

WALK THE TALK



After winning World Rowing's commentator competition in April, beating entries from around the world, **Camilla Hadland** earned a spot as guest commentator at the first World Cup earlier this month. **Caroline Roberts** finds out how it went

We all love talking about rowing, but few of us are as good at it as Camilla Hadland. Earlier this year, the former GB junior international rower beat amateur commentators from all over the world to win FISA's first commentator competition. The prize: a commentating spot at the World Rowing Cup 1 in Belgrade, Serbia, in June.

"I was gobsmacked to win and was on a rollercoaster of nerves and excitement," she says. As an on-site commentator, she was stationed on the course, picking up races at 1km and handing over with 500m to go. "It's where the race starts to develop so I really enjoyed being right in the action."

It was a big step up from the domestic events that Camilla is used to. "The most challenging thing was the preparation. With UK regattas, I know what's happening on the circuit, so have lots of interesting snippets I can throw in. But at this level, there were so many athletes I didn't know much about, and the foreign names were a struggle too."

But working alongside one of her commentating heroes gave her confidence. "It was wonderful to sit with Martin Cross as he's been a voice of World Rowing for as long as I can remember. He's a fount of knowledge and can build a story around a crew and get it across in a way that makes everyone feel excited with him."

Camilla's first commentating experience came at the age of 13 when a commentator at a local regatta noted she had a nice voice and thrust a microphone into her hands.

"I had no idea what was going on," she laughs. She only took it

up seriously after she left Durham University following a rowing career that saw her in the eight that won GB's first ever junior women's gold at the 2010 World Rowing Junior Championships.

"It got to the point where I had to take rowing very, very seriously, or [alternatively] I could start my life in the real world."

She opted for the latter and now works in recruitment, but saw commentating as a way of staying connected to the sport. Her first big event was BUCS Regatta and she then went on to Henley Women's, the British Rowing Junior and Senior Championships, and Henley Royal.

It's a high-pressure job and, like all good commentators, she's made the odd gaffe.

"When I was commentating for the first time at Henley Women's, I'd just left Durham. All my friends were racing and they made the final in the academic eights. With 15 strokes to go, it was neck and neck and I was so excited I just blurted out: 'And hopefully Durham's going to win this race.' I get reminded of that a lot!"

Her first big international has whetted her appetite for more. "It was nerve-racking and testing, but I learnt so much that I can take back to my UK commentating."

This year, among other events Camilla will be at Henley Women's Regatta again, and at the European Championships in Glasgow in August.

"I'd love to do the Olympics one day," she says. "It's the pinnacle of achievement for an athlete and it's just the same for a commentator."

Right: Camilla pictured by the course at Belgrade



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