to coach in Carlow at 24. I coached Junior and Novice Women then for about 6 years. I took a coaching career break when my kids were young and when my children started rowing, I returned to coaching. This seems to be a common trait in rowing families and it's always great to meet old rowing friends on the bank and see their children on the water. My daughter, Sadhbh, is in the crew that I currently coach. My son, Con, resigned from coxing and rowing at twelve to take up cycling!



Your coaching highlight :

There have been so many highlights. Watching the first crew I coached win the Irish Women's Novice 8 and Women's Novice 4+ Championship in 1999, seeing Sadhbh and Keara Egan win the Women's Junior 18 double at the Irish Championships last year and the next day watching Sadhbh win the Women Club 1x. Of course, seeing Carlow Rowers represent Ireland at international level also makes me very proud. But it's not all about winning. Watching a young person take on the challenge of the sport, trying to be the best they can be, giving their all during the training sessions, overcoming personal difficulties and striving to do well, are all immensely rewarding for me as a coach. I love coaching girls as I think they thrive in the team environment. The Commercial Regatta two years ago when all of the Carlow Junior Women won a medal, some for the first time, was a highlight for me too. A couple of years ago I had the opportunity to coach a young woman who was visually impaired. She was an excellent football player and losing her sight meant that she could no longer enjoy her chosen sport. Áine learned to row and competed. It challenged me to coach differently to meet her needs and she excelled. The club got behind her and despite her difficulties, Áine sculled, ran and participated fully in the sport.

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN COACHING:

I had really positive experiences of coaching when I was a junior rower. The people who coached me were giving something back so I always believed that I would do the same. It helped that my husband was also coaching at the time as he understood the commitment it required.

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

Good coaching skills are not really gender specific. Qualities of respect, enthusiasm, commitment, communication, responsibility as well as a sense of humour are important in any coach. I think it can be difficult for a woman to get recognition for her successes as a coach, just as it can be difficult for the successes of women rowers to be recognised.

This is true for women across most sports and while it is changing slowly, it is really important for women to step into leadership and coaching roles. For me personally, most of the time I am good at juggling my job as CEO in Carlow Regional Youth Services, family life and coaching. I guess it's extreme multi-tasking! I couldn't do it without the support of my family. The fact that we are all involved really helps. Coaching has changed since I first started, parents are encouraged to be involved. It's a welcome change and parents now form part of the coach's team. Rowing has moved to another level and young people need the help of their families to achieve their training goals.



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

Go for it! If you have a passion for the sport, you can have a fulfilling coaching career. Rowing is a sport of integrity, and hard work and probably is the ultimate team sport. If you are struggling with an aspect of coaching, ask for help. There are lots of coaches out there who are delighted to offer advice and support. Once you are open to new ideas and advice, you will be fine.



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