

From the WEAR TO THE WORLDS

Words: Sarah Chapman

Mother and daughter duo **Hazel** and **Rebekah Stainforth** travelled to Zagreb for the FISA World Championships in September and pulled together – literally – to win WC2X and MixC4X Gold medals.

It's usually the parents who encourage their children into sport, but in the case of double Gold medal-winning composite Hazel and Rebekah Stainforth, mother and daughter respectively, the opposite is true.

Rebekah started rowing with Durham ARC and encouraged her mother to get into a trainer boat. "At first I was very nervous," mother Hazel recalled, "even the trainer boat felt unsteady!" Despite her wobbly start, soon Hazel was officially bitten by the rowing bug and – initially under the guidance of Peter Burdass, the long-time stalwart and coach at Durham ARC and latterly, Emma and Wade Hall-Craggs at Durham University BC – developed into a fine veteran D and E sculler with many national and FISA wins to her credit.

Rebekah went on to row for her university, Imperial College, in the highly successful 2000/1 Women's 8+ that won BUSA and Women's Henley. Her career has taken her to Germany – where she has joined Duisburg Ruderverein – but not before she had persuaded her brother, Richard, into rowing (he was captain of the University of Hertfordshire BC) as well as her father, Roger (who prefers "the stability of indoor rowing events").

At the 34th FISA World Masters Championships held at Lake Jarun in Zagreb, the Durham-Duisburg composite and mother-daughter duo each won two Gold medals, rowing together in Vet C category events.



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The World Masters was the first time they had rowed together in a competitive event since becoming the first mother and daughter to complete the 50km Boston Marathon in 1999. Hazel is the current holder of the Boston Marathon WD1X and WE1X fastest times.

Their first gold medals came on Thursday in the WC2X event when, in a double scull that, according to Rebekah, "would have been more suitable for two 90kg men than two lightweight women", they stormed over the final 300m to row through a strong field including, coincidentally, another

mother and daughter team from Japan. This was the first time Rebekah could row as a veteran under FISA rules and the average of their joint ages just qualified them for the Vet C category. Many at the event speculated that they were probably the first mother and daughter team to win Gold medals at a FISA Masters Championship.

Gold medal number two came on Sunday in the MixC4X when Hazel and Rebekah teamed up with two of Rebekah's rowing colleagues from Germany to win a hectic race full of strong crews after a recall due to a false start by an Italian crew. For Hazel, the win came as something of a surprise. "Our only practice was rowing up to the start," she said, "so I was thrilled to win a second gold medal with Rebekah and her team-mates. To win with these three younger high rating scullers took me well out of my comfort zone and I was glad to hear the hooter as we crossed the finishing line!"

Earlier, Rebekah had stroked a MixC8+ in a race that had the grandstand on its feet roaring on a Duisburg-Oberhausen composite to row down a Russian crew. They had to settle for an honourable second by a length after a final 200m that won the hearts of all spectators. "This is what FISA Masters is all about," said Rebekah, "a good club boat asking a serious question of former Olympians



and internationals and this is when second place enhances pride and makes the long hours of training worthwhile."

Hazel achieved her third gold medal on Saturday in her own category (Vet E) together with her regular Durham ARC partner, Carolyn Edwards, in the hotly contested WE2X event. Having established a lead at 500m, they sculled neatly and efficiently to hold off a determined challenge from a much heavier Hungarian crew who were very surprised to be beaten.

Earlier this year Hazel and Carolyn had won the WE2X races at the National Championships and Henley Veterans Regatta.

And so to the future. Hazel has her sights set on more medals. "From January 2008, I shall be rowing as Vet F and I hope to set more records and win more FISA Masters medals," she concludes, with the kind of optimism that suggests she will almost certainly succeed in her undertaking. ■

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