

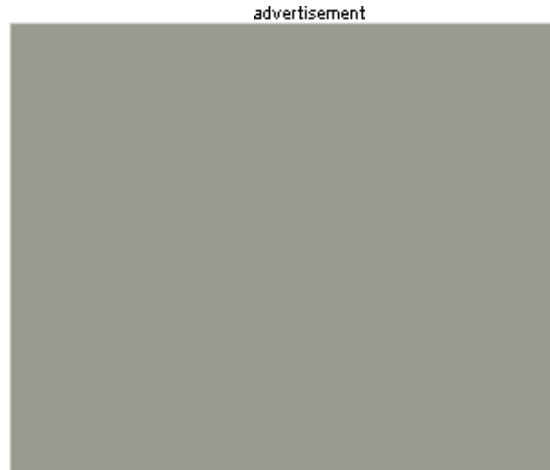


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Cracknell's unplanned return helps Leander to victory

By Rachel Quarrell
(Filed: 14/11/2005)

Leander's gamble with 'supersub' James Cracknell paid off on Saturday as the crew who also included 2005 world champions Peter Reed and Steve Williams won the coxed pennant at the 51st Fullers' Fours Head on the Thames.



"It was a good run but we took it a bit steady," Cracknell said, though perhaps the low rate was a concession to their lack of practice time together.

Cracknell, who had not competed since May but was in training to row the Atlantic with television presenter Ben Fogle, was filling in for Alex Partridge, who was recovering from a knee injury.

Leander finished 16th overall, less impressive than the seventh place Williams and Cracknell managed together while coxed in 2001, but they were still the fastest coxed boat.

Earlier, Leander's all-international quad of Matt Langridge, Ian Lawson, Steve Rowbotham and Mark Hunter moved away from Tideway Scullers to win outright, and Molesey's quad, stroked by world champion Andrew Triggs-Hodge, overtook several crews impressively but finished third, 17 seconds off the headship.

Hodge has a bet on with fellow Blue and Oxford president Barney Williams - neither will have a haircut until they have raced head-to-head. Williams' Isis crew finished two seconds ahead of the nearest Cambridge boat to claim the coxless fours trophy, fifth overall, and could have been faster had they not been manoeuvred into slack water round the first bend. Oxford's top coxed boat was also fractionally faster than Cambridge's, but by a mere fraction.

The quickest women were Thames's senior 2 quad, beating Leander's lightweights, although Leander claimed the women's elite pennant. Thames also won the coxless event.

For once, Oxford Brookes won no coxed events, but they claimed their first Fours Head sculling trophy, Senior 2 quads.

Another unexpected result came for University of London, winning Senior 1 coxed with a crew including Wingfields champion sculler Matt Wells, who has only spent two weeks with a sweep oar in his hands. Coach Tim Foster said: "Maybe scullers can row after all".

► 10 November 2005: Cracknell set for surprise comeback

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