

# National team rowers rev up training months before returning to water

Neil Stevens, Canadian Press

**Published: Saturday, February 03, 2007**

(CP) - The big regattas are months away, but that doesn't mean Canada's rowers are taking the winter off.

Au contraire. "We're training as hard as we would in the summer," says world champion Jane Rumball. Most of the work is on rowing machines, and this is a big weekend for it as rowers congregate in Toronto, Victoria, Regina, St-Hyacinthe, Que., and Dartmouth, N.S., for Rowing Canada's annual indoor championships.

"It'll be intense," Rumball predicts.

Last August in Eton, England, Rumball, 28, of Fredericton and Darcy Marquardt, 27, of Richmond, B.C., won the world pairs title.

Now they have to start all over again with no assurance they'll be in the pairs entry for the big races this year. That's the way Rowing Canada does things: athletes have to prove they are worthy each year to gain selection.

"It keeps everyone on their toes," says Rumball. "You don't get complacent or develop a feeling of entitlement.

"We're all trying to get better and faster and the way to do that is to push each other."

That said, it wouldn't be surprising to see Rumball and Marquardt together at the Olympic start line in Beijing. The opening ceremonies will take place Aug. 8, 2008.

"That date is in our minds," says Rumball. "That's the goal you always keep in front of you."

Rumball lives in London, Ont., where she is studying women and asthma at a sports medicine clinic as she steers towards a PhD diploma from the University of Western Ontario. She's on a rowing machine most days, too.

Some national team members train at Elk Lake in Victoria most of the year, but those in southern Ontario are forced indoors for much of the winter. With milder-than-usual southern Ontario weather in December, national team rowers were able to be on Lake Fanshawe in boats longer than usual.

"To be out there in January was pretty amazing," says Rumball.

Then it was indoors and onto the machines.

There was a national team camp in Ottawa for some cross-country skiing and swimming last month, and Rowing Canada will be sending Rumball and others to Georgia later this month and to Virginia in March so they can train on water. The London-based rowers will be back on Fanshawe when the ice melts in late March.

The first races at the world-class level will be in Germany in mid-May. The first World Cup regatta will be in Austria in June.

In the meantime, says Rumball, "There are a lot of things technically and training-wise to work on. All of us want to be in the fastest boats possible. We look to make improvements on an on-going basis."

This weekend's tests give top prospects a chance to see where they rank against national team members and give the team veterans the opportunity to race against each other.

"It'll be a good benchmark for national team members to see where we're at at this time of year," says Rumball. "Any chance to race is a great opportunity."

Participants will be able to race against rowers in the other cities. Monitors will display racing lanes and boats, each moving at a pace reflecting the effort each rower is exerting at his or her machine. There'll even be an announcer to call each race.

It won't be the same as being on water, but the effort will be there.