

# Fresh talent inspires Dan for title defence

THE Boat Race is fought on the incoming flood tide on the Thames in spring so it is apt that Dan O'Shaughnessy is heading up a similar conundrum at Cambridge University Boat Club.

O'Shaughnessy is the president of CUBC for the 154th University Boat Race on April 7, and he finds himself in a fairly inexperienced squad.

The 25-year-old Canadian is one of only three returning Blues - along with Tom Edwards and cox Rebecca Dowbiggin - so it is a club flooded with a tide of oarsmen looking to make their name.

"We've a huge influx of new guys and it's given us a chance to create a positive atmosphere early on," said O'Shaughnessy.

"Last year, we had Olympic and world champions who had proved themselves, this year we have people who will be Olympic and world champions and want to prove themselves."

The Light Blues will get their first public outing in the Head of the River Fours on the Thames next weekend, having resisted competing in the E.ON Hanse Cup and Head of the Charles events.

But O'Shaughnessy explained that the closeness of the squad meant early season outings were not needed.

"Without having to put together a boat a bit earlier in the year it creates a better spirit," he said. "By not going to the early season races it creates more unity in the team. I look at these races as a distraction.

"Guys know the task ahead and what it's going to take. The beauty of it is the squad is so close that if anyone becomes complacent they will drop off the back. We don't have to race that often because it's so competitive."

Having gone through the programme for the first time last year and becoming a victorious Blue, it is always a different challenge to lead the club as president. But O'Shaughnessy is determined to make the most of the experience.

"I really want to enjoy the process and look at it as a great adventure," he said. "It's made easier that we won last year.

"You have to have trust in people that are helping you. You get a lot of advice from a lot of great people. There are 10 or 15 presidents that I can lean on at any time."