

# Balancing the books and the boats

And you thought it was hard having a life out side of medical school? Local London medic, Cameron Nichol, shows us how to do it by being a national sports champion and still having time to turn up to clinics!



Richard Smith  
Staff Sports Writer

CAMERON Nichol came down to the University of London (UL) boat club to try his hand at some serious rowing. He had already experienced a few previous outings with RUMS boat club and enjoyed the feeling of propelling himself up and down the river with both hands gripped tightly around a trusty wooden shaft.

Cameron was one in a small but keen group of newbies that the UL coaching staff were willing to develop in order to become the club's top rowers in two years time after the present squad had finished their studies

and moved on.

Despite their lack of fitness and experience of the rowing world, they were expected to endure a tough training schedule that would see them training at least nine sessions a week, pushing and expanding their cardiovascular systems at a time when the nights were drawing in and their fellow fresher students were busy testing and expanding their hepatobiliary systems.

Rowing is a sport which is often characterised by the commitment of its athletes to rigorous, time-consuming exercise regimes which cover most of the year, starting in the autumn and culminating in the summer regatta season.

Rowers dread the long winter sessions, where they are often only motivated to continue by the fact that their competitors are training just as hard and their efforts "will all pay dividends come the summer racing".

New university rowers are easy to spot amongst the student body – while most students are afflicted with 'freshers flu' and see their wastelines balloon uncontrollably, the neuronally-impaired rowers shed their school puppy fat and replace it with the lean muscular coat of strong, maturing thoroughbreds.

Cameron's strong physical attributes saw him take to the training regime with relative

ease, and he quickly moved up the ranks to be knocking on the door of the top end of the squad by Easter. This remarkable progress continued throughout the summer, narrowly losing the final at Henley Royal Regatta, but making up for this loss by becoming national champion two weeks later and representing England. This was all achieved with less than a year's rowing under his belt – simply outstanding.

Cameron's next year was to bring payback at Henley, where his coxed 4 trounced the opposition to claim UL's first Henley medal in 11 years. More success was to come when he raced for Great Britain at the World U23 Rowing Championships and pulled out all the stops to win a bronze medal with his coxless 4.

This last season has seen Cameron narrowly miss out on a place at the Beijing Olympics, but this has only strengthened his resolve to be at the forefront of the British efforts to win on home waters in 2012.

When asked to sum up his views on his Olympic rowing goals, he said "To me, being an Olympian is an achievement eclipsed by no other in the sporting world. To play a part in representing our country is a great honor and one that I am



HOLY GRAIL: Cameron delivers a beautiful baby boy in the shape of a trophy

grateful to have achieved. However, these minor achievements to date are merely stepping stones to the main event. I see the Olympic Games as the greatest show on earth and the ultimate reward for the endless years, months and days spent training, travelling and sacrificing."

These are stirring words indeed, but it was interesting to see that there was room inside this athlete's mind for more than single-minded sporting success: "My passion to become a doctor still drives me when I'm studying and when I'm in the hospitals, and although my main focus for the next four years is sport, a career in medicine remains my long-term focus."

It was refreshing to be told by Cameron that despite pressures to attend lectures and clinics, there has been a hugely positive response by his medical school toward his ambitious sporting aim: "The support that I have received from the UCL Medical School so far

has been fantastic and an original medical curriculum has been devised so that I can successfully balance my passion for becoming a doctor and my lifetime goal of becoming an Olympic Champion."

Cameron is currently in his 4th year of medicine at UCL, and is also a member of the senior GB rowing team. His fellow national team athletes are all encouraged to pursue their sport on a full-time basis, but Cameron has been persistent and kept in touch with his deep desire to continue studying medicine.

As fellow medical students we should recognise not only his achievements to date, but his ongoing resolve to combine top-level sport and medicine in order to fulfil his lofty life ambitions. From the evidence of his success thus far, I have no doubt that we shall see him at the top of the podium on the World rowing stage before the decade is out. And good luck for 2012!



NATIONAL PRIDE: Cameron (second from right) and the GB team win Bronze at the U23 World Championships

## Air Football has landed



Mustafa Jaafar  
Staff Sports Writer

Les Ferdinand endorses a new health project which hopes to change people's lives through having a knockabout

*Air Football*, a scheme which provides football training and, most importantly, support services for individuals who are traditionally socially excluded, recently received funding to the tune of £206,399.

The project which was set up by Colm Whitty, an ex-Fulham FC youth player, received the money to finance a three year development plan, hoping to build on the success that they

have had over their first 18 months. In a presentation ceremony held at Goodmayes hospital, Ilford, the cheque was handed over by ex-Tottenham Hotspur and England striker Les Ferdinand.

The founding father of the project, Colm Whitty, was a promising young footballer and was on the books at Fulham FC, before exporting his talents to Thailand. However, he soon became involved in the darker side of life, becoming embroiled in drugs. He eventually found his way to prison and things were at a low. Thankfully, this was the impetus that Colm needed, and he used it to restructure his own life, as well as making a massive difference to many others.

Today, *Air Football* is working with those who have mental health problems, drug and alcohol addiction, and those in contact with criminal justice serv-

ices as well as homeless people.

Whilst giving these individuals a chance to partake in meaningful and healthy activity, it also serves as a way for those involved with the scheme to have access to health services, as well as general lifestyle support. Talks have been organised which give advice on finance through links with HSBC, as well as giving guidance on sexual health and smoking cessation.

All of this helps in improving the quality of life of those involved with *Air Football*; a comfortable, friendly and welcoming environment is created for everyone. With this kind of support, it has been claimed that even the notoriously dreaded and lung-busting 'bleep test' was enjoyed!

There are regular football training sessions organised with highly qualified coaches passing on their expertise, as well as

organised matches against other teams inside and outside of London. This has given the participants focus and motivation, describes Colm, which has contributed to an improved state of mind and body. For the footballers involved, a family environment has been created, and has given many people friends when they would otherwise not have any. This is one of the most important aspects of this project.

Whilst great credit goes to those who have taken the time to ensure *Air Football* is a success, the real hard work has been done by the players in *Air Football* who have used it to move forward in their lives and return to work or education. It is hoped that with this grant money, *Air Football* can build on their good work over the next three years and continue to change to lives of many more.

## GKT Aces



Jennifer Kelly  
Guest Writer

UH Mixed Doubles Tournament Trophy'.

Of course, there was a well-deserved trip to the pub afterwards for the prize-giving, some delicious food & lots of celebratory drinks!

ON the 1st November 2008, a number of London medical schools competed in the UH mixed doubles tennis tournament, which took place at Sutton indoor tennis centre.

This is an annual event which has been taking place since the 1980's and is sponsored by the Medical Protection Society (MPS).

At this year's event there was a very high standard of tennis played, with the final being contested between GKT and SGUL. The GKT pairing of Jenny Kelly and Webber Emile emerged victorious, and they walked away with the 'MPS

If there is anyone who is interested in playing for UH or in the UH tennis events, please visit the UH tennis Facebook group. Here you can make contact with Nicholas Faure-Walker (UCL) - the men's captain - and Yayganeh Chiang (BL) - the ladies captain.

For more info about joining in with the tennis and other social events that take place throughout the year, get in touch with Jennifer Kelly - [jennifer.kelly@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:jennifer.kelly@kcl.ac.uk).

