



The History of Wemmer Pan Rowing Club



Recollections of two decades

by Kurt Landsburg

Wemmer Pan's first Olympian since 1960

(edited by Rod MacKinnon)

We all need de-stress time to do our thing and a special place to do it. Nowadays I love running on the beach or surf skiing across the bay with the dolphins and the seagulls. It's a privilege to have the fresh sea air, beach and the ocean as your training arena: there's nowhere else to be.

It's hard to believe that years ago I got that same feeling from rowing endlessly round a tiny pond in Jo'burg next to mine dumps - and that I did this every day for almost 15 years!

My history with Wemmer Pan began in 1976 with my first session in the Jeppe U13 coxed four. None of us knew what we were doing except that we had to get through a stroke without catching a crab or hammering fingers on the gunnels. Those first few sessions were not very pleasant: balancing that wobbly boat seemed an impossible task, but we kept coming back. Even if there was no lift after school we would run through the mine dumps to "The Pan", row and then run back. Now it seems crazy, but rowing was not just another boring school sport: you had to go to Wemmer Pan, so each session was a mini adventure.



The 'last Grand', 1985, Mark Shuttleworth, Garth Lemkus, Rod MacKinnon, Kurt Landsburg

During the 1970s and 1980s Wemmer Pan was the rowing Hub. Most of the schools and all the best senior oarsmen trained there, and there was an addictive buzz of excitement. You could watch the top crews row past you just metres away: watching the great Springboks like Mark Shuttleworth row with perfect technique, stroke after stroke, was inspirational. My initial determination to learn how to row well soon became an obsession to be the best. I wanted to go to the Olympics, and Wemmer Pan was the gateway to this dream.

When I joined the Club in 1983, Steve Lockwood told me I must win the coxless pairs if I wanted to get noticed for Trident colours. There is nowhere to hide in the pair. So if you win it, you are the best, and it will keep you in the national squad. He was right. Steve Basset and I won the Pairs at Champs

that year and I made sure Wemmer kept that title every year of my rowing career: next with Rod MacKinnon, and then with Tim Lahner.

The Trident Tours to Henley and Germany were amazing. We were banned from Worlds and Olympics, but we still got to meet and row against top internationals at club regattas. The fun and experience was priceless. The highlight was definitely 1984 when the Trident 8 won the Thames Cup.

After I qualified I rowed for a year in Australia and Switzerland, winning NSW Champs and Swiss National Champs in the pair before the army nabbed me.

The finale was a roller coaster ride. I had stopped rowing and started my first Vet Practice when Tim called and said South Africa was back into the Olympics. Much to my wife's disgust I gave up work, trained like hell again, and made it into the squad. Tim was in the eight and I was in the four. It felt incredible actually to be going to the Olympics after all those years of being denied the opportunity.



The light / heavy brigade at Vereeniging, (L-R) Kurt Landsbuerg, Daryl Phillips, Adrian Buddingh, Clive Gilman, Kevin Bennett, Estie, Eddie Bruce



The 1992 Barcelona eight with members (R-L-) Martin Walsh, Rogan Clark, Paolo Cavlieri, (miss 3), Eric Mauff and Tim Lahner

African rowing team at the opening ceremony of the Barcelona Olympic Games. It remains one of the most moving experiences of my life. At last, against the odds my dream had finally come true.

Then, suddenly, the elitist rowing squad was deemed too big, and the four was axed. After this devastating news, the roller coaster shot back up again, and I remained in the squad as spare man for the eight.

In 1992 "Afrique du Sud" was first to walk into the opening ceremony and the stadium went crazy. It was as if the whole event was staged just to welcome us back into international sport. I had to pinch myself to check I was actually there in the South

