

Courier Mail

Disclaimer

From **\$196** Per week*
48 months/100,000kms



Search

FRIDAY, MAY 11, 1989

QUEENSLAND, THE BOLTER, BOBBED UP

Wilf. Mole Stroked Home Crew To Victory

HALF-LENGTH MARGIN IN THRILLING FINISH


MORE than 20,000 people cheered Queensland on to victory yesterday in the King's Cup, the Australian rowing classic, in time that equalled the fastest rowed race in the history of the event.

To score their third victory in the Australian eight-oared championship, the Queenslanders staged a Herrulian finishing effort. It was a paralyzing spurt over the last half mile that won the honors for the local team. Wilf Mole's crew thoroughly deserved the plaudits of the great throng that crowded around the finishing mark and on the many flagships.

TASSIE LEADS

THE PLACINGS



 Newspaper report of Queensland winning the 1939 King's Cup. A group rowing enthusiasts wants to repeat history.

SPORT

Olympians join forces to end Queensland rowing's 80 year drought

Mike Colman, The Courier-Mail

May 17, 2019 3:53pm



When Dr Michael Toon took a “selfie” at Brett’s Wharf on Monday afternoon he almost expected to see a rowing eight cutting through the water in the background.

“I had chills going up and down my spine,” he said. “It was weird. I looked out over the river and I could almost see this ghostly crew going past.”

The time was precisely 4.14pm and 30 seconds, the exact moment 80 years to the day since the Queensland eight crossed the finish line off Brett’s Wharf to win the coveted King’s Cup, a feat that Queenslanders have been unable to repeat since.



 Olympian Michael Toon at Brett's Wharf, finish line of 1939 King's Cup won by Queensland. Picture: Michael Toon

Dr Toon, 40, who was cox of the Australian eight that won bronze at the 2004 Athens Olympics, competed in a record 12 King's Cup campaigns for Queensland and is now part of a committee formed to help break one of the longest droughts in the country's sporting history.

It was a century ago this year that a crew made up of Australian infantrymen won the King's Cup donated by King George V at the Peace Regatta held at Henley-on-Thames to celebrate the end of World War I.

MORE IN SPORT

Lions preying on rugby heartland



Ashes rivals now have jump on sick Burns



Two years later Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for The Colonies, wrote to Australia's governor-general Baron Forster that, "His Majesty commands me to inform you that it is his wish that the Cup should be used as a permanent trophy and be competed for annually in the Interstate Eight-Oar Race of Australia."

Queensland won the cup in 1924 and again on May 16, 1939, but despite plenty of talent, hard work and high hopes, the closest they have come since is 11 third-placings.



📷 Queensland's King's Cup-winning crew of 1939. From left W.B Mole (stroke), M. Hourigan (5), K. Sheard (6), L. Tait (3), K. Thompson (bow), R. Marks (cox), D. Tynan (4), B. Fihelly (2).

“Every few years we have a sniff of victory but we never quite get there,” said Dr Toon, who was cox of the Terrace crew that won the GPS Head of the River in 1996.

“In 1999 a committee was formed to give Queensland every chance of winning the cup. It

raised money for a new boat and some training camps but after a few years it fell away.

“There was some money left over so a few of us have got it up and running again and we’re putting a couple of development crews together and trying to break the drought.

“It’s become something a crusade for us. I was doing research into it and saw the date of the last win. The race was supposed to start at 3.30 but I found an old newspaper report that said it had been delayed half an hour.

“The winning time was 14 minutes and 30 seconds so I added that on and made sure I took the selfie at exactly the right time. I know it sounds crazy, but rowing can do that to you.

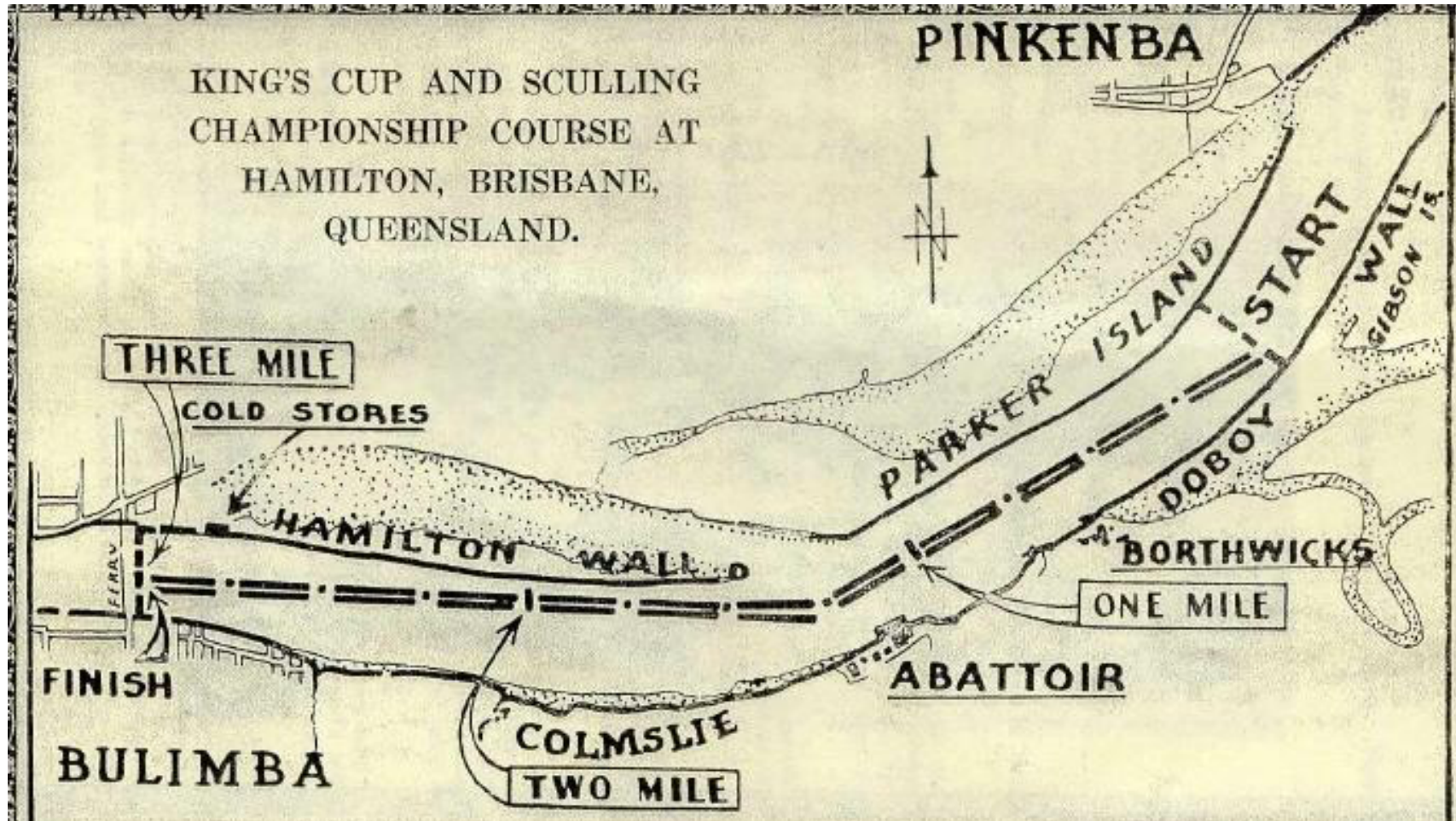
“Being out on the water at 5am with the sun coming up, the water like glass. Words can’t describe it.”

The King’s Cup Supporters’ Committee is chaired by Bruce Greenland, president of Commercial Rowing Club, with former Australian representative and BBC 1990 Head of the River winner Randall Martin a driving force.

“If we could bottle the passion that Randall puts into everything he does we would have won every King’s Cup for the past 20 years,” Dr Toon said.

To raise awareness for their campaign the committee is organising a re-enactment of the 1939 race between two development crews, coached by Olympians Duncan Free and Bo Hanson.

They will race over the original three-mile course from Pinkenba to Brett’s Wharf on Sunday September 8.



 Course of 1939 King's Cup on Brisbane River

For Dr Toon the sight of the two crews followed by a flotilla of spectator craft will be just the latest highlight of a 27 year-long love affair with rowing that has been remarkable in any number of ways.

As a baby he was diagnosed with congenital heart disease and underwent open heart surgery at the age of three. At seven he was fitted with a pacemaker.

Barred from contact sport and frustrated at not being able to play rugby at Terrace like his older brother Matthew, he instead took up rowing as a cox.

In 1996 he was a late call-up into the 1st VIII that won the school's third Head of the River title. Two years later he was cox for the Australian crew that won gold at the Under 23 world championships in Greece.

In 2001 he took the gamble of moving to Sydney to push for a place at the Athens Olympics, which paid off with selection in the bronze medal-winning crew.



📷 Michael Toon (left) with Australia's bronze medal-winning men's eight in Athens, Steve Stewart, Mike McKay, Boden Hanson, Geoff Stewart, James Stewart, Stuart Welch, Stuart Reside and Stefan Szczurowski.

Having qualified as a pharmacist in 2002, he returned to Brisbane in 2007 and studied medicine at the University of Queensland, graduating in 2010. He is now an anaesthetist at the Mater Hospital.

Having represented Queensland in the King's Cup from 1998 to 2009 (a record he shares with Olympic crewmate Bo Hanson) he still competes in the Queensland Master's Eight which in two weeks' time heads to Perth in pursuit of its six interstate title in the past seven years.

Given that CV, being part of a campaign that breaks an 80 year King's Cup drought should be a piece of cake.

"We're out to change history," he says. "Hopefully people will get behind us, just like the Sheffield Shield. Everyone loves an underdog, don't they?"

Anyone interested in joining the fight should email: race3miles@kingscup.org.au.

