

A STREAMING SUCCESS

Jenny Conlon meets Fulham Reach Boat Club's Head of Rowing to gain an insight into life on the water

With the boat race taking place at the beginning of April, I thought what better time to venture out and investigate what rowing is really like on the Thames. I caught up with Natysha Hubbard, Head of Rowing at Fulham Reach Boat Club, who explained how the club came about in 2014. "When Fulham Reach Boat Club was being built," says Natysha, "the council stated that it needed to create a community sports club, so we have created a community boat club and as part of that we have become a registered charity."

FRBC makes rowing and paddle sports accessible to everybody, but Natysha says its main body of work is helping local state schools. "We have a programme called First Row which is where we teach every student from local state schools how to row. At the moment we are working with seven schools in Hammersmith and Fulham and hopefully over the next 12 months we will teach all the state schools in the borough."

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The majority of students come to FRBC with no real knowledge of the sport but leave with priceless lifelong skills. "This year we will probably teach about 900 students how to row. We usually have 17 sessions a week and about 300 students from state schools so that's part of their curriculum. They come down in year nine to do a six week taster and learn how to row, and if they choose to, they come back in year ten and 11."

The sport offers many positive benefits, one of which is teaching students how to work together. "What we are trying to do here is teach the kids the benefits and qualities of organised team sports – in rowing you need to be able to work in a team. It really helps with your teamwork skills because rowing is one of those few sports that if you don't do everything perfectly in time, you're going to have a massive impact on the run of the boat."

Natysha explains what she enjoys most about her job: "It would have to be teaching novices

who know nothing. Most of the children have never been in a boat and don't know what a rowing boat is. Taking them from that to the end of their six weeks and experiencing that moment when they just get it and they're rowing together and rowing in time. They get super excited and it's such a reward to see their faces light up."

Being a registered charity means the club relies heavily on donations and fundraising. "We have the Thames 100 event where we row from Oxford all the way back to FRBC over Easter. It's 100 miles in five days and we use that as a fundraiser for our First Row project."

What's even more important than funding is the people who make it happen. "The amazing coaching team, these guys are out on the water in all-weather delivering the sessions and mentoring our students. Without them the work we achieve would not be possible." ^{T&L}

