

# World Coastal Champs and World Beach Sprint Finals



Sally Knight

Saundersfoot is a small seaside village in Pembrokeshire, South Wales. It is quiet and picturesque with cottages and terrace houses perched on steep, narrow streets and a generous collection of cafés, pubs and shops.

PHOTO:  
SIMON DERVILLER,  
COLGAN FOUNDATION

## Saundersfoot, Wales, October 7–16

The Welsh summer season is well over by October, and locals and regular weekenders are walking their dogs on the beach and enjoying the peace.

Now drop in eight enormous trailer-loads of coastal boats, a huge athletes' tent, various merchandise and retailer tents, a stage and bar area, porta-cabins for commentators and IT crew, a massive team of volunteers, photographers and umpires and several hundred excited athletes from all over the world. Let the fun begin!

The Saundersfoot beach is long and sandy with a truly immense tidal height range of up to 8 metres across several hundred metres of beach. The slope is gentle – ideal

for beach sprint racing – but the beach is narrow at high tide and it's a long way to the water at low tide. The organisers moved the course each day between high and low tides.

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**Everything's just a big learning curve. It's the same but at the same time it's a whole new sport.**

*Ben Mason*

travel, and purpose-designed racing and thermal gear.

A group of seven NZ athletes raced at the 2022 Coastal Champs in Wales. Most of them squeezed the event in after competing at the World Champs in Račice and before heading to Boston for the Head of the Charles Regatta. The Colgan Foundation generously supported the team with accommodation and

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**You're constantly turning to try and get the most out of each swell for the crew. So much fun.**

*Matthew Dunham*



WOMEN'S COXED QUAD  
EMMA DYKE, EMMA TWIGG, BIBI COLGAN,  
JACKIE KIDDLE, COX MATT DUNHAM



MIXED DOUBLE,  
JACKIE KIDDLE  
& MATT DUNHAM  
PHOTO:  
SIMON DERVILLER,  
COLGAN FOUNDATION

Swift Racing NZ assisted with coastal boats for training and competition, and Sally and Phil Knight of Swift, were at the event to help with logistics. Rowing NZ coach Mike Rodger was an invaluable member of the team. Also supporting were Lucy Spoons, Char and Tommy Twigg and Robyn Aylett. Coastal rowing competition does require a few extra hands: boat holders are key to the race crew, and Mike Rodger and Phil Knight took on this role.

There are two coastal event formats, raced over consecutive weekends. The first, the long format (called Coastal Champs), is a 4km heat with 6km finals, open to club crews in seven events: men's and women's quads; men's, women's and mixed doubles; and men's and women's solos.

*New Zealand's own Roger Milne of Swift Racing was a part of the World Coastal Rowing Umpire team, with Lesley Milne also volunteering on the course.*



PHOTO: PHIL KNIGHT

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It was so hectic out there ... I didn't come here expecting to try and medal, so I just kept racing and practising how I can make any stroke a little bit better, any corner a little bit better, and then at the end I got big hugs and cheers. I was stoked to come away with a bronze medal.

*Matthew Dunham*



MATT DUNHAM, MENS SINGLE  
PHOTO: SIMON DERVILLER,  
COLGAN FOUNDATION

MEN'S DOUBLE,  
BROOK ROBERTSON  
AND BEN MASON  
PHOTO: SIMON DERVILLER,  
COLGAN FOUNDATION



PHOTO: SALLY KNIGHT



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**It's been an amazing couple of weeks ... This is something I'd like to keep doing. A little more practice and some fine-tuning of skills, and hopefully we'll get to the real finals another year.**

*Emma Twigg*

The following weekend was the World Rowing Beach Sprint Finals. There are nine events, with just one entry per country allowed in each boat class. Open classes are mixed quads, mixed double, men's and women's solos. Junior classes are mixed, men's and women's doubles, and men's and women's solos. Beach sprint finals are special in that junior events are raced at the same event as open – a huge opportunity for young athletes.

At the World Coastal Champs, New Zealand athletes raced for Nelson Rowing Club (men's double and mixed double), Star Boating Club (men's solo and mixed double) and Hawke's Bay Rowing Club (women's quad). At the beach sprints, New Zealand contested all four open events. See table opposite.

With the notable exception of Ben Mason, who rowed 1000km in a coastal single in his fundraising Row for Breast Cancer last winter, most of these NZ rowers had limited experience in coastal boats.

From the outset it was clear that the coastal rowing world was watching the New Zealanders very closely. Every time they trained or raced there was a high level of interest and lots of photos taken. Team Coastal NZ worked together trying different techniques for fast entry and exit from the boats and tight buoy turns. Saundersfoot turned on a complete range of water and weather conditions, from flat calm in some of the heats to perfect coastal conditions with a good swell and nice waves at the shoreline, and finally through to some wild water on the finals day of Beach Sprints.

Thanks to the Colgan Foundation and Swift Racing NZ for their support of this exploratory entry to the World Coastal Rowing Champs.

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**There are way more possibilities coming in within the sport – that's so exciting.**

*Ben Mason*



PHOTO: SALLY KNIGHT



PHOTO: SIMON DERVILLER,  
COLGAN FOUNDATION



PHOTO: SIMON DERVILLER,  
COLGAN FOUNDATION



MIXED COXED QUAD  
BEN MASON, EMMA TWIGG,  
JACKIE KIDDLE, BROOK  
ROBERTSON, COX MATT  
DUNHAM  
PHOTO: SALLY KNIGHT

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**Anything can happen here. It was awesome, this is so fantastic. It was a spectacular race and we did everything we could.**  
*Jackie Kiddle*

*The New Zealand crew achieved some terrific results:*

## World Rowing Coastal Champs

### Women's coxed quad

Emma Dyke, Emma Twigg, Bibi Colgan, Jackie Kiddle, cox Matt Dunham, Hawke's Bay Rowing Club.

**SILVER MEDAL**

### Men's double

Brook Robertson and Ben Mason, Nelson Rowing Club. **BRONZE MEDAL**

### Mixed double

Emma Twigg and Ben Mason, Nelson Rowing Club. **A FINAL**

### Mixed double

Jackie Kiddle and Matt Dunham, Star Boating Club. **4TH IN A FINAL**

### Men's solo

Matt Dunham, Star Boating Club. **BRONZE MEDAL**

## World Rowing Beach Sprint Finals

### Mixed coxed quad

Ben Mason, Emma Twigg, Jackie Kiddle, Brook Robertson, cox Matt Dunham.

**SILVER MEDAL**

### Mixed double

Jackie Kiddle and Matt Dunham

### Men's solo

Ben Mason

### Women's solo

Emma Twigg. **GOLD MEDAL**



PHOTO: JACKIE KIDDLE

PHOTO: SIMON DERVILLER,  
COLGAN FOUNDATION



**We just wanted to get as much experience as we could, so I did the mixed double with Jackie (Kiddle). It was so much fun. The single was amazing. A highlight was coxing the quad ... and they got silver, so that was really exciting too.**

*Matthew Dunham*



PHOTO: SIMON DERVILLER,  
COLGAN FOUNDATION

PHOTO: SALLY KNIGHT



PHOTO: SIMON DERVILLER,  
COLGAN FOUNDATION



**It's kind of cool to be back on the ocean. There's so much more going on. There's so much more to do and think about. Out there in those conditions the race can change very quickly, something can go bad and you're in a shambles, so you've got to stay focused and get that line wherever you are.**

*Ben Mason*



**We were just trying to race the person next to us, it was so up and everywhere.**

*Brook Robertson*



PHOTO: SIMON DERVILLER,  
COLGAN FOUNDATION

PHOTO:  
SALLY KNIGHT



**I did officially retire from flat-water rowing but I would consider coming back for this. It was such fun, something different.**

*Emma Dyke*

