



The crew of (from left) John Welchli, Art McKinlay, John McKinlay and Jim McIntosh won a silver medal at the 1954 Melbourne Olympics.

'4 Oarsmen' Rowers recall Olympic glory

By M.B. DILLON

Almost everyone has heard of the football-playing Four Horsemen, Well, Detroit's "Four Oarsmen," the National Rowing Hall of Fame's most recent inductees, enjoy the same fame among American rowers.

Jim McIntosh, John and Art McKinlay and John Welchli formed the Detroit Boat Club's four-oar crew and won a silver medal for rowing in the 1954 Olympics at Melbourne, Australia.

At the annual oarsmen's convention this month at Southfield's Michigan Inn, the foursome joined the likes of Knute Rockne and Tom Harmon in the hallowed Citizens Savings Athletic Foundation Hall of Fame in Los Angeles.

The "1956 Detroit Boat Club Olympic Four Without Cox" dominated American rowing for a decade and collectively won 26 individual National Association of Amateur Oarsmen championship medals plus 44 elite-level championship medals at the Canadian Henley regatta.

"The Stroke" McIntosh, a 1954 graduate of the University of Detroit and an auto test driver for General Motors, claimed six NAAO championships and eight Canadian Henley Championships.

The Farmington resident also earned a bronze medal in the 1959 Pan American Games. Birmingham realtor John McKinlay's rowing achievements include five NAAO titles and eight Canadian Henley Championships. The 1958 graduate of Boston University also reached the semifinals of the 1962 Henley Royal Regatta in England.

McKINLAY'S TWIN BROTHER Arthur racked up five NAAO championships and seven Canadian Henley Championships. The portside McKinlay, also a Birmingham resident, graduated from Detroit Institute of Technology and is credit manager of Shatterproof Glass Co.

Eleven-time NAAO champion John Welchli claimed 21 Canadian Henley championships and accompanied John

McKinlay in the semi-finals of the 1962 Henley.

The vice president of Jackson's Investment Securities was one of America's foremost oarsmen for 10 years.

"The crew, to a man, downplayed its recent honor in this 200-year-old sport.

"I'm not going around broadcasting it because hardly anybody knows about it (the National Rowing Hall of Fame)," said Welchli. "But it is nice to be recognized by your peers in the sport."

"I don't feel I deserve it," said McIntosh. "We were a product of the far-sightedness of our coach, Walt Hoover."

"He talked something bigger than winning local regattas. He used to say 'give me someone who'll work hard and I'll give you a winner.'"

"There was no second-guessing him — he was way ahead of his time."

"IT'S EXCITING," said Art McKinlay, "but you don't feel like you belong there."

"You always know that there are good people who don't get the award," said John McKinlay. "You have to be lucky as well as good to get into the Hall of Fame."

"The Stroke" McIntosh, a 1954 graduate of the University of Detroit and an auto test driver for General Motors, claimed six NAAO championships and eight Canadian Henley Championships.

"We were up at 5 a.m. and on the water by 6 a.m.," said John McKinlay, "and we'd be back in the water at 6 a.m. We rowed 10 miles each time."

"Later it was three times a day. We felt like machines."

"You have to put everything else aside — social life, drinking, staying out late — you have to have blinders," McKinlay added.

"The earlier the sun came up, the earlier we went out," said McIntosh.

"To avoid competing with the power boats and to get to work on time, we were out there at 5 or 6 a.m. We'd row again at dusk — 10 miles in our prime years."

"We ran around Belle Isle all winter," said Art McKinlay. "You trained as hard as you could. You could never give in to yourself."

"We were out there no matter what," said Welchli. "We rowed in weather even a duck hunter wouldn't be out in."

ENDURING PUNISHING WORK-OUTS together developed "callouses you could put a cigarette out on," absolute confidence and an impenetrable bond among the men.

"With that caliber of competition, where everyone has more or less the same physical qualifications, mental toughness separates the winners from the losers," said Welchli.

"Our coach engrained confidence in us until we knew we were at least in as good condition as anyone else in the race."

"You had to have total confidence in yourself and in each other," he added. "You're only as good as your weakest link."

"If your stroke is off by one-tenth of a second, the boat doesn't go."

One thing you learn in a crew is that you can't do it alone," said John McKinlay. "I think the fact we were twins helped quite a bit."

"You have a lot of confidence in your other half."

McIntosh said the confidence gained while rowing still helps him.

"There are times in life when you feel like you're beating your head against a wall and you'd like to give up. But reaching something as unattainable as the Olympics prompts you to succeed in other things."

THE OLYMPICS LEFT the American crew with memories of world-class athletes, celebrities, friendly Australians and the peaceful beauty of the South Pacific.

"The Australians were great people," said McIntosh. "So down to earth — and they couldn't do enough for you."

"The '56 Olympics was our initial experience in the big leagues," he continued. "It was so exciting."

"We beat only 19 crews in the Olympic trials. We were walking on clouds."

"Making an all-state high school basketball team would be much more difficult than what we did. Kids work harder now."

"When it was all over, we were disappointed we didn't put a little more oomph into it and beat the Canadians," added McIntosh. "But we were so awed by the Games."

The crew vividly remembers meeting Jack Kelly, a fellow rower and brother of actress Grace Kelly, and basketball's Bill Russell.

"Russell was kind of a loner," recalled McIntosh. "I remember we were late coming out of Fiji (en route to Australia) and Russell couldn't have been more cool, calm or collected."

"He said, 'Quantas Airlines is right on time, 24 hours late.'"

"He told us he didn't even make his high school varsity team until senior year. He was big, but he couldn't shoot. He went to the only college that offered him a ride. John McKinlay recalled a contrast among the athletes.

"Bill Russell was almost seven feet tall, and the diving champions stood about 5-foot-1," he said. "You realize there's a sport for everyone."

"I remember meeting heavyweight boxing champion Floyd Patterson and his Swedish challenger, (Ingemar) Johansson."

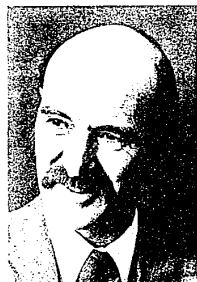
"And I'll never forget having the Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition party in Australia watching us compete."

"Thirty-seven countries were represented, and it was windswept and cold," he added. "The Canadians won the gold medal by six seconds."

The Americans finished the 2,000-meter course five seconds ahead of



ART MCKINLAY



JOHN MCKINLAY

third-place France. Italy placed fourth.

"All the rowers were housed together," recalled Welchli. "We weren't separated by nationality."

"RUSSIA HAD JUST invaded Hungary, and there was disaffection there. It seems there's political disharmony every Olympic year for some reason."

"So living together lent to better understanding and communication among athletes."

"But really, the thrill of getting there kind of overshadowed the event itself. I know this sounds kind of crazy," said Welchli, "but I got more of a kick out of the time trials than I would have on a date with Marilyn Monroe."

"It meant that much to me."

It's obvious that the sacrifice, success and camaraderie they shared means plenty to the silver-medallists.

"Welchli was the brainstorm, the McKinlays were the muscle and they allowed me to chafeur," said McIntosh.

"They followed my cadence very well."

It's hard to say enough about the great teammates," said John McKinlay.

"We agreed amongst ourselves and never changed the seating," said Welchli. "Those three were tough characters, mentally and physically."

"You reach a point where you're totally exhausted and then put yourself out a little further. Few people get to that point or even want to go through it."

Bausano defends Canton mat title

By SCOTT ADLER

Plymouth Canton coach Dan Chrenko says that team balance will be the key to victory at this year's fourth annual Plymouth Canton Civan Wrestling Tournament, which will be held on Tuesday in the Canton gym.

"This year we have good-quality wrestlers in the tournament," said Chrenko. "Overall, the quality is more balanced than last year and it's going to take team depth and balance to win it."

Jeff Vojcek will help Plymouth Salem defend the title that it easily won last year. Salem piled up 206½ points, 48 ahead of second-place finisher Warren Lincoln (158½).

Vojcek (98 pounds) finished third last year as a freshman, defeating another freshman Todd Bartlett of Canton in the consolation round. Vojcek and Bartlett are sure to meet sometime before the tournament is over, probably in the finals. Earlier this year Bartlett and Vojcek battled to a 4-4 tie. Vojcek was awarded the win on a referee's decision.

Another top finisher in last year's tourney for Salem was Steve Szilagyi, who placed second at 167 pounds behind Canton's Dave Vaughn who has graduated. He will be the favorite in his respective division.

The host Chiefs hope to improve on last year's third-place finish and Chrenko like his team's chances.

"WE ALWAYS want to improve,"

Chrenko said, "and I think we are. We've got a good shot."

Chrenko is looking for a good performance out of Steve Hamblin, who placed third last year at 145 pounds. Out of those wrestlers who weren't lost to graduation this past June, he was Canton's top finisher last year.

The only defending champion returning this year is Bary Bausano (155) of West Bloomfield. The Lakers as a team finished fourth last year.

Bausano will have his hands full with Canton's Bob Mullen.

Chrenko is also the tournament director along with his assistant coach, Dan Riggs, and says this tournament is a showcase for the Plymouth Canton community as well as a time to see some good wrestling.

"I think that this is good for the community," Chrenko said. "We bring in teams that they don't get a chance to see. It has gone off real well in the past and it is a good showcase for the community. It gives them a chance to get a look at our facilities."

The tournament will start with the heavyweight division at 11:30 a.m. Admission fees are 75 cents for students and \$1.25 for adults for the first session. All tickets are \$1.50 each for the finals, which will start at 7 p.m.

Other teams included in the eight-team field will be Birmingham Seaholm, Birmingham Brother Rice, Dearborn, Redford Thurston and Warren Lincoln.

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The twins, Art and John McKinlay, now Birmingham residents, made up the middle oars of the 1954 silver medal crew.