

Thomastown Canoe Marathon Sunday August 7th 2011

While most eyes in Kilkenny were firmly fixed on Croke Park last Sunday, those not were focused on a 20km stretch of the River Nore between Bennetsbridge and Inistioge. This was for the annual marathon canoe race organised by the Thomastown Paddlers Canoe Club. There were three courses for canoeists to choose from at Sunday's race. For the top athletes there was a 23km course from Bennetsbridge meandering along the river to the finish at Inistioge boat-slip. Most of the kayakers however took part in the 10km course which began in Thomastown and followed the Nore to the finish in Inistioge. The final course was a fun race for Ireland youngest canoeists where they raced over 2km. Water levels in the River Nore were at their lowest in many years for Sunday's race which would mean added work for the contestants as they made their way downstream to the finish.

Thomastown Paddlers must be credited for organising and running such a great event with 110 athletes taking to the water to compete over the various courses. With many of the clubs members involved in marshalling and organising the event only a few actually competed, but they certainly did not disappoint. Performance of the day was from junior female paddler Cáit Broderick who finished fifth in the Division 4, K1 class. Cáit was racing in a K1, which are the formula 1 boats of kayak racing. Cáit has shown great progress in recent weeks and this result certainly highlights this. She was only 1 minute off third position. Also racing in this category was Eamon Forristal who finished in 12th place.

Thomastown had three members compete in the Men's General Purpose class. Kieran Varley was dominant from start to finish when taking the gold medal. Kieran will use this win as a start point as he begins his build up towards the International Liffey Descent kayak race in early September. David Comerford finished strongly in fifth position while new member Colm Mullins completed his first marathon in 9th place. In the Women's category Jackie Walsh and Carmel Mackey enjoyed their day out on the river and they finished in 4th and 5th places respectively.

Racing in the K2 (doubles) class were two crews from the Thomastown club. David MacCormack and Dermot Forristal completed their first competitive outing together when claiming fifth place on Sunday. Richie and Melissa Kelly made it a family affair on Sunday when they raced together and crossed the line in Inistioge to take 7th position.

Next up for the Thomastown Paddlers Canoe Club will be the Lower Liffey Marathon race in two weeks time which will provide members hoping to compete in the 2011 International Liffey Descent with some course practice. The club also hope to enter a team in the Irish Canoe Polo Championships in Galway at the end of August. This will be a new venture for the Thomastown club. Canoe Polo is like football on water, where two teams of five canoeists try to score more goals than the opposition.

The club also hold their final beginner (Level 2 skills) course next week, starting on Monday 15th for four successive evening. Anyone interested in reserving a place can do so by checking www.thomastownpaddlers.com or calling Dave 086-3391549