

THE SPORT OF ROWING

To the readers of *www.Rowperfect.co.uk*

This is the fourth installment on *www.Rowperfect.co.uk* of the latest draft of the beginning of my coming new book. Many thanks again to Rebecca Caroe for making this possible.

Details about me and my book project are available at *www.rowingevolution.com*. For six years I have been researching and writing a four volume comprehensive history of the sport of rowing with particular emphasis on the evolution of technique. In these last months before publication, I am inviting all of you visitors to the British Rowperfect website to review the near-final draft. Your comments, suggestions, corrections, agreements, disagreements, additional

sources and illustrations, etc. will be an essential contribution to what has always been intended to be a joint project of the rowing community.

All my contact info is at my website. I will also be at the 2010 World Championships on Lake Karapiro, and I hope to be at the FISA Coaches' Conference in London in January. Or you can email me anytime at *pmallory@rowingevolution.com*.

For a short time you can still access the first, second and third installments. Additional chapters for your review will continue to appear at regular intervals on *www.Rowperfect.co.uk*.

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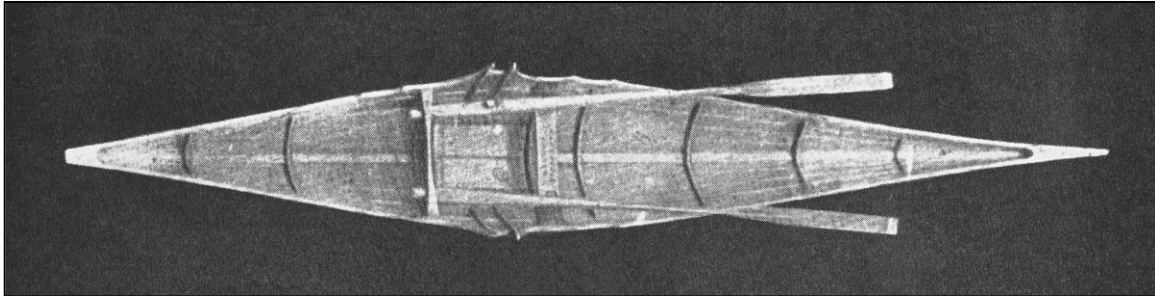
Part III

**The Birth of
Classical Technique**

THE SPORT OF ROWING

9. The Developing Sport of Professional Sculling

Thomas Eakins – 1870s Technique



Byrne & Churchill

Wager Boat

“[Before the invention of the outrigger,] the best that could be done with the early ‘wager’ boats was to keep them as narrow as possible on the waterline and to have high, widely-flared gunwales to carry the rowlocks. In effect, this was an attempt to ‘outrig’ the boat by building out the gunwales, but the consequent top-hamper of heavy wood made the boats clumsy and unsteady.”

– Burnell, *Swing*, p. 7

It should be noted that during this period of evolution in amateur rowing, the competitive professional sport was also evolving around the world among those who already rowed for a living.

In fact, soon it became the most popular spectator sport in the world.

The earliest races, including **Doggett’s Coat and Badge**,⁴⁵⁰ were held in the very same wherries that artisans used to transport people and cargo. “The **wherry** had a fine bow and stern much alike under water. [It] was made either for one or two pairs of sculls or for two oars.”⁴⁵¹

For competition, these regular wherries were soon replaced by lighter, thinner

purpose-built “**wager boats**”⁴⁵² and eventually by craft with outriggers. As was happening in the amateur ranks, soon smooth, keelless hulls and then sliding seats were added until the boats weighed less than thirty pounds and closely resembled modern racing single shells in all dimensions.

It is hard to compare the level of interest in professional rowing during the 19th Century with international sport and culture of the modern era. The passion of the World Cup, perhaps. The individual fame of Formula 1 drivers or Tour de France riders, perhaps. No, more like international rock stars with the added interest of massive public wagering.

⁴⁵⁰ See Chapter 2.

⁴⁵¹ Byrne & Churchill, pp. 205-6

⁴⁵² Woodgate, p. 233

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In 1863, professional single sculling became the first sport to crown a world champion.⁴⁵³ Major championships were also held for coxless-fours and pairs. Newspapers covered big races with separate sections and extra editions, and correspondents were sent around the world to report.

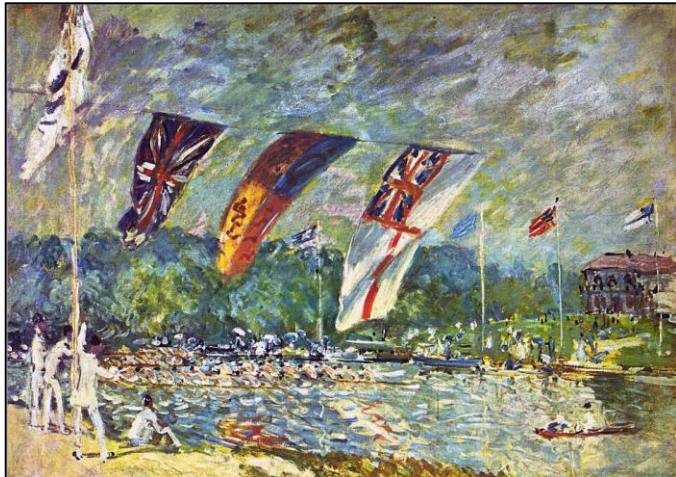
Progress down a race course was communicated to crowds gathered at the finish line by elaborate systems of semaphore flags or cannons. Races were followed by fans worldwide in real-time via telegraph. Huge sums were wagered, the equivalent of \$10,000,000 to \$20,000,000 in today's American dollars for a championship race in 1880,⁴⁵⁴ and the very best professional scullers became the idols of their day.

The American Professional Sculling Champion of 1877 was Philadelphian **Fred Plaisted** (1849-1946) an absolutely charming, plain-spoken man of limited education who eventually lived into his late '90s. He wrote a poem on rowing technique called "The first lesson in rowing:"

Catch the watter hard at the begening.
Let the legs with vigor work.
Little chance has one of winning
If he does the stretcher shirk.

Let the armes be well extended.
Just as stiff as pokers, too,
And until the strok is endid
Pull it hard all the way through.⁴⁵⁵

Interpreting Plaisted's description, his technique seemed to include strong legs from the entry and straight arms until near



Musée d'Orsay

Regatta at Molesey, Alfred Sisley, 1874

the finish (ferryman's finish?), with the intention of a hard *Schubschlag* pullthrough.

Thomas Eakins, Rower and Painter

Thanks to the paintings of 19th Century Philadelphia artist **Thomas Cowperthwait Eakins**⁴⁵⁶ (1844-1916), the fame of two professional rowers from 1872, North American singles champion **John Biglin** (1844-1886), 5'9¾" 177 cm, 161 lb. 73 kg, and his brother **Barney Biglin**, (1840-1924), 5'9½" 176 cm, 151 lb. 68 kg,⁴⁵⁷ has survived to the present day

Rowing historian **Bill Lanouette**: "John Biglin, said the weekly sports paper, *Turf, Field and Farm*, was 'endowed with great strength, presenting in appearance the perfect picture of an athlete.'

"A student of anatomy, Eakins, too, appreciated the Biglins' appearance and worked meticulously to capture these muscular figures in their slender racing shell

⁴⁵³ Melissa S. Bray, *Racing for cash – the era of professional scullers*, *World Rowing Magazine*, April, 2009, p. 4

⁴⁵⁴ Melissa S. Bray, op cit, p. 4

⁴⁵⁵ Fred Plaisted, personal scrapbook, Mystic Seaport Library

⁴⁵⁶ pronounced "A-kins"

⁴⁵⁷ Cooper, p. 39

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The Cleveland Museum of Art

The Biglin Brothers Turning the Stake, Thomas Eakins, 1873
Schuylkill River, Philadelphia

– making perspective drawings and studying how colors reflect on water.”⁴⁵⁸

Trained in Paris in the academic Beaux Arts tradition, Eakins approached painting rowers on his beloved Schuylkill River as a technical challenge to be solved in the studio with perspective drawings and miniature figures in a shadow box.

Unfortunately, while this cerebral approach produced paintings of near-photographic accuracy, they also had an inappropriately still and static appearance for an action sport rowed back then at up to 50 strokes to the minute.

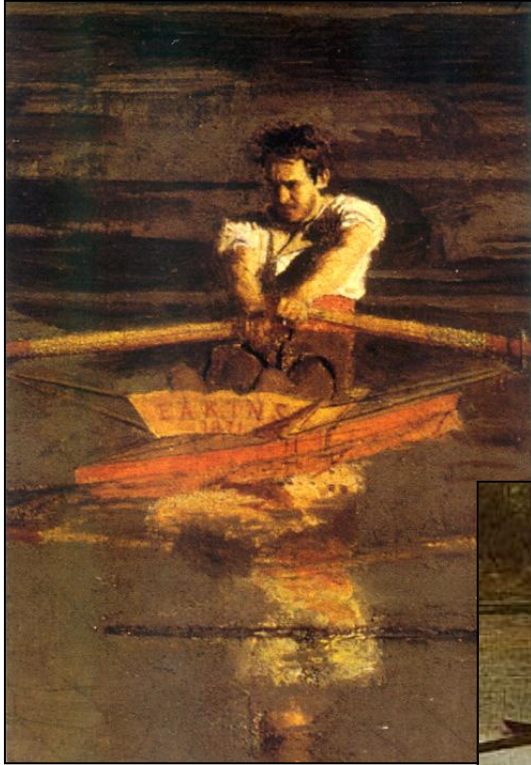
During this same period in history, a group of dissident artists in Paris were beginning a rebellion away from the

academic tradition to which Eakins belonged. Rejecting the kind of airless studio paintings that Eakins was creating, they painted their own canvases outdoors, seeking to capture fleeting “impressions” of atmosphere and motion and light. Among them were men such as Édouard Manet and Claude Monet.

There is an **Impressionist** painting in the Musée d’Orsay in Paris of a regatta at Molesey by Alfred Sisley, but there is little to be learned from it about the rowing of the time. For rowing historians, however, Eakins’ paintings represent unique documentation of how 19th Century oarsmen actually rowed in the period before outdoor motion picture photography was invented.

⁴⁵⁸ Lanouette, p. 96

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The Metropolitan Museum of Art
The Champion, Single Sculls, Thomas Eakins, 1871 (background detail)
 Autograph and self portrait.



The Philadelphia Museum of Art
The Pair Oared Shell (detail), Thomas Eakins, 1872
 Compare relaxed shoulders to Eakins self portrait.

The Biglin Brothers Turning the Stake shows the named protagonists at the halfway point of the first professional coxless-pair race ever held in America, which had been prominently covered in the American press. “*The New York Times*, May 21, 1872 [the day following the race], placed its report in the center of the front page, above the fold.”⁴⁵⁹

Wearing blue bandanas, they had reached their turnaround stake, marked with a blue pennant, and were performing a river-turn around the stake.

In the background, their opponents in red bandanas, Henry Coulter and Lewis

Cavitt of Pittsburgh,⁴⁶⁰ had yet to reach their own stake and were looking around to line up their approach.

The brothers had only just acquired their first boat with sliding seats. John in the stroke-seat was portrayed steadying the boat, employing his blade as the fulcrum of the turn, while Barney in bow was pulling the boat around.

What catches the modern eye is Barney, caught at mid-stroke and laying back generously with arms still straight. Could this be inaccurate or perhaps artistic license?

Not likely.

The American poet **Walt Whitman** once wrote, “I never knew of but one artist, and that’s Tom Eakins, who could resist the temptation to see what they thought ought to be, rather than what is.”⁴⁶¹

Several of Eakins’ rowing paintings show their subjects on the recovery, but five of the six which show the pullthrough all consistently chose this very moment: legs flat, arms straight and generous layback.

Eakins was himself a recreational sculler, and his most well known rowing

⁴⁵⁹ Cooper, p. 126

⁴⁶⁰ Cooper, p. 36

⁴⁶¹ Qtd by F.O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance*, Oxford Press, London, 1941, p. 604

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Portland Art Museum

The Oarsmen (detail), Thomas Eakins, 1873

This wonderfully impressionistic sketch makes Eakins' other rowing pictures look as static as the rowers in Georges Seurat's *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*, 1884, Art Institute of Chicago

painting, *The Champion, Single Sculls*,⁴⁶² contains a self portrait in the background.

⁴⁶² This painting is referred to today as *Max Schmitt in a Single Scull*, committing the common linguistic heresy of referring to the boat in which a single sculler rows as a "single scull" instead of a "single shell." A "**scull**" is an oar used by a sculler, and never, ever a boat!

Boatbuilder Stan Pocock (who should know!) has written to me: "Peter, I must thank you clarifying the use of the word 'scull.' The very first time I saw it used to describe a boat was in a letter from someone in the East who wanted to order a 'scull.' In all innocence, I

He painted himself in the same position, laying back with straight arms.

The self portrait is not flattering. Compared to *The Pair Oared Shell*, which showed the Biglins from a similar vantage point off the stern, Eakins' shoulders looked tense and awkward. The realism is obvious, and the conclusion is inevitable that Eakins chose to repeatedly portray with unflinching

replied to ask for details, including whether he needed it for port or starboard. I never got a reply." – personal correspondence, 2005

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Yale University Art Gallery

The Schreiber Brothers, Thomas Eakins, 1873

accuracy the moment of the pullthrough that he felt was the most evocative and appealing for his artistic purposes.

However, his decision was not entirely successful. There is very little sense of animation. His approach works for me only in *The Pair Oared Shell*, a reflective study of the Biglins on the paddle in the late afternoon summer sun, but the race scenes are void of appropriate movement and drama.

Historian Tom Mendenhall tells the story that during his rowing phase, Eakins sent a sketch to **Jean-Léon Gérôme**, his former teacher at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

Mendenhall: “While finding it generally promising, Gérôme pointed out that the point halfway through the stroke is likely to give an impression of ‘immobility’ rather than movement and that for the

painter either the beginning or the end of the stroke offer the most possibilities.”⁴⁶³

A short while later, Eakins entirely abandoned rowers as subjects for his paintings, but before that, Eakins reliably documented the fact that during the early 1870s, the Biglins and others were rowing a technique with the same back, then arms sequentiality also seen in the Thames Waterman’s Stroke (and English Orthodoxy) of the period.

In Fred Plaisted’s words,

Let the armes be well extended.

Just as stiff as pokers, too,

And until the strok is endid

Pull it hard all the way through.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶³ Mendenhall, *The Rowing Art of Thomas Eakins*, *Rowing U.S.A.*, April/May 1983, p. 14

⁴⁶⁴ Plaisted, Fred, personal scrapbook, Mystic Seaport Library

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Yale University Art Gallery
The Schreiber Brothers (detail), Thomas Eakins

Mendenhall described the 19th Century American professional technique as follows: “catching the water with a good lift of back and legs, heavily emphasizing the first half of the stroke, and letting the arms pull the blade through to a clean feather and an easy recovery.”⁴⁶⁵

Any word description fails to adequately prepare the modern eye for Eakins’ depictions of arms held straight until the backs have fully completed their swing. *Oarsmen on the Schuylkill*, 1874,⁴⁶⁶ depicting a coxless-four at the same point midway through the pullthrough, also portrays the same stroke technique: bodies laying back with arms still straight.

Refer back to Photo 5 showing contemporary **life-guard rowing** in Chapter 6, and you will see the very same positioning of the oarsmen at near full layback with their arms still straight. The technique in use in Philadelphia during the 1870s traced directly back to the artisan

waterman’s stroke that had been in use for centuries.

The question remains as to whether that is the way they completed the pullthrough, in the manner of *Walker’s Manly Exercises*,⁴⁶⁷ where the stroke actually ended with the arms still straight. Of course, watermen (and lifeguard rowers today) used the ferryman’s finish.

Taken together, two specific Eakins paintings give us the answer. *The Oarsmen*, 1873, now in the Portland Art Museum, is an absolutely delightful “Impressionist” oil sketch of the Schreiber brothers,⁴⁶⁸ two Philadelphia

recreational rowers, rowing through Columbia Railroad Bridge in a pair.

In the sketch, the Schreibers are caught at the now familiar point on the pullthrough. However, in the finished painting *The Schreiber Brothers*, 1874, now in the Yale University Art Gallery, they are shown a bit later in the pullthrough, nearing the release. They are awkwardly performing a ferryman’s finish, pulling their bodies back toward vertical as they pull their handles into their chests.

The two Schreiber paintings complete Eakins’ documentation of 19th Century amateur and professional rowing technique

⁴⁶⁷ See Chapter 6.

⁴⁶⁸ The subjects of this sketch have been incorrectly identified by Cooper, p. 54, as the Biglins. This is impossible, as the painting is obviously an outdoor study sketched from life, and by the time this painting was done, 1873, the Biglins had long since left Philadelphia. The garb of the pair in *The Oarsmen* is virtually identical to that worn by the Schreiber brothers in Eakins’ 1874 painting, *The Schreiber Brothers*, in the Yale University Art Gallery.

⁴⁶⁵ Mendenhall, *Harvard-Yale*, p. 49

⁴⁶⁶ in a private collection and not illustrated in this book.

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in Philadelphia at the time of the introduction of the sliding seat, the initial use of the legs and back to achieve a layback position of -30° or more past vertical, and then finishing the stroke with the arms helping to pull the upper body back towards the vertical position.

Eakins' rowing paintings illustrate that rowers in Philadelphia in the early 1870s were still rowing an archaic waterman's technique virtually identical to that of modern lifeguard rowers.

It was into this world that **Ned Hanlan** came just two years later.

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10. The Sliding Seat Comes of Age

Ned Hanlan – The Ward Brothers

Professional Evolution

With tremendous personal fortunes to be made, competition amongst professionals was understandably fierce, and evolutionary **selectivity**⁴⁶⁹ in equipment and technique was in full swing. The same arms race which produced modern racing eights for universities had also produced modern racing singles for the pros, including sliding seats. And as the technique of university oarsmen had been forced to evolve, the original waterman's stroke that the Biglins and others on both sides of the Atlantic used was also forced to adapt as the professionals as a class, like their amateur counterparts, achieved higher and higher hull speeds.

The first practical sliding seat had been developed in the 1860s, probably by American **John C. Babcock**. Unlike Orthodox amateurs, English and American professionals had no philosophical commitment to exaggerated body angle forward, and so they were more open-minded to increasingly long slides, which meant that over the years knees and thighs rose ever higher with the attendant decrease in how far the body could swing forward.⁴⁷⁰

This opened the door rather quickly to achieving reach at the entry through a combination of body angle and leg



www.kids.premier.gov.on.ca

Ned Hanlan posing near the front stops of his revolutionary slide

compression which looks quite modern to the 21st Century eye.

The first athlete to make the breakthrough to truly *effective* usage of the sliding seat was Canadian sculler **Edward “Ned” Hanlan** (1855-1908), born “of Irish parents who had squatted on Mugg’s Landing on the Island on Lake Ontario just offshore from Toronto.”⁴⁷¹

At only 5’8¾” 175 cm tall and weighing between 148 and 154 pounds (67-70 kg), he should have been at a distinct disadvantage in a sport which then as now rewarded size

⁴⁶⁹ See Introduction.

⁴⁷⁰ *Fairbairn On Rowing*, p. 489

⁴⁷¹ Dodd, *World Rowing*, p. 315

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and strength, but Ned was blindly fast even at the beginning of his career.

After his retirement, Hanlan wrote that in 1875, only months after he had first sat in a shell, “there was a regatta in Toronto Bay, and I entered the amateur race, having for competitors ‘Bob’ Williams and ‘Bob’ MacKay, and others. I had no difficulty in winning the event, and later in the day, when the professional race was called, I resolved to test my speed for my personal satisfaction.

“In this race were entered such crack scullers as Henry Coulter⁴⁷² [of Manchester, Pennsylvania], the then Champion of America, Tommy Loudon, the then Champion of Ontario, Eph Morris and Pat Luther of Pittsburgh, and Jim Douglas, the well-known Toronto hotel keeper, then considered a very speedy man.

“The start was from the foot of York Street, and the race was to Gooderham’s Distillery and return, a distance of two miles. I was stationed away at the outside, and when the gun was fired I started with the rest. I turned opposite the half-way buoy one-hundred-fifty yards ahead of the whole flock, and without exerting myself very much returned to the starting post fully two-hundred yards ahead of the winner.

“This imbued me with a lot of confidence, and the next year I went into the professional class, defeating Billy McCann for the Championship of Toronto, the race being rowed on Toronto Bay.”⁴⁷³

Don Morrow, co-author of *A Concise History of Sport in Canada*: “Hanlan’s lower-class Irish background did not endear him to Toronto’s snobbish upper- or middle-class British sportsmen, who were dominant in the organization of rowing. Ned’s father

was a fisherman who also ran a hotel on Toronto Island, and Ned gained his early rowing practice in a fishing skiff, either in the pursuit of angling or in the business of illegally smuggling rum across Lake Ontario to his father’s hotel.”⁴⁷⁴

“He won several four-oared and single sculling races as a teenager in the early 1870s, and won the Ontario singles championship in 1875. Shortly afterwards he came close to being caught by the police for illegally supplying liquor to his father’s hotel; Hanlan left Toronto in late May, 1876 and carried out his plans to race at the Centennial Regatta in Philadelphia on the Schuylkill River.”⁴⁷⁵

Hanlan: “I then entered into the Professional Championship race in the Centennial Regatta, which was held at Philadelphia in August of that same year [1876].

“The race was a distance of three miles with a turn, and the fastest men in the world were entered, including [John] Higgins, Champion of England, Coulter, Morris, Fred Plaisted,⁴⁷⁶ John McKeel, Ellis Ward⁴⁷⁷ and [Alexander] Brayley [champion of Halifax, Nova Scotia].

“There were altogether fifteen starters, and to win I was compelled to two preliminaries and a final.

“In winning, I made the fastest time on record for the distance, the figure being 21 minutes, 9½ seconds.”⁴⁷⁸

“I had no moustache and didn’t weigh more than 137 pounds [62 kg] stripped. So easily did I win that I never shed a drop of perspiration from my brow during the race.”⁴⁷⁹

In his time, Hanlan’s technique was described as being a “long, smooth, loping

⁴⁷² who was a member of the pair that had lost the 1872 race depicted by Thomas Eakins in *The Biglin Brothers Turning the Stake*. See Chapter 9.

⁴⁷³ Hanlan, p. 3

⁴⁷⁴ Hunter, p. 27

⁴⁷⁵ Morrow, p. 32

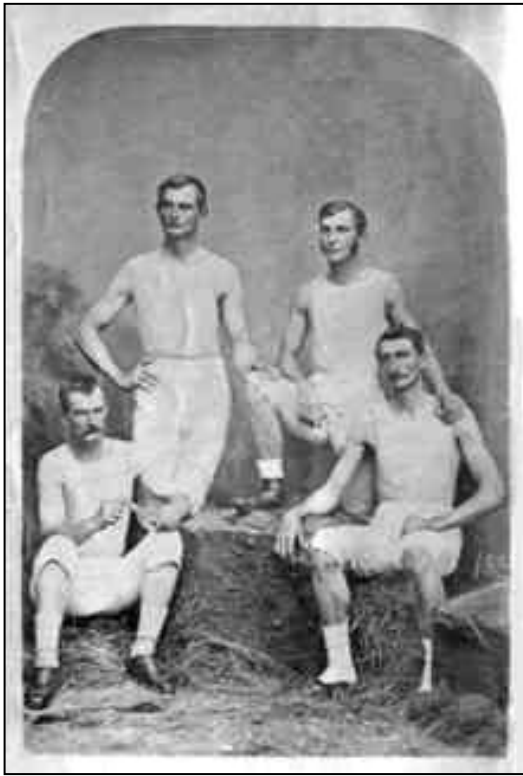
⁴⁷⁶ See Chapter 9.

⁴⁷⁷ See below.

⁴⁷⁸ Hanlan, p. 3

⁴⁷⁹ Qtd. by Palmer, p. 660

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www.rowinghistory.net

The Ward Brothers
Hank, Josh, Gilbert and Ellis

sweep of the oars gliding ahead” as opposed to the normal “short, choppy, slapping effort lurching forward [ferryman’s finish] with every pull of the oars.”⁴⁸⁰

Given that Ned Hanlan seemed to break every rule followed by the professionals of his era, nobody could figure out how he could be so fast. Singles rival **Ellis Ward** also rowed bow in the famous American-champion Ward Brothers four. There were five brothers in all, Charles, Hank, Josh, Gil and Ellis, sons of a fisherman and hotel keeper in Cornwell-on-Hudson, New York.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁸⁰ Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 18

⁴⁸¹ Mendenhall, *Harvard-Yale*, p. 55

Ellis described Hanlan as having a “haunted boat,”⁴⁸² and Hanlan wasn’t about to tell anyone his secret. Here’s how he described his own technique during his career: “A full, long reach out over the toes, with both arms straight; a sharp, clean ‘catch’ of the water; a powerful, steady, horizontal stroke, with an application of the whole force at the moment of immersion; a clean feather and a low, quick recover, shooting out at the moment of the finish.”⁴⁸³

You can read that quote as often as you like. It sounds good, but it is full of platitudes and self-evident truths. It is not terribly informative except that Hanlan definitely practiced *Schubschlag* force application.

Contemporaries were dazzled, even blinded by Hanlan’s technique. Here is the beginning of an account of one of Hanlan’s victories:

The Illustrated London News: “The Canadian, whose style is simply perfect, and has never been approached by that of any other sculler, at once took a slight lead . . .”⁴⁸⁴

According to *The Montreal Herald*: “No other sculler made such a picture in a boat. There was a combination of grace and strength and the perfection of motion that appealed to the eye in the same way as the thoroughbred racehorse does.”⁴⁸⁵

Others could only joke. “*The Spirit of the Times* claimed to have discovered the secret to Hanlan’s smooth, effortless stroke: he had concealed bellows in his boat which, when pressed by his feet would puff him along like a modern jet.”⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸² Qtd. by Kelley, p. 33

⁴⁸³ Qtd. by Harding, p. 7, Kelley, p. 44

⁴⁸⁴ *Championship Sculling-Match, The Illustrated London News*, November 20, 1880, p. 506

⁴⁸⁵ Qtd. by Glendon, p. 93

⁴⁸⁶ Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 39

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All who saw Ned Hanlan row agreed that his strokes were long and smooth, and his catches clean and sharp, two aspects which were reflected in Hanlan's own description, quoted above.

Mendenhall: "Headstrong, gregarious, childishly fond of food, drink and adulation, the black-haired Irishman from an island in Toronto Harbor"⁴⁸⁷ was not a popular champion amongst the majority of his competitors, for Hanlan's affairs had been quickly taken over and managed by a syndicate.

Hanlan biographer **Frank Cosentino:** "Five Toronto businessmen recognized the lucrative potential of 'handling' Hanlan as a promising rower if he were backed by a small consortium. Sometime between 1875 and 1876, these men formed the **Hanlan Club**, which managed all negotiations and arrangements, leaving Ned free to train and row."⁴⁸⁸

"At a time when the professional athlete was regarded as something of an athletic prostitute because of fixed contests in several sports, Hanlan competed only for money, usually \$200 to \$1,000 a side before 1878. His club set up all the contests and even had Hanlan and his opponents advertise an upcoming race by making whistle-stop tours between Toronto and Barrie [Ontario].

"Hanlan reportedly accepted \$3,900 from various railroad companies after an 1878 train tour to promote a race with Wallace Ross, champion oarsman from St. John, New Brunswick."^{489,490}

In addition, Hanlan himself had become infamous for taunting his rivals during races. Soon there was no one his fellow professionals wanted to beat more than Ned Hanlan, and no one came to want it more than American **Charles Courtney**.

⁴⁸⁷ Mendenhall, Ch. III, p. 7

⁴⁸⁸ Cosentino, *Case Study*, p. 8

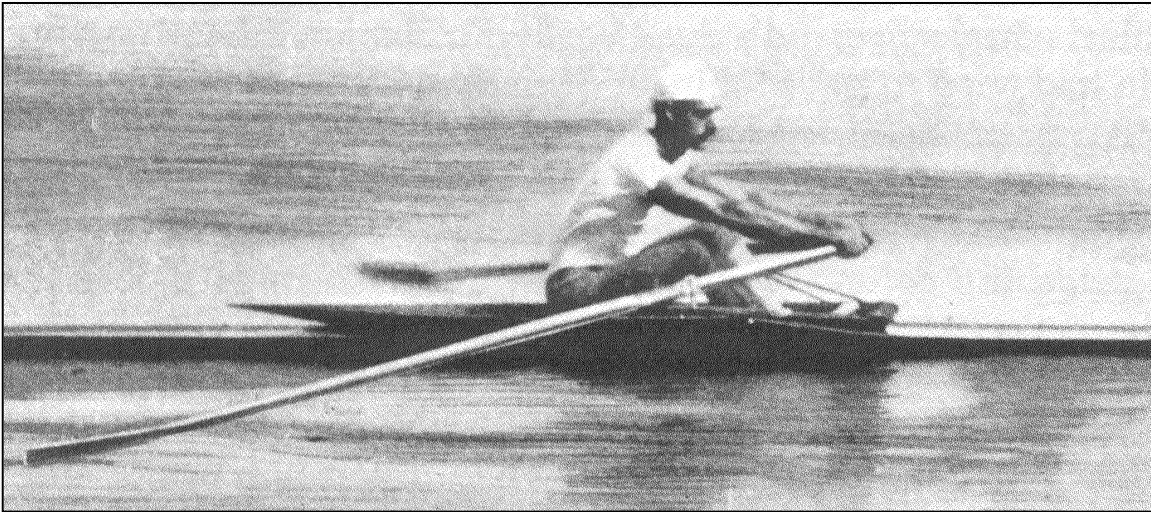
⁴⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 8

⁴⁹⁰ Morrow, pp. 32-3

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11. Ned Hanlan's Career

Courtney – Trickett – Beach – Sportsmanship



Young, Courtney and Cornell Rowing

Charles Courtney was taller with more heavily-muscled arms and shoulders.
Note the shorter slide compared to Hanlan's.

Charles Courtney

Charles Courtney (1849⁴⁹¹-1920) was a relatively simple young man from Union Springs, a rural village at the northern end of Lake Cayuga⁴⁹² in upstate New York. Like Hanlan, he had been rowing from the age of five, and in his 20s he set up a successful woodworking business. And like Hanlan, Courtney was fast from the very beginning.

⁴⁹¹ Austin amateur rowing historian **Virginia Hoffman** reports that the 1900 U.S. Census records Courtney's birth date as November 13, 1849. Other sources indicate 1848.

⁴⁹² one of the eleven long, thin Finger Lakes of Upper New York State. See Chapter 68.

The New York Times: "In the summer of 1868, most of the leading scullers of the East, widely known amateurs who had already amassed collections of trophies, gathered at the little up-state town of Aurora for a water sports festival. The event for single sculls was scheduled for 3 o'clock, and for the previous couple of hours the spectators, as well as the oarsmen, wandered up the shores of Lake Cayuga, inspecting the craft of their opponents.

"They came upon a rudely constructed canoe, rough, cumbersome [weighing 80 pounds or 36 kg⁴⁹³] and with a pair of oars beside it, seemingly out of place among the

⁴⁹³ Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p.34

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sleek, shining, glistening racing shells [weighing then as now around 29 pounds or 13 kg]. They laughed, most of them, and a nineteen-year-old country boy who watched them was overcome with shame.

“The canoe was his.

“It was the home-made product of Charles E. Courtney, built with hammer, saw and plane, out of boards which had been picked up here and there.

“The race for single scullers was for three miles. At the pistol, Courtney jumped into the lead with his awkward contraption. He held the lead as much to his own surprise as anyone’s.

“He pulled harder with every stroke for, as he said afterward, he was afraid the ‘newfangled’ boats of his rivals would in some mysterious way catch him. Courtney went over the finish line a full half-mile in the lead and won his first race.

“That was the beginning of his career as an oarsman, and before he entered the professional ranks in 1877, he had competed in more than ninety amateur events and had an unbroken string of seventy-eight consecutive victories.”⁴⁹⁴

At the **1876 Centennial Exposition** in Philadelphia, while Ned Hanlan was winning his first international *professional* championship, amateur Charles Courtney, of serious demeanor, 6’0” 185 cm and a solid 170 pounds 77 kg,⁴⁹⁵ was winning the amateur championship.

After Philadelphia, he turned professional, mostly to take on Hanlan.

According to *The New York Times*, on July 14, 1876, Courtney was scheduled to row professional James H. Riley, whom he had beaten as an amateur, on Greenwood Lake in New Jersey “for a \$500 prize, but at noon of that day [Courtney] drank iced tea

which had been drugged and was rendered too ill to row.

“This [not uncommon] trick of his enemies created excitement throughout the country, and would not be the last time in his career that Charles Courtney would lose a race due to illness or incident.

“On August 28, [1877] however, he easily defeated Riley and Fred Plaisted at Saratoga Lake for a purse of \$800, rowing the three miles in 20:14½, the fastest time ever made to that day,”⁴⁹⁶ nearly a minute faster than Hanlan’s time in Philadelphia the previous year.

By this time Hanlan had become champion of both Canada and the United States. The public demanded that he take on this new rowing phenomenon, Charles Courtney. The match would eventually take place in Lachine, Quebec.

Sports Gambling

Morrow: “Betting on horse racing events, snowshoeing contests, and matched rowing meets was the addiction of the era. Odds were published in the newspapers before every one of Hanlan’s races, and gambling outlets and pool selling ventures were widely available at the contest sites. In selling pools, the operator ran an auction on the athletes. The highest bidder selected his favourite athlete, established the odds on him, and the operation then auctioned the odds on the second athlete. Bids on the second athlete had to be close to the odds established by the original highest bidder. Pool selling worked best when the outcome was uncertain.

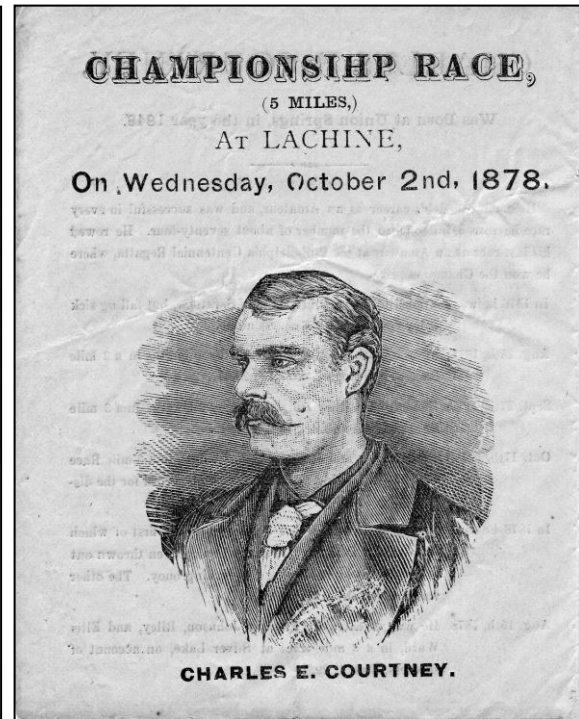
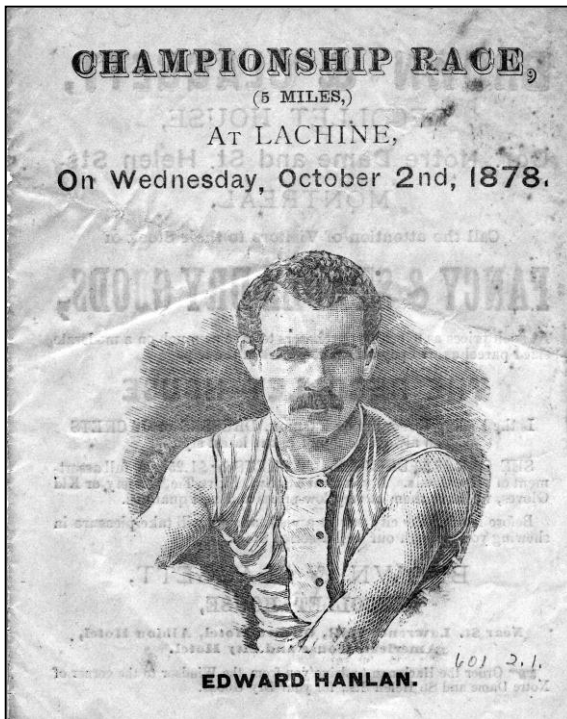
“Front page headlines were blatant in providing gambling information. For example: ‘Toronto Men Putting Their All on Hanlan,’ *Toronto Mail*, 2 October 1878. For the Lachine race, ‘pools were sold . . . in the

⁴⁹⁴ C.E. Courtney Dies From Shock in Boat, *The New York Times*, July 18, 1920

⁴⁹⁵ Mendenhall, Ch. III, p. 4

⁴⁹⁶ C.E. Courtney Dies From Shock in Boat, *The New York Times*, July 18, 1920

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Thomas E. Weil Collection

The program for the Lachine race had two covers for fans of both scullers.

Windsor Hotel which presented the appearance of an exchange in one of the Metropolitan Cities of the world.^{497,498}

“In letters to the editor of *The Globe*, disgruntled critics of the ‘betting fraternity’ associated with Hanlan’s races and those who favored more ‘noble’ and ‘manly’ sports such as cricket, shooting contests and yacht races, were vituperative in their summation of Hanlan’s impact. For example:

The fever that has fairly seized the feeble-minded portion of the masses has now been raging for several months past. Column after column has been and is still being devoted to it, until great numbers of people have become surfeited with what are termed

‘aquatics’ that they begin to loathe them as Jews do swine.

It is said that enough is as good as a feast, but it is very evident that some of the journals labour under the impression that the reading public can never have too much of this simple boat race, where one professional proved himself faster than the other, a fact that is weighing upon some minds so much that they are actually led to make the ludicrous declaration that the honour of nations hung upon this sculling contest.⁴⁹⁹

“Perhaps Hanlan’s fans were mainly drawn from the working-class and gambling elements whose values were different from those of the upper- and middle-classes, who espoused sport for sport’s sake.”⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁷ *The Mail*, Toronto, October 2, 1878

⁴⁹⁸ *Morrow*, p. 36

⁴⁹⁹ *The Globe*, Toronto, July 14, 1879

⁵⁰⁰ *Morrow*, p. 38

THE BIRTH OF CLASSICAL TECHNIQUE

Lachine

After more than a year of delays cleverly orchestrated by Hanlan's syndicate to increase the public's anticipation for the clash of the former top amateur against the top pro, thereby increasing the betting fever surrounding the event, the two scullers finally met on October 3, 1878 in a five mile race before a crowd of twenty-five thousand spectators on the St. Lawrence River at Lachine, Quebec, not far from Montreal, for the magnificent purse of \$11,000.

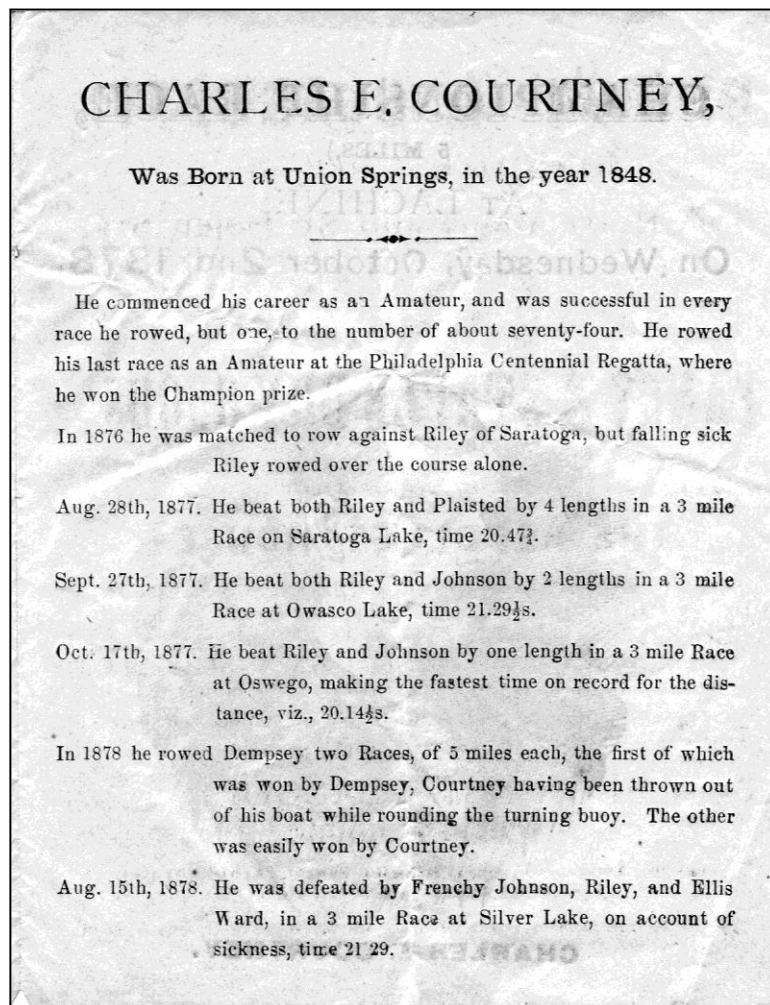
Historian **Tom Mendenhall**: "Hours of sculling alone, initially in heavy boats, had given [Courtney] a powerful, economical but easy stroke,"⁵⁰¹ a typical professional stroke on medium-length slides, presumably not a great deal different from the technique shown in the Eakins paintings of just a few years earlier.

"Six years younger, four inches shorter and almost twenty pounds lighter than Courtney, Hanlan had developed a sculling stroke with 'a perfect combination of body and legs for his work in the water,' as compared with too great dependence [by Courtney] on arms alone."⁵⁰²

Of course, criticism of any 19th Century professional's "overdependence on arms"

⁵⁰¹ Mendenhall, Ch. III, p. 4

⁵⁰² Ibid, p. 7



Thomas E. Weil Collection

Courtney had an impressive résumé.

can only mean that he was employing the ferryman's finish.

Mendenhall: "Hanlan's suppleness gave him a length in the water which allowed him almost to toy with any opponent."⁵⁰³

Without exaggerating, the first Hanlan/Courtney race was the most widely followed athletic event in all of world

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

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EDWARD HANLAN

Was Born in Toronto on 12th July, 1855.

Stands 5 feet 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches high, and when in condition weighs about 160 pounds.

He made his first appearance in a Fisherman's Boat with three others when but 16 years of age.

About the year 1872 he won two skiff races, and in 1873 first appeared in a shell, rowing for the Amateur Championship of Toronto Bay, which he won.

In 1874 he beat Thos. Loudon for the Championship of Burlington Bay, this being his first professional race.

In 1875 he beat Thos. Loudon by 2 lengths in a 1 mile race.

In 1875 he won a 2 mile race for the Governor General's Medal, beating Loudon and Douglas.

In 1876 he beat both Douglas and McCann for a purse.

In 1876 he won Ontario Champion Belt, beating McCann. At the same Regatta he, with two others, won the Fisherman's Race.

In 1876 he won the first prize at the Philadelphia Centennial Regatta, defeating Coulter, Luther, Plaisted and Green (England). In the final heat defeating Alex. Brayley, in the then fastest time on record, 21.09 $\frac{1}{2}$; distance 3 miles.

In 1877 defeated by Plaisted, Frenchy Johnson and others at Silver Lake, on June 13, in a 3 mile race, won in 21 m. 49 $\frac{3}{4}$ sec., caused by broken outrigger.

In 1877 he won a 3 mile race in 21 m. 41 $\frac{3}{4}$ sec. at the same place on June 25th, defeating the same men, with the exception of Plaisted, who did not start.

On 4th July at Boston he was ruled out of a race on account of a foul (2 mile). The race was won by Plaisted in 14.24 $\frac{1}{2}$.

At Toronto, on October 15th, he defeated Wallace Ross in a 5 mile race easily. No official time.

1878.—At Toronto, on May 15th, defeated Plaisted in a 2 mile race easily.

1878.—At Pittsburg he defeated Evan Morris in a 5 mile race for the Championship of America by 4 boat lengths in 35.15.

At Brockville, on July 1st, he defeated Plaisted, Kennedy, Riley, Ten Eyck, Elliott, Luther and McKen easily, in a 4 mile race by 10 lengths.

On the Kennebecasis River, on 25th July, 1878, he defeated Wallace Ross easily in a 5 mile race.

At Barrie, O., 13th August, 1878, defeated Wallace Ross, Wm. McKen, A. Elliott, Luther, Plaisted, Morris and Hosmer easily in a 4 mile race. Time, 28.12.

Thomas E. Weil Collection

Hanlan had a more impressive résumé.

history up to that time, surpassing the Oxford-Harvard crew race of nine years earlier.⁵⁰⁴ "*The New York Times* carried the race news on the right-hand side of the front page, 'a place usually reserved for announcing wars.'⁵⁰⁵

The contest caused a major controversy. In the twenty-four hours before the race began, the betting odds had turned sharply. For someone wishing to bet \$10 on Hanlan,

the payoff plunged from \$8 to \$3,⁵⁰⁶ prompting suspicions that the race was fixed and that Courtney had agreed to lose.

The New York Clipper later reported: "Investigation developed nothing of a reassuring nature, and buttoning up their pockets, Courtney's suspicious admirers proceeded to the course, earnestly hoping that their man would stop the mouths of his detractors and disprove the assertions of a disgraceful transaction, by administering a decided defeat to his opponent."⁵⁰⁷

Conditions were rough on the day of the race, with a strong current and a headwind slowing the scullers on the way out to the turnaround, and speeding their return.

As a Canadian, Hanlan was familiar with the five-mile course and chose the lane which was more sheltered from wind and current during the first mile. He rowed 28-9 strokes per minute into the headwind with an occasional

burst at 30.

Shorter in the water with his shorter slide and ferryman's finish, Courtney rowed at least three to four beats higher.

It was a terrific race, unquestionably the toughest opponent Hanlan had ever encountered up to that time. He held only a length lead at the turnaround after two and one-half miles, and Courtney actually pulled

⁵⁰⁴ See Chapter 26.

⁵⁰⁵ Qtd. by Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 35

⁵⁰⁶ Glendon, pp. 81-2

⁵⁰⁷ Qtd. by Glendon, p. 82

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three feet ahead with two miles to go. Both were rowing 32 in the helping current and tailwind.⁵⁰⁸

The return to the start/finish area saw the lead change hands several more times, with Hanlan just slightly ahead as they entered the last quarter-mile.

The New York Clipper continued, "On either side of the course at the start/finish were long lines of booms, introduced to keep out [spectator] boats of all kinds, but several tugs and barges had gotten inside. The lines of booms were then pulled down.

"Close up to this line, Courtney had pushed Hanlan with tremendous power. As they neared the finish Hanlan seemed to lose his usual calmness and self-possession, and before he was aware of it, he was close on to a tug, with Courtney just outside.

"Had Courtney continued to row and pulled five or six strokes, he would have had the race won, as Hanlan slacked up and was rowing leisurely. Seeing this, Courtney ceased rowing, and at once Hanlan quickened again and just pulled out of the pocket in season to get clear water and pull over the line at an angle of thirty degrees. Courtney was told to pull on, and he did so in season to cross the finish line a length and a quarter behind."⁵⁰⁹

Suspicion in the press fell squarely on Courtney's shoulders. *The New York Times* accused him of accepting a bribe of "\$4,000 to lose the race and added to his take by betting on Hanlan."⁵¹⁰

Editorialized *The New York Clipper*: "Unfortunately, though the winner pulled a magnificent oar all through the five-mile contest and completed the distance in time which is better than that officially recorded for any other race within the last nineteen years, the result, in view of the favorite position occupied by Courtney at different

parts of the course and his seeming ability to improve the same when so disposed, added weight and color to the ugly rumors and damaging statements which had been put in circulation regarding an alleged dishonorable bargain entered into by the contestants and others interested on both sides, whereby the Union Springs sculler had bound himself to lose the race whether able to win it or not."⁵¹¹

Even the newspaper nearest Courtney's hometown, *The Daily Journal* of Ithaca, NY, home to Cornell University, condemned him. "The general belief here is that Courtney sold yesterday's race. *The Tribune's* Montreal special says there were some things about the race which certainly give color to suspicion, such as Courtney's poor rowing in the last mile when his stroke never exceeded 32, and the very crooked steering of both men near the finish, Courtney getting very much into Hanlan's water and having to stop short just before reaching the line to avoid a foul.

"At any rate, whether it is true or not, many people hold the opinion very firmly that the result has already hurt Courtney's reputation, and will do much to throw professional rowing into disfavor."⁵¹²

The second half of this prediction would prove to be only too accurate. Thanks in large part to repeated scandals, professional rowing would become virtually extinct by the end of the 19th Century.

Hanlan declared that he had won fairly and that Courtney was the first opponent that he "could not do with as he pleased." For his part, Courtney believed that the wind and current had cost him a minute in the first mile, that later it was the current that forced

⁵⁰⁸ Glendon, pp. 82-5

⁵⁰⁹ Qtd. by Glendon, pp. 86-7

⁵¹⁰ Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 36

⁵¹¹ *The New York Clipper*, qtd. by Glendon, pp. 76-7

⁵¹² Qtd. by Look, pp. 79-80

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both rowers off course toward the end, and that he stopped early by mistake.⁵¹³

Courtney: “You will find plenty of men who will tell you I crossed the line first; I always had my opinion in the matter, but the race was awarded to him, and I accepted the decision of the judges.”⁵¹⁴

Morrow: “In the months following the Lachine race, a great deal of newspaper controversy over Hanlan’s and his backers’ tactics was aired in the *American Sport of the Times* and *The Globe* of Toronto.”^{515, 516}

The world demanded a rematch.

Champion of England

But first Ned Hanlan made a trip to Great Britain. On May 8, 1879, he first disposed of **John Hawdon**, 5’7” 170 cm 150 lb. 68 kg, “one of England’s best,”⁵¹⁷ by five lengths on the **Tyne Championship Course** in Newcastle, “three miles and 760 yards in length [5,523 meters],”⁵¹⁸ “from the Mansion House to Scotswood Suspension Bridge.”⁵¹⁹ British papers remarked about his “knees to nose” technique of sculling.⁵²⁰

Cosentino: “Grudgingly, the English admitted that the sliding seat on runners, the ‘patent row-locks’⁵²¹ and other devices new to competitors’ and a ‘scientific study of rowing in its higher forms’ had given the advantage to the Canadian.”⁵²²

Then Hanlan set his sights higher. A second match was arranged for him in Newcastle against **William Elliot**, 5’7½”

171 cm 167 lb. 76 kg, the English professional champion.

Kerr: “Never before were the Tyne’s banks so crowded, on the occasion of an aquatic contest, with interested spectators as on the morning of the 16th of June [1879], when Hanlan and Elliot contended for *The Sportsman’s Cup* and the Championship of England. Long before daybreak the sport-loving people of Newcastle and vicinity had taken their stations, where each for himself expected to witness the most interesting features of the contest. As the day advanced, trains from all directions deposited their living freight by thousands, and all the avenues leading to the river or commanding a view of the course were blocked with dense masses of spectators, while every available steamer and every species of floating craft crowded with visitors made the navigation of the river a somewhat difficult affair.

“Both men were in rare trim for the contest, and both were equally confident of success. The odds which had all along been largely in favour of Hanlan grew less and less as the hour for the race arrived, and Tynesiders bet freely in small sums on their champion, whom they believed invincible.

“A little after twelve o’clock the contestants took their places, and shortly afterwards a fair start was made and the race began. Hanlan’s bark *Toronto* led the way from start to finish. He pulled that same strong and long stroke which has so often deceived his opponent and decided the contest in his favour.

“Rowing ahead as is his wont, he eased off from time to time until Elliott’s craft lessened the distance between them, and then with a few powerful strokes drew quickly ahead.

“Elliot rowed in magnificent form, and struggled manfully until the close. But it was all in vain. Hanlan won by eleven boat lengths, the course having been rowed over in 55 seconds less than the fastest time on

⁵¹³ Look, p. 80

⁵¹⁴ Qtd. by Look, p. 73

⁵¹⁵ Cosentino, *Case Study*, p. 10

⁵¹⁶ Morrow, p. 37

⁵¹⁷ Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 28

⁵¹⁸ Harding, p. 15

⁵¹⁹ Ibid, p. 13

⁵²⁰ Qtd. By Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 28

⁵²¹ Hanlan was using modern swivel oarlocks while British scullers were still using thole pins.

⁵²² Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 29

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record. The victory was a decisive one, and with that generous spirit which animates the British nation the Canadian victor was everywhere received with enthusiasm.”⁵²³

Morrow: “Hanlan was the toast of the town when he returned to Toronto. A three-mile flotilla followed Hanlan’s steamer into Toronto harbor. One editorial in the *Ottawa Citizen* proclaimed that Hanlan should be knighted for his British victory!⁵²⁴ *The Globe* of Toronto heavily advertised a ‘Hanlan Gala Day’ during which Hanlan would be presented in full racing costume to the audience attending the performance of *HMS Pinafore* at the Horticultural Gardens.”^{525,526}

The Rematch with Courtney

Both Hanlan and Courtney had expressed keen interest in racing a second time, but as it had with their first match, it took a year to arrange it. Finally, an agreement was negotiated for them to meet on October 8, 1879 in southwestern New York State on Chautauqua Lake, a destination resort with railroad connections extending in four directions. The crowds from nearby Canada as well as the United States were expected to be huge, and betting would be rampant.

Chautauqua

Hanlan historian **Frank Cosentino:** “As soon as the race was announced, construction started on a grandstand six hundred metres long, which would seat fifty thousand. A railroad spur line was

constructed along the shore parallel to the race course.”⁵²⁷

During the late 19th Century, spectating from a moving train, often nearly a kilometer or half a mile in length,⁵²⁸ was the best way to see a North American professional sculling championship, or later a collegiate race in New London or Poughkeepsie.

“The cars are platform cars, and tiers of seats are built up on them, rising one above another, so that everyone has an unobstructed outlook; only, if we can get a place on the central car, we shall be more likely than in any other to remain just opposite the boats during the race.”⁵²⁹

In addition, at Chautauqua Lake “rival steamboats vied for passengers, while old lumber and stone barges were refurbished and outfitted with chairs to carry passengers at \$5 per person,” a huge sum in those days.

The upheaval to the local town of Mayville caused by race preparations was later called the “Chautauqua fiasco.”⁵³⁰

Morrow: “Hanlan’s backers did an admirable job, producing the 37-page *Sketches of the Champion Oarsmen, Hanlan and Courtney*,⁵³¹ financed by advertising revenue from Montreal businesses. It included an account of Canadian rowing successes, early life stories of each athlete, their records to date, the articles of agreement, and preliminary comments on race conditions.

“The publication was not merely good advertising. It also gave the conduct of the races an aura of legitimacy and business acumen. Further dignity was added to the event with the distribution of an *Official Program of the ‘Championship Boat Race,’* which featured handsome sketches of the

⁵²³ Kerr, pp. 14-6

⁵²⁴ Cosentino, *Case Study*, p. 11

⁵²⁵ *The Mail*, Toronto, October 15, 1878

⁵²⁶ Morrow, p. 37

⁵²⁷ Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 39

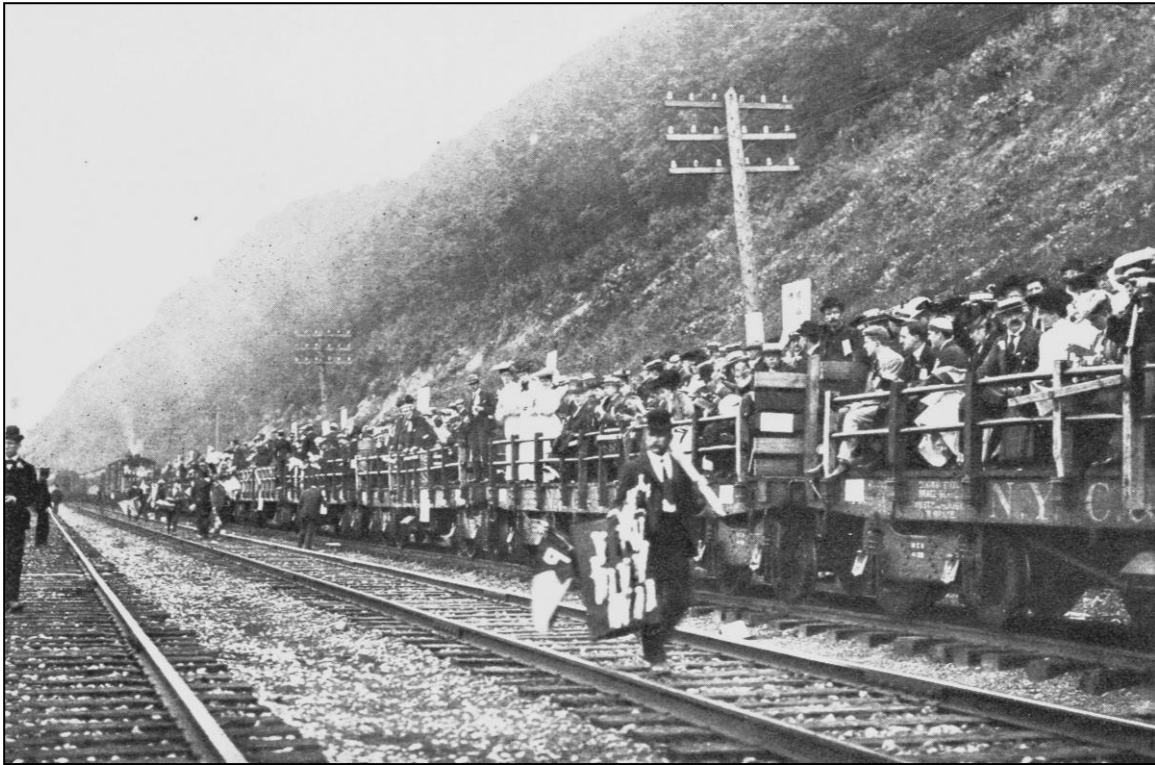
⁵²⁸ Ibid.

⁵²⁹ Hawthorne, p. 187

⁵³⁰ Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 39

⁵³¹ Callahan and Co., Montreal, 1878

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The Century Magazine, August 1905

“The Observation Train at Poughkeepsie, Trailing Abreast of the Varsity Crews”

competitors, a full list of the officials, and advertised prices for spectators that ranged from fifty cents for a grandstand seat to ten dollars for a place on the press steamer that would follow the boats with the referee.

“Over the five-mile [out and back] course of the main event, flags were hoisted on the judges’ barge to give information to the public on the progress of the race at every half-mile, and incidentally giving good betting information. If Hanlan was ahead, a red flag was raised, if Courtney was in the lead, a white flag was raised, a blue flag indicated that the race was in suspense. Overall, it was a masterfully orchestrated piece of entertainment.”⁵³²

The entire back story of this historic race was only uncovered a century later by local historian **Margaret K. Look** in her biography of Courtney.⁵³³

A week before the appointed race day of October 8, Courtney arrived at the regatta site to find that Hanlan, complaining of an illness, had already asked for and been granted a postponement until October 16th. As that day approached, Hanlan was still under the weather.

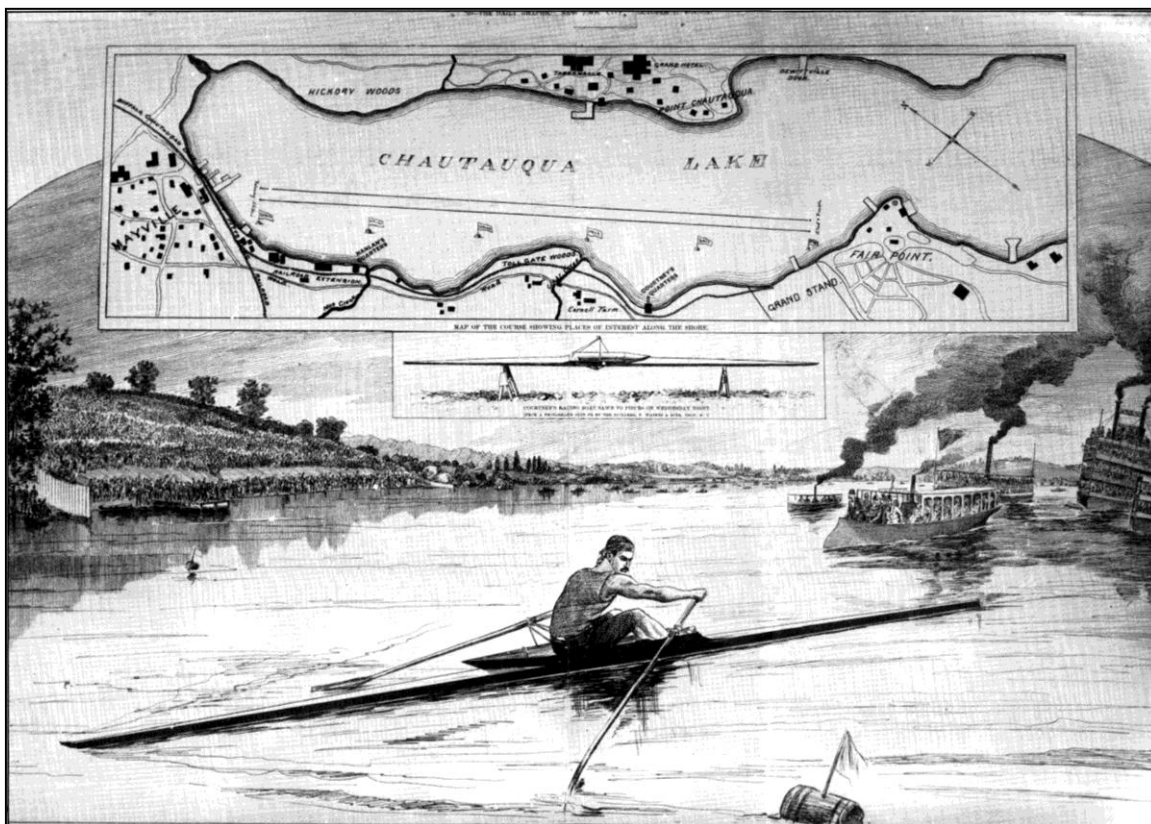
According to Look, on the 14th or 15th, Hanlan and a couple of members of his syndicate apparently visited Courtney in his boathouse and offered him the entire purse if he would agree to lose the race.

Courtney refused.

⁵³² Morrow, p. 35

⁵³³ See Bibliography

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The Daily Graphic, New York, October 17, 1879

Ned Hanlan rowing past the grandstands after Courtney's withdrawal.

The railroad spur constructed for the race can be seen on the map extending from the Buffalo – Pittsburg line in Mayville to the grand stand near Fair Point.

Words were exchanged, and Hanlan was observed leaving in a huff.

Late on the afternoon of the 15th, a man whose name has been lost to history but who purportedly was among Courtney's backers volunteered to guard the Courtney boathouse while the two men previously assigned the task went into town for a pre-race shave. This substitute was then seen entering the boathouse with a saw "and immediately the sound of sawing was heard." He was then observed throwing the saw into the lake.⁵³⁴

Courtney awoke on race morning to be told that all his boats had been sawed in half. He was devastated and requested a postponement like the one that had already been granted to Hanlan. He was refused.

Hanlan rowed the 5-mile course unopposed that day in 33:56.25, beating the course record by more than a minute,⁵³⁵ but the \$6,000 purse was withdrawn.

Unlike Lachine, suspicion fell on both sides this time. "Courtney produced a letter from Soule, [owner of Hop Bitters Manufacturing Company,⁵³⁶ sponsor of the

⁵³⁵ Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 40

⁵³⁶ **Hop Bitters, the Invalid's Friend and Hope**, advertised as "the Purest and Best

⁵³⁴ Look, pp. 102-3

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www.monarchyfreecanada.org

Ned Hanlan

race] promising \$2,000, win or lose. . . . At that point, Hanlan produced a letter from Courtney, offering the Canadian champion \$3,000 if he allowed the American to win. There seemed no end to the web of uncertainties.”⁵³⁷

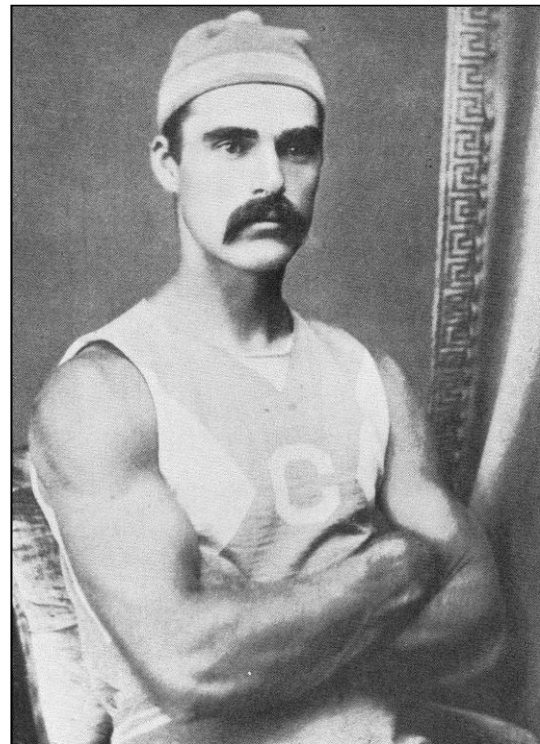
The Globe of Toronto, a Hanlan backer, proffered one version: “They met at Chautauqua Lake, and before Courtney would go out upon the water he wanted a promise from Hanlan in writing that he

Medicine ever made, the greatest Blood Purifier, Liver Regulator, and Life and Health Restoring agent on earth, tonic and stimulating WITHOUT INTOXICATING.” Not mentioned was that its primary ingredient was low-grade, high-powered whisky, per Samuel Hopkins Adams, *That Was Rochester*, *The New Yorker*, August 23, 1952, p. 27.

⁵³⁷ Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 42

(Courtney) would be allowed to win, and when he found that Hanlan meant to pull the race ‘on his merits,’ he sawed his boats to sneak out of the contest.”⁵³⁸

But to many, that seemed to make no sense at all. As the Chautauqua area’s local paper, the *Jamestown Journal*, pointed out: “Courtney had no motive to destroy his boats. If he thought Hanlan could beat him, he could have sold out, rowed a close or losing race in quick time and saved his honor.



Young, *Courtney and Cornell Rowing*

Charles Courtney

“Facts seem to throw the blame on the Hanlan party, who didn’t want defeat. All who saw Courtney were impressed with his sincerity and genuine regret.”⁵³⁹

Nevertheless, Courtney was crushed by the scandal. Sports journalist and author

⁵³⁸ Harding, p. 26

⁵³⁹ Qtd. by Look, p. 93

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Harry Clay Palmer, writing ten years later: “He was at the ‘head of the pack’ when the boat cutting incident leveled him to the ground, and he has rowed only a few good races since.

“Gazing at that sawed boat in 1887, Courtney said to the writer, ‘That shell brought me blasted hopes and a name that God knows I never deserved. But I’ll live it down, and I’ll show these hounds who are now so willing to cast their cowardly aspersions at me that I remain what I have always been – an honest oarsman and a loyal friend.’”⁵⁴⁰

Historians have long speculated that three races between Hanlan and Courtney had always been planned. There is a strong possibility that in order to profit by increasing the drama of the contests, the backers of the two athletes arranged to have Hanlan win the first, lose the second, and then the two would be free to race in the third.⁵⁴¹

Morrow: “Given ensuing events and Hanlan’s frequently questionable behavior throughout his career, a fixed set of races seems highly probable.”⁵⁴²

If Hanlan had decided he no longer was willing to lose to Courtney in the second race, perhaps because he had become Champion of England in the interim, this would provide a plausible alternate explanation for the behavior of both men in Chautauqua. Perhaps Courtney, having bet heavily on himself and unsure that he could beat Hanlan in a real race, would have needed a reason for the race to be cancelled.

A Second Rematch

Morrow: “Some 100,000 spectators were drawn to the third Hanlan-Courtney

race [on May 19,] 1880 on the Potomac River in Washington. Both Houses of Congress adjourned, businesses closed; hats, shoes and cigars named after the oarsmen were on sale everywhere; pickpockets disguised as clergymen roamed the crowds; partisan spectators wore the colours of their favoured oarsman; a system of coloured balloons and rockets was set up to provide spectators with information on the progress of the scullers, and gambling was rampant as ever.”⁵⁴³

Apparently, the tawdry experience of the first two races had taken a great deal out of Charles Courtney. President Rutherford B. Hayes was in attendance, but Courtney was only a shadow of his former self and didn’t even finish the course.

Looking back years later, Courtney wrote, “I had no business to be racing any longer at that time anyway.”⁵⁴⁴ After rowing against Hanlan the first two times, he had lost his competitive drive along with any innocence left from his amateur days.

Charles Courtney finished his professional career at thirty-nine wins and seven losses, and it was only five years later when he turned to coaching crew at **Cornell University**,⁵⁴⁵ twenty miles south on Cayuga Lake from his boyhood home, that his love for rowing was completely revived.

Hanlan Returns to England

Jim Rice, a fellow Canadian professional sculler from Toronto, raced against Ned Hanlan for many years, and after they had both retired and turned to coaching, succeeded him as coach of Columbia University in New York City. They often reminisced about Ned’s competitive career.

⁵⁴⁰ Palmer, pp. 637-8

⁵⁴¹ Hunter, p. 29-30

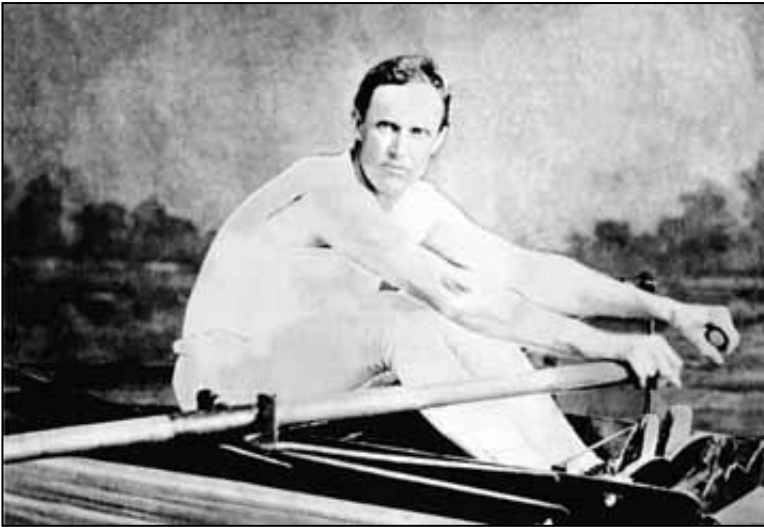
⁵⁴² Morrow, p. 34

⁵⁴³ Ibid, p. 38

⁵⁴⁴ Qtd. by Look, p. 73

⁵⁴⁵ See Chapter 31 ff.

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www.rowinghistory-aus.info

Edward Trickett

World Professional Singles Champion 1876-1880

Rice: “Having gained all the honors that were to be gathered on this side of the ocean, [Hanlan] crossed over to England to do battle with Trickett, who had been enthroned as World’s Champion in 1876.”⁵⁴⁶

Edward Trickett (1851-1916), a quarryman⁵⁴⁷ from Sydney, Australia, was huge for his time at 6’3½” 192 cm 178 lb. 81kg.⁵⁴⁸ He was the first non-Englishman to be crowned World Professional Singles Champion since competitions had begun in 1831. After taking the title from Joseph Sadler in 1876, he had returned to Australia to defend his title against two of his countrymen, Michael Rush in 1877 and Elias Laycock in 1879. Having defeated all comers Down Under, Trickett returned to Britain in 1880.

⁵⁴⁶ Rice, James C., *Rice Rates Hanlan Ahead of Courtney*, *The New York Times*, May 13, 1917

⁵⁴⁷ Jacobsen, p. 27

⁵⁴⁸ as officially measured before a race on May 1, 1882. These are indeed impressive statistics for a man in the mid-19th Century. Other sources listed him as much larger. See following page.

Cosentino: “When Ned Hanlan arrived in London to prepare for his November 15, 1880 race for the world title, the English public was dismayed by the upcoming contest. Their position as masters of the waterways was being usurped. From across the Atlantic came Hanlan, the Canadian Champion of England; from far across the Pacific came the Australian Trickett, Champion of the World. The only consolation seemed to be in knowing that both men were products of her colonies. At least the rowing future of the Empire seemed secure.

“The two were as different as their countries were distant. Hanlan’s small stature and light weight reinforced his image as the underdog. Trickett instantly created an impression of strength. A strapping man, two metres tall and weighing 90 kilograms,⁵⁴⁹ he seemed the personification of power.”⁵⁵⁰

In fact, photographs of Trickett reveal a long-limbed athlete very much in the mold of 20th Century scullers Stuart Mackenzie⁵⁵¹ from Australia and Jim Dietz⁵⁵² from the United States.

The outcome of the race was never really in doubt.

Cosentino: “[Trickett,] relying on a shorter stroke and the power of his immense arms [i.e. ferryman’s finish], started out with 40 strokes per minute to Hanlan’s 36.

“His slight lead at the beginning was quickly wiped out as the full force of

⁵⁴⁹ 6’7” 199 lb., an exaggeration

⁵⁵⁰ Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 47

⁵⁵¹ See Chapter 86.

⁵⁵² See Chapter 139.

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During the 19th Century, manufacturers of consumer products, including cigarettes, distributed **collector cards** showing famous personalities as advertising.

Hanlan's stroke took effect. Reaching the Soapworks, a landmark one and a half kilometers beyond the start, Hanlan's steady stroke had opened a lead of two lengths, and the pace was such that Trickett seemed to be straining to maintain his arm-weary tempo."⁵⁵³

The Illustrated London News: "[Shortly thereafter, Hanlan] put in a 'half a dozen' to show the spectators how much he had in hand, and then, clumsily dropped his sculls into the water, threw himself flat on

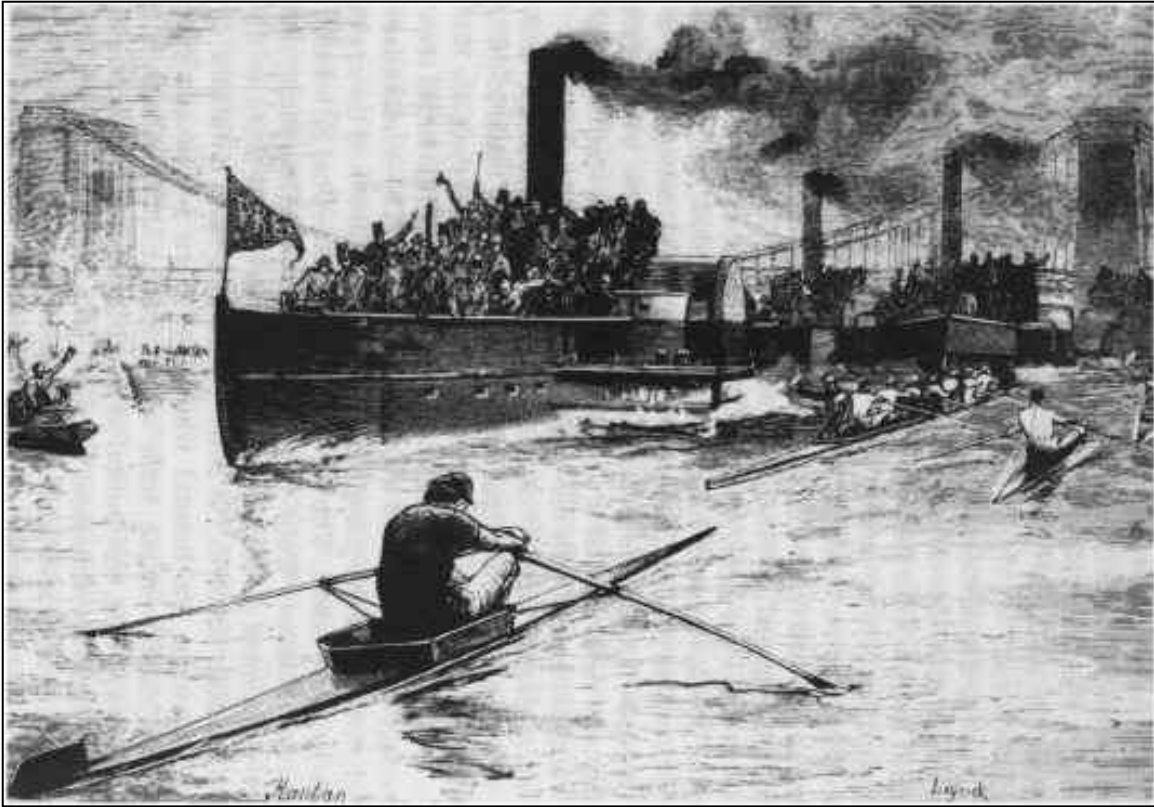
his back in the bottom of the boat, and lay there for a second or two, the act occasioning great excitement amongst the large number of spectators, for they naturally imagined that something terrible had befallen him.

"However, he was soon up and at work again, laughing heartily.

"The Canadian made at least half a dozen further stoppages before [the finish line] was reached, on each occasion going through a little performance, such as washing his face, kissing his hand, and cheerfully waving his handkerchief to

⁵⁵³ Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 48

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Harper's Magazine

Hanlan defeats Elias Laycock - London, 1881

Note the "round back." See below

different friends on the bank, and he eventually won at his leisure by three lengths, which he could have made a quarter of a mile had he so chosen."⁵⁵⁴

Cosentino: "In the final yards of the race, Hanlan was rowing consecutive strokes, first with his right oar, then with his left, as the boat zig-zagged toward the finish line. Cannons erupted, whistles blew, bells pealed for Hanlan. A very downcast Trickett slipped from sight, retiring to his quarters. It was reported he took sick and refused to see anyone."⁵⁵⁵

In their second meeting two years later in 1882, "Hanlan displayed total command of the situation, crossing the finish line almost a minute and a half ahead of the giant Australian.

"Having won the race, he wheeled around, rowed back down the course until he was even with Trickett and then spun around and once more beat his opponent to the finish line."⁵⁵⁶

Just imagine Trickett's desire to defeat the arrogant Ned Hanlan. Other professionals would have been similarly motivated, as beating Ned would have made their careers.

⁵⁵⁴ *Championship Sculling-Match, The Illustrated London News*, November 20, 1880, p. 506

⁵⁵⁵ Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 50

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 56

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In 1881, the Australian **Elias Laycock** agreed to race Hanlan only under the condition that “there were to be no antics in the water. Hanlan agreed. ‘After all,’ he was to say later, ‘I didn’t want to make a show of a decent plucky man.’”⁵⁵⁷

However, he had no problem returning to his antics the following year on the Tyne against British sculler **R.W. Boyd**. “Hanlan teased his opponent by ‘blowing his nose and using his oars in a comical fashion.’”⁵⁵⁸

Nobody could beat Hanlan. Barnstorming the world, he retained his World Championship for four years.

The Riddle

Nobody could beat him because nobody figured out how he went so fast. In 1880, *The Sportsman*, covering a race between Hanlan and James Riley, had this to say:

“How Hanlan stands the terrific work he cuts out for the men behind him is a question I shall not attempt to solve.

“That he does endure it and well, too, is a fact everyone who has seen him row will acknowledge. He never appears to labor or to tire and the motion of his body and arms affords no clue to the wonderful pace he gets on his craft.

“It is true that he slides some inches longer than any other oarsman ever did – over twenty-six inches [66 cm], and that his knees go down at the same time that his arms straighten.”⁵⁵⁹ This no doubt eases the strain in such a manner as to enable the Canadian to keep at his work long after his antagonists quit.

“When he goes forward for his ‘grip’ he has a **round back**, his knees are up under his arm-pits and his whole appearance is a

complete refutation of the doctrines promulgated by some would-be-experts and adopted in the modern schools of rowing [i.e. he did not display rigid English Orthodox posture and maximal body swing forward unencumbered by uplifted knees].

“Some people have suggested that Hanlan needs coaching. I should like to know what for – certainly not for the development of speed or staying power, for his worst enemies must concede that ‘the poor tool of a rower’ possesses these qualities.

“If it is to make him what is termed a ‘pretty rower,’ then I should certainly advise him to go on with his ‘humped-back’ style, and not attempt to take any liberties with a method that has swept everything before it.

“It is really amusing to listen to the sage remarks and suggestions which occasionally drop from the lips of men who know no more of rowing than they do of the language they are always abusing.

“In my estimation Edward Hanlan is the finest sculler the world has ever seen, his action is perfection, and his speed and bottom is beyond peradventure.”⁵⁶⁰

Decline

Morrow: “Because of his renown, Hanlan was unable to profit financially by matched races during his reign as World Champion. For income-producing events he was relegated for the most part to staging rowing exhibitions and performing ‘trickster’ feats, such as rowing a straight line using only a single oar.”⁵⁶¹

Hanlan had returned to England to dispatch the Australian **Elias Laycock** in 1881 and then **R.W. Boyd** and **Trickett** in their second meeting in 1882. Laycock

⁵⁵⁷ Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 53

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 55

⁵⁵⁹ What this cryptic sentence means is that his legs only finished their drive at the moment of the release, when the arms were straightened to begin the recovery.

⁵⁶⁰ *The Sportsman*, May 19, 1880, qtd. by Glendon, pp. 88-9

⁵⁶¹ Hunter, p. 33

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traveled to Canada for a rematch in 1884 but was defeated again.

Cosentino: “Deciding that England and North America offered little in the way of challenge, he decided to travel to Australia, stopping in Hawaii to give demonstrations of his boating prowess.

“Arriving in Australia, Hanlan was given a hero’s welcome wherever he went. However warm the receptions, it was evident that the wearying travel was beginning to take his toll. He contracted typhoid, but recovered and returned to his rigorous schedule of appearances and exhibitions. Forty thousand spectators turned out in Melbourne to see the World Champion on a tour which took him to Ballarat, Brisbane, Hooperstown, Launceton, Sydney, Walla Wago, Cockatoo Island and Western Australia from May 22 to mid July [winter in Australia].

World Rowing Magazine: “In 1884, the race between Hanlan and Australia’s **Bill Beach** practically brought the whole of Sydney to a standstill with estimates of half of Sydney’s population watching the race.”⁵⁶²

They called Bill Beach “that ‘doughty son of Vulcan,’ the Dapto Blacksmith.”⁵⁶³

“William Beach, a 90-kilogram,⁵⁶⁴ steel-nerved blacksmith, defeated Hanlan on the Paramatta River on August 16, 1884. Beach was not only strong physically. [He had

also mastered the sliding seat,⁵⁶⁵ and he] seemed able to cope with Hanlan’s psychological gamesmanship. During the race, Hanlan’s boat strayed into Beach’s lane and fouled him. Beach was able to recover and row on to victory.



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Bill Beach (1850-1935)

World Professional Singles Champion 1884-1887

“Returning to the boat-house after the race, Hanlan confidently confronted the dour Australian, who was showering: ‘Beach, I am not satisfied with that race at all and request that you row me again. How soon can you oblige me?’

“‘Just wait until I finish drying myself, and I am your man’ was the matter-of-fact reply.”⁵⁶⁶

The second race finished as the first.

Steve Fairbairn, perhaps history’s most influential coach ever:⁵⁶⁷ “Bill Beach, the finest sculler I ever saw, had a round back,

⁵⁶² Melissa S. Bray, op cit, p. 4

⁵⁶³ Dapto is a town on Lake Illawarra, 100 km south of Sydney.

⁵⁶⁴ He was actually measured as 5’9½” 177 cm 170 lb. 77 kg with a 42” 107 cm chest, 15½” 39 cm biceps and 16” 41 cm calfs.

⁵⁶⁵ Hunter, p. 23

⁵⁶⁶ Cosentino, *Hanlan*, pp. 56-7

⁵⁶⁷ See Chapter 19.

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sat abnormally high in his boat, the wheels of his slide were six inches in diameter, and his skulls went very high in the air. No flash form about him.”⁵⁶⁸

Hanlan: “What gave Beach success was his constitution, his physical force. He was a blacksmith before he took to rowing. From the hip to the shoulders and arms, Beach was the finest man, I think, who ever sat in a boat – that is, for endurance and strength.”⁵⁶⁹

Morrow: “Hanlan stayed in Australia for over half a year, hoping to regain his title in 1885, but in that he did not succeed. He even returned to Australia in 1887. In the interim, and while on his second tour, he frequently failed to show up for arranged races, made excuses for losing, and fouled his opponents during races.

“True to form, he turned his trips to Australia into commercial exhibitions, putting on aquatic displays and rowing in exhibitions anywhere he could command spectators and a significant gate.”⁵⁷⁰

Ned Hanlan continued to appear in competition until 1897 but was never again champion. But even with public interest in professional sculling declining, his name alone would still draw crowds, and he remained much beloved in his native Toronto.

Morrow: “In spite of the shadow cast on his reputation by manipulative tactics and unethical practices, he was a classic sports hero whose character flaws were overlooked in deference to the perceived significance of his athletic prowess. At his death he was given a civic funeral in St. Andrews Presbyterian Church [in Toronto], and ten thousand people filed past the bier.”⁵⁷¹

“In 1926 the City of Toronto spent \$17,000 to erect a commissioned bronze statue of Hanlan near the Princes’ Gates of the Canadian National Exhibition Grounds in Toronto.”⁵⁷²

Race Strategy

Hanlan often seemed to toy with his opponents, repeatedly letting them catch up only to sprint away again, as he did in his first race with Trickett. He often kept the races close and played to the crowds.

Limiting the margin of victory was typical of Hanlan throughout his career.

Morrow: “Some have thought that Hanlan ‘refused to row away from his victims and allow them to suffer an ignominious defeat.’⁵⁷³ But it’s more likely that Hanlan, for whom rowing provided his livelihood, won his races by narrow margins to maintain uncertainty about the outcome, which is the very foundation of all professional sport and its attendant gambling. His technical advantage and talent made him so much better than his opponents that it would have been career suicide always to pull ahead of them at the outset of a race and to stay ahead, as he could have done.

“Hanlan and his backers were much too clever to have him go all-out in any single event for fear of losing the element of betting speculation.”^{574, 575}

Hanlan the Man

Rice: “Champion of Canada at 18, champion of America at 20 and champion of the world at 24, where can one find a record to equal it? The very men that he defeated

⁵⁶⁸ *Fairbairn On Rowing*, p. 292

⁵⁶⁹ Qtd. by Palmer, p. 656

⁵⁷⁰ Morrow, p. 39

⁵⁷¹ Berton, p. 211

⁵⁷² Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 61

⁵⁷³ Hunter, p. 29

⁵⁷⁴ Cosentino, *Case Study*, p. 10

⁵⁷⁵ Morrow, pp. 35-6

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www.hanlanboatclub.ca

EDWARD HANLAN
THE MOST RENOWNED OARSMAN
OF ANY AGE WHOSE VICTORIOUS
CAREER HAS NO PARALLEL IN
THE ANNALS OF SPORT ·
BORN & DIED IN TORONTO
JULY 12·1855 · JANUARY 4·1908

were unanimous in their opinion of his prowess.”⁵⁷⁶

Many of Hanlan’s competitors lost heart of ever beating him. One particular tale is illustrative.

⁵⁷⁶ Rice, James C., op cit.

Hanlan took sick during one of his races with James Riley, “and halfway up the course Hanlan had to stop. Riley was stunned, and refused to cross the line.

“He had obviously placed bets on Hanlan and would lose his money if he won the race.”⁵⁷⁷

Rice: “No man ever proved to be a more popular champion than he was throughout Canada. The day he rowed Courtney at Lachine in 1879, the telegraph offices all over the Dominion were besieged by his compatriots seeking the tale of the race from quarter mile to quarter mile. When he won that race, he was the recipient of the greatest ovation that national pride could produce.

“I am anxious to have myself on record as holding that no man has yet equaled the achievements of ‘Edward Hanlan of the Island’ in the game of rowing.

“I never knew a finer oarsman. I never met a straighter man. He met his opponents without fear or favor. He rowed in all conditions and in many countries. In the days when the sport produced the greatest men in its annals, he

fought his way to the top and held the crown for four years. In short – he was the best ever.”⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁷ Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 38

⁵⁷⁸ Rice, James C., op cit.

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Sportsmanship

The preceding quote was written in 1920, twelve years after Hanlan's death. By then, the patina of nostalgia had begun to obscure the rough edges of the young Ned Hanlan, who had commenced his life inauspiciously as the child of Irish immigrant squatters. In addition, the rough edges of the sport in which he participated were also fading into the past.

The truth is that like Hanlan, most 19th Century professional scullers and the Thames Watermen who preceded them came from the margins of society. They were for the most part uneducated and cared little for the gentleman's concept of fair play.

Morrow: "Adorned with a broad mustache, [Hanlan] was always regarded as a handsome man and a crowd favorite, and in his race with Trickett he was the consummate showman. His behavior – described on other occasions as 'clowning,' 'harlequinading' and 'gamesmanship' – amounted to nothing short of sideshow entertainment and the complete humiliation of his opponent. Unsportsmanlike and technically unethical, such behavior was nevertheless part and parcel of Hanlan's cockiness and irresistible fan appeal."⁵⁷⁹

Hanlan later explained, "I made an exhibition of Trickett because he was a bit of a blowhard, and when I was training, he and his friends were always bluffing and chaffing me."⁵⁸⁰

Years later, Hanlan shared with fellow Columbia coach **Jim Rice** a different memory:

Hanlan: "The greatest picture I ever came across I saw from my seat in my shell when I was rowing Trickett for the championship of the world from Putney to

Mortlake. The big fellow had been chasing me for two miles and was gradually drawing up on me.

"I was absolutely cooked. A hundred times I wanted to quit. I could see the wonderful play of the muscles in his back as his shell drew up on me. Just when I thought he had me, when I thought my arms would refuse to work anymore, I saw these great muscles quiver and tremble as they gave way under the strain.

"That was my greatest picture. It gave me courage to stick to the end, and afterward it was told how easily I won that race, just because I was not pressed at the finish."⁵⁸¹

Ned Hanlan was by no means the only professional to foul intentionally, but he was one of the most flagrant.

Even a pamphlet lionizing Hanlan written by **W.H.C. Kerr** in 1879 to raise funds to build Hanlan and his family a large stone house in Toronto contained the following account of an 1877 race:

"The Kanuck⁵⁸² next took part in the scullers' race at the Boston Fourth-of-July regatta, and was ruled out for fouling Plaisted, whom he ran into at the turning stake. His conduct on this occasion gave great offense to the regatta officials, who subsequently passed a resolution recommending that in the future Hanlan be debarred from participation in all races under municipal management. This was, however, upon appeal from Hanlan himself, and through representations of gentlemen who had taken him in hand after his return to Canada, reconsidered, and the bar against him removed."⁵⁸³

⁵⁸¹ Rice, James C., op cit.

⁵⁸² slang for "Canadian"

⁵⁸³ *Toronto Globe*, May 6, 1879, qtd. by Kerr, pp. 11-2

⁵⁷⁹ Morrow, p. 39

⁵⁸⁰ Qtd. by Cosentino, *Hanlan*, p. 53

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American **Tom McKibbon**, a member of the 1969 European Champion Double,⁵⁸⁴ lends a personal perspective to Hanlan's roots.

"My family is really Canadian. McKibbons came up to the Ottawa Valley in Ontario in the early 1800s. There's a McKibbon Island in the middle of Mink Lake.

"I think that one thing you have to realize is that unlike most people in rowing today, I'm a street kid. I grew up playing mud gutter and street ball, and you actually made up your own rules for your own games. If you didn't have enough people, you made the game a different game, so I approached the whole competitive concept with a little bit of a different perspective.

"I know there's this vast difference between preppies like you, Peter, and street kids. What a prepie doesn't often understand is that a street kid is willing to chew his own arm off to win."⁵⁸⁵

This is the kind of man who lined up against R.W. Boyd in Newcastle and Edward Trickett in London.

Morrow: "In spite of the shadow cast



Kerr

Edward Hanlan

on his reputation by manipulative tactics and unethical practices, he was a classic sports hero whose character flaws were overlooked in deference to the perceived significance of his athletic prowess."⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁴ See Chapter 88.

⁵⁸⁵ McKibbon, personal conversation, 2007

⁵⁸⁶ Morrow, pp. 39-40

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12. Thames Waterman's Stroke

"Guts" Woodgate – The Badminton Library

Between 1876 and 1884, other scullers tried and failed to figure out why Ned Hanlan was so fast. All they seemed to be sure of was that Hanlan's long stroke was made possible by his long slide, and that was something they all could copy.

The Police Gazette: "It is a well-known fact that [William] Elliot, after he saw Hanlan defeat [John] Hawdon on the Tyne, had a boat built and rigged just the same as Hanlan's, and he tried to copy Hanlan's style. He was unable to do so, and when he came to the post to meet the great American oarsman [six weeks later on June 16, 1879] he was in a quandary."⁵⁸⁷

As has already been described, he lost badly.

So in one fell swoop, short slides had become obsolete among professionals, and it would only be a matter of time before they also disappeared among amateurs. Global die-out.

But even with long slides, no one could beat Ned Hanlan. The mystery continued.

Motion picture technology was not sufficiently advanced during Hanlan's career



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Ned Hanlan

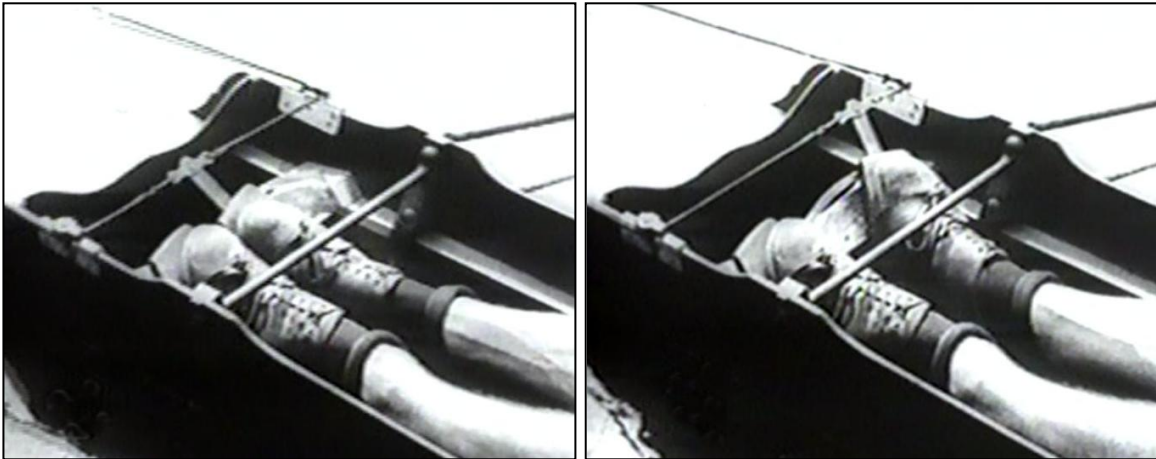
to capture on film an athlete performing his sport outdoors, so there is no direct visual record of Hanlan's technique. We know how he *didn't* row, because the era's "Thames Waterman's Stroke" that had evolved among English professional racers from the original waterman's stroke used by artisan rowers has since been described in elegant detail:

George Pocock:⁵⁸⁸ "A good sculler of Thames fame . . . will catch and drive with the legs at the same time, keeping his back

⁵⁸⁷ Harding, p. 34

⁵⁸⁸ See Chapter 45 ff.

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Gaumont Pathé, PR 1924 32 2

Steering footstretcher (at the 1924 Olympics)

in the same position and his arms straight. When the initial drive is at midpoint, he bends his elbows to come faster over dead center, his back slowly comes over, his hands squeeze, providing force to keep the run on as long as possible.”⁵⁸⁹

Leg-Back Concurrency

Leg motion first, then back and arms to the finish, in contrast to post-Egan era English Orthodox⁵⁹⁰ back first, then legs and arms to the finish. Even though putting the legs first proved not to be the elusive Hanlan secret, still it turned out to be a substantial step away from English Orthodox Technique and toward making more effective use of the leg drive.

Of course, English Orthodox reaction to the Thames Waterman’s Stroke was horror. With derision, they accused professionals (and quite accurately, from their point of view) of “kicking away the slide at the beginning of the stroke,”⁵⁹¹ and though by definition no amateur could ever actually

compete against a professional, Orthodox adherents were confident that the best amateur scullers were faster than their professional counterparts based on their superior approach to the mechanics of rowing.

Guts Woodgate

But still there were gentleman Orthodox rowers and coaches watching Ned Hanlan with great interest. **Walter Bradford “Guts”⁵⁹² Woodgate** (1841-1920) was one of the more interesting characters.

After being a member of the winning Oxford boats in 1862 and 1863, Woodgate changed British rowing with his Brasenose College entry in the Stewards’ Cup at the 1868 Henley regatta. Having witnessed a the Western Club from St. John’s, New Brunswick, Canada⁵⁹³ row a four without a coxswain steered by the **articulated footstretcher** of one of its oarsmen at the 1867 Paris regatta, Woodgate went home and developed his own version of the steering mechanism.

⁵⁸⁹ Qtd. by Newell, p. 78

⁵⁹⁰ See Chapter 7.

⁵⁹¹ Rowe & Pitman, p. 50

⁵⁹² Dodd, *Water Boiling Aft*, p. 76

⁵⁹³ Page, p. 9

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The following year, “he announced that the Brasenose crew in the Stewards’ would row without a cox, with himself at No. 3 steering with a wire and lever attached to his stretcher.”⁵⁹⁴

Though the rules were mum on the subject, the regatta stewards ruled against him. Accordingly, he announced “that Brasenose would comply with the condition of starting with a coxswain but that he would jump overboard directly the race began . . . and thousands flocked to the bank to watch the fun.”⁵⁹⁵

The Brasenose man given the task of abandoning ship was one **Frederick Edward Weatherly** (1848-1929). He plunged in, and observers reported that he narrowly escaped entanglement in a patch of water lilies. Brasenose won the race but was promptly disqualified.

But the wisdom of eliminating the coxswain was so obvious to all that in short order coxless-fours became the rule in the Stewards’ Cup.

Incidentally, Weatherly eventually made it to shore and forty-five years later wrote the timeless Irish ballad, *Danny Boy*.⁵⁹⁶

“Guts” Woodgate, 162 lb. 73 kg, was one of the great rowers of his generation, winner of the Diamond Sculls, twice winner of the Boat Race, thrice winner of the Wingfield Sculls, five times winner of the Henley Silver Goblets for pairs, and the author of *Boating*, the first of two volumes dedicated to the sport of rowing in the series of books called *The Badminton Library of Sports and Pastimes*, a publishing project of **Henry Somerset** (1824-1899), 8th Duke of



Badminton Library

Badminton House

Beaufort. The series was named after the duke’s principal country home, **Badminton House** in Gloucestershire. Woodgate’s volume was published in 1888.

The Woodgate volume’s coverage of the sport was later supplemented by R.P.P. Rowe and C.M. Pitman in another Badminton volume, *Rowing and Punting*, published in 1898.⁵⁹⁷

Interestingly, there was no volume in the series on the sport of badminton, whose modern form was originated at Badminton House in 1873.

Hanlan Rowed Concurrently

Woodgate was a great admirer of Ned Hanlan.

Woodgate, 1888: “It did not require any very deep knowledge of oarsmanship to enable a spectator to observe the vast difference which existed between [Hanlan’s] style and that of [other professional scullers], kicking backwards and forwards with piston action and helpless bodies doubled up at the finish [i.e. excessive ferryman’s finish].

“Hanlan used his slide [i.e. leg drive] concurrently with [back] swing, carrying his body well back, with straight arms long past

⁵⁹⁴ Dodd, *Henley*, p. 60

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁶ Richard Burnell, *Hooray Henley*, TSL Productions, BBC, 1990

⁵⁹⁷ See Chapter 15.

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perpendicular, before he attempted to row the stroke in by bending the arms. His superiority was manifest, and yet our British professional scullers seemed wedded to this vicious trick of premature slide and no swing, and doggedly declined to recognise the maxim '*Fas est et ab hoste doceri*'.⁵⁹⁸

Interestingly, though Woodgate considered Hanlan's success with leg-back concurrency as proof of the inferiority of the Thames Waterman **leg-back** sequentiality, it never seemed to occur to him to evaluate Hanlan's leg-back concurrency against the English Orthodox **back-leg** sequentiality.

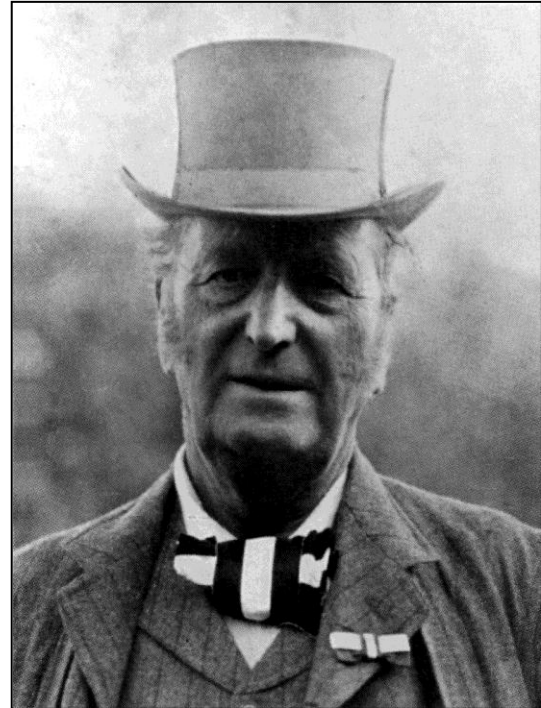
The great coach **Rudie Lehmann**⁶⁰⁰ also studied Hanlan's technique closely and realized immediately that Hanlan was a true revolutionary. Many years later he wrote:

"Most professional scullers drive their slides away before their bodies have a chance of getting to work. They have learnt their sculling by the light of nature, and the natural impulse of untaught and unpractised men is to ease the concentration of the forward position by letting the slide drift away."⁶⁰¹

Nevertheless, for quite some years after Hanlan rowed neither Woodgate nor Lehmann applied their insights to their own writing or coaching. It would be left to someone else to first put Hanlan's example to good use.

Ferryman's Finish

Lehmann, describing the technique of professionals: "The consequence is that, having lost the first and necessary moment for the use of their bodies [upon entry], they never get a chance of using them



Wikipedia

W.B. "Guts" Woodgate

subsequently.⁶⁰² They are thus compelled to throw on the arms a strain which these are not fitted to bear [i.e. forcing a ferryman's finish].

"Such was *not* the method of the late **Edward Hanlan**, the greatest professional sculler I have ever seen."⁶⁰³

Like Charles Courtney and the scullers in Thomas Eakins' paintings, Thames Watermen indeed ended their pullthroughs in the traditional ferryman's finish, but not all writers of the era disapproved.

Rowe & Pitman, in their Badminton volume: "During the last part of the stroke, the body should be allowed to start its swing forward, and thus in a degree to meet the

⁵⁹⁸ "It's proper to learn even from an enemy." - Ovid

⁵⁹⁹ Woodgate, pp. 227, 229

⁶⁰⁰ See Chapter 16.

⁶⁰¹ Lehmann, p. 49

⁶⁰² This echoes modern Norwegian coach **Thor Nilsen**: "If you are not prepared at the front, you lose the catch. The catch is the key point of the stroke." See Chapter 123.

⁶⁰³ Lehmann, p. 49

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sculls. This motion in a light boat avoids burying her head at the finish of the stroke, and does not shorten the stroke in the same way as meeting the oar in rowing; for in the one case the handles of the sculls are past the ribs, while in the other the handle of the oar is, or should be, against the chest.”⁶⁰⁴

Woodgate disagreed with **Lehmann’s** observation that **Hanlan** did not employ the ferryman’s finish:

“In sculling, with a very long swing back it is not a fault to commence the recovery of the body while the hands are still completing their journey home to the ribs. The body should not drop, nor slouch over the sculls while thus meeting them. It should recover with open chest and head well up, simply pulling itself up slightly, to start the back swing [forward], by the handles of the sculls as they come home for the last three or four inches of their journey.

“**Casamajor**⁶⁰⁵ always recovered then, so did **Hanlan**, so did **Parker**,⁶⁰⁶ and any

sculler who does likewise will sin (if he does sin in the opinion of some hypercritics of style) in first-class company.”⁶⁰⁷

Interestingly, **Woodgate** clearly wrote that **Hanlan** made use of the ferryman’s finish while **Lehmann** vehemently stated that he did not.

So what did **Hanlan** actually do?

Woodgate wrote in 1888, when **Hanlan** was still active. **Lehmann** wrote twenty years after that, long after **Hanlan** had left Britain. As an athlete, **Woodgate** had been extraordinary, a Diamond and Wingfield Sculls winner. **Lehmann** never won at Henley and missed his Blue at Cambridge. He was far better known as a coach.

Accordingly, one might infer that **Woodgate’s** near-contemporaneous analysis is probably more reliable, but that **Hanlan’s** ferryman’s finish must have been a great deal more smooth and subtle than the finishes of his opponents.

⁶⁰⁴ Rowe & Pitman, p. 46

⁶⁰⁵ **Alexander Alcée Casamajor** (1833-1861)

148 lb. 67 kg, the greatest amateur oarsman of the mid-19th Century. “He won the Diamonds five times and held the Wingfields from 1855 until he stepped down in 1860. He won the pairs at Henley six times, the Stewards’ five, the Grand four and the Wyfold once, a grand Henley total of twenty-one wins.” – Dodd, *Water Boiling Aft*, p. 50

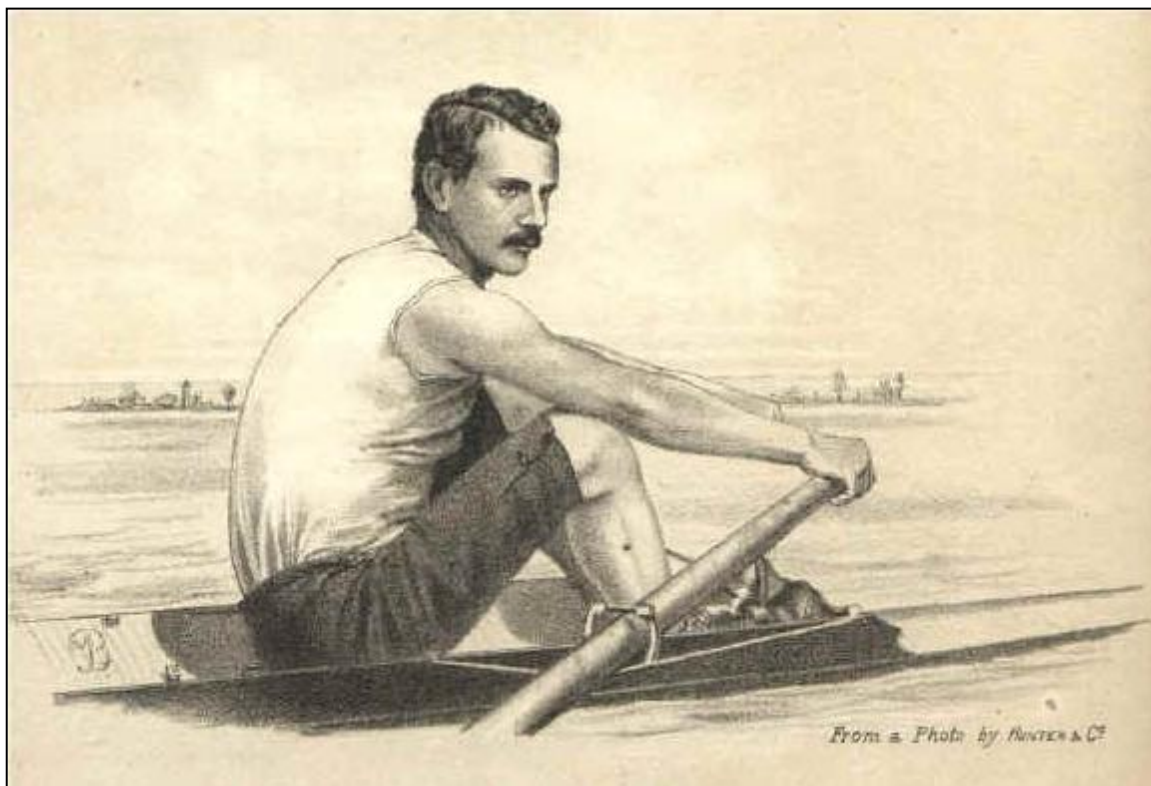
⁶⁰⁶ **J.E. Parker**, 1863 Wingfield Sculls Champion.

⁶⁰⁷ **Woodgate**, pp. 136-7

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13. Classical Rowing Technique

Hanlan In His Own Words – Genealogical Tree of Rowing



www.rowinghistory-aus.info

Ned Hanlan

During the period that Ned Hanlan rowed, the description of his long, smooth strokes and sharp, clean entries was repeated innumerable times,⁶⁰⁸ but no one came forward to offer a convincing explanation for his dominance.

Like the flight of an eagle's pinions,
When to the sun he soars,
Is the graceful sweep and powerful stroke

⁶⁰⁸ Marsh, p. 1

Of his well-feather'd oars.⁶⁰⁹

Woodgate's observation, published in 1888, that Hanlan rowed with concurrent legs and back persuaded no amateur to abandon English Orthodox's back first, legs second sequentiality or the Thames

⁶⁰⁹ Kerr, *Edward Hanlan, An Epinikian Ode*, p. 23

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Waterman legs first, back second sequentially.

And Lehmann's observations only came decades later, probably with the benefit of hindsight.

An anthropometrist once measured Hanlan's body, searching for the secret.

"In rowing, the back takes the greatest portion of the strain. . . . A long stroke being desirable, the advantage of a long body . . . becomes apparent, while the short thigh and upper arm, as compared with the lower leg and forearm, is of service; when otherwise, a greater reach is obtained, without losing any mechanical advantage.

"These facts are better illustrated in Hanlan, the professional oarsman. . . . His total height entitles him to a place in the 65% class, and his sitting height in the 90% class, while the height of knee remains with the 30%, and the pubic arch with the 25% class, the most surprising difference being in the relative length of the upper arm and forearm. 80% of all those examined surpassed this man in length of upper arm, and only 25% surpassed him in length of forearm. In view of Hanlan's style of rowing, these measurements are suggestive."⁶¹⁰

In His Own Words

After his retirement in 1897, Hanlan wrote and answered questions about his approach to the sport.

Hanlan: "The science of sculling is a most difficult one to master and requires a number of years' experience, combined with a steady application and constant thought to arrive at any degree of perfection. . . .

"Those who aspire to prominence and fame in this great branch of sport place too much reliance on their physical strength,

allowing the scientific principles to escape them to a large extent.

"An experience of twenty-four years devoted to the study of rowing has taught me that mere endurance and brute strength do not make the successful oarsman. The man who would lead in this sport must apply himself diligently and assiduously to a study of the finer points of the game . . .

"A strong arm and a stout frame are essentials to success, but with the brain work lacking, they are almost worthless. In other words, the man must use his head as well as his physical gifts."⁶¹¹

Ned Hanlan had learned to row almost as early as he had learned to walk.

Cosentino: "One of his favorite toys was a plank, five centimeters thick, with tapered ends [and] fitted with a seat and outriggers, upon which rested two weather-beaten oars. In this contraption, Hanlan could pretend to race the many [boats] which were rowed between the Island and the mainland."⁶¹²

It was even reported *at the time* that little Ned Hanlan had rowed himself across Toronto Harbor, across more than a mile of open water subject to currents and sudden weather changes, at the age of five,⁶¹³ a claim that rowing historian **Ted English** finds difficult to take seriously.⁶¹⁴

Nevertheless, by the time he was of school-age, young Ned used his homemade boat to commute daily across the bay to attend George Street Public School.⁶¹⁵

Hanlan was a thoughtful man, and it turns out that he had become a self-made champion by using his brain to take a fresh look at all aspects of technique, training and equipment.

⁶¹⁰ Sargent, p. 554

⁶¹¹ Hanlan, p. 1

⁶¹² Cosentino, p. 8

⁶¹³ *Toronto Colonist*, September 6, 1860

⁶¹⁴ English, personal conversation, 2008

⁶¹⁵ www.hanlanboatclub.ca

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And he developed several significant innovations.

Eliminating Check

When Hanlan was 20, sliding seats were still in their infancy.

Hanlan: “When I first took it into my head to follow rowing, the boats used were very inadequate for the purposes. The sliding seat, which is now [1898] in such a high state of perfection, was a sliding seat in name only. It was invented by **Walter Brown**, of Portland, Maine, in the sixties. It consisted of a short steel slide, on glass tubes about eight inches long. The slide the oarsman obtained by this seat was but four inches, and only those who have gone through the experience can realize how great a drawback it was to speed.

“I remember when I bought my first shell. It was in 1875. **George Warin**, of Toronto, built it for me. It was a spruce frame with skin of butternut, and it cost me \$80. It had a four-inch slide. [The tracks were 8 inches long, accommodating four inches of seat travel.]

“The first time I used it, I noticed a defect somewhere, but I did not locate it for some time.

“I was out sculling in Toronto Bay one day, rowing as hard as I knew how, and I began to wonder at the slow rate of progress I was making.

“I noticed that every time I reached forward for a stroke and put my oars aft that the stern of the boat would sink about four inches in the water. [This is called **stern check**.] On each occasion, I could also feel the seat bump up against me, so to speak, [He was hitting his stern stops.] checking the movement of my boat to a large extent.

“I ascertained that every time I took a stroke, I threw the whole weight of my body on my feet, thereby causing the stern of the boat to be submerged inordinately in the water.

“I studied the matter for some time and finally concluded that the fault lay in [the placement of] the seat. I went to Mr. Warin and asked him to put in another seat with a three-inch longer slide. Mr. Warin said that I was the most ungainly sculler he had ever seen in his life. However, he made the alteration, and I resumed my practices on the bay.”⁶¹⁶

The stern ends of the original tracks had been even with the rigger pins. For convenience, Warin left them there but extended the seat deck and tracks toward the bow the additional three inches. This was much easier for him to construct, but it required Hanlan to move his foot stretchers three inches toward the bow to ensure that his seat would reach the new bow stops when he flattened his legs.

The change made intuitive sense. It moved him away from the stern and made it less likely that he would hit his stern stops, but since the stern stops had not been moved, it did little to prevent the continued transfer of too much weight into the stern at the entry.

Hanlan: “The new seat did not satisfy me, though, and in a short while I went to Mr. Warin again and induced him to add another three inches to the slide on the seat [also in the direction of the bow].”⁶¹⁷

Hanlan’s tracks were now fourteen inches long, and seat travel had been more than doubled, from four inches to ten. This allowed more leg compression which led to less body angle forward, giving Hanlan a more upright posture at the entry and reducing much of the downward arc of his head and shoulders, which had contributed to his tendency to bury his stern in the water.

⁶¹⁶ Hanlan, p. 1

⁶¹⁷ Ibid, p. 2

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Hanlan: “This proved to be acceptable, and I found that the greater freedom I could give my body, the greater impetus I could give the boat, and, therefore, attain a faster rate of speed.

“When I came into the possession of the new sliding seat, I appreciated its great value, but realized, however, that I was only beginning to learn the rudiments of sculling, and that this improvement was but a single step in the right direction.”⁶¹⁸

As for the continuing problem of excess weight transfer into the stern, rowing coach and philosopher **Jimmy Joy** has long studied Ned Hanlan. “Hanlan’s short stature forced him to use a more pronounced [back] swing to give more length to his stroke.”⁶¹⁹

It is well understood that Hanlan laid back a long way, but there is no question that Hanlan also compressed further forward than anyone had done before him, tending to reach with his upper body between his knees.

Hanlan: “The knees should be spread well apart, thereby giving the loins an easy and more powerful action.”⁶²⁰

This was the original source of his stern check.

Hanlan: “I could not ascertain how to accomplish the object I had in view when it came across my mind like a flash that the control of the whole motion of the body while in the boat *lay in my feet*.”⁶²¹

Hanlan realized that toward the end of the recovery he was transferring his weight onto his feet in the stern, and this was causing the check and interfering with the run of the boat.

Jim Rice: “It is the commonest thing in the world to see a boat jump ahead at every stroke. This may seem to indicate power to the inexperienced eye which does not notice that

the shell remains practically stationary between the strokes [i.e. the boat’s run is checked].

“Ned Hanlan developed what I call the ‘sneak back’ to the catch, and it was a pretty sight to see him manipulating his sliding seat so that the boat seemed pulled through the water by a string instead of being driven by separate strokes.

[This is reminiscent of Ellis Ward’s “haunted boat”⁶²² comment and indicates that there was no “check” in Hanlan’s stroke.]

“By such methods as this, Hanlan made sculling an art as well as a science.”⁶²³

In the generations after Ned Hanlan, many coaches have taught that instead of imagining that you are traveling down the slide into the stern, you should instead imagine that you are drawing the boat back underneath you. This simple change in point-of-view can bring a significant transformation of technique, and this appears to be similar to what Hanlan was attempting.

Hanlan: “It took considerable time to conquer the habit, but I finally accomplished it and by degree got every muscle of my body working in perfect unison.

“At first it was very awkward. I spent months practicing in that direction, and every day I noticed an improvement in my speed.”⁶²⁴

The Pendulum Swing

Hanlan’s cure for stern check at the entry evolved into what he ended up calling “pendulum body swing,” which he developed by watching the steady swing of the pendulum of an ordinary kitchen clock.

⁶¹⁸ Hanlan, p. 2

⁶¹⁹ Joy, *Hanlan*, p. 3

⁶²⁰ Harding, p. 8

⁶²¹ Hanlan, p. 3

⁶²² Qtd. by Kelley, p. 33

⁶²³ Rice, James C., *op cit.*

⁶²⁴ Hanlan, p. 3

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“It swung forward and backward, but I could not detect, by the closest observation, where the swing ended.

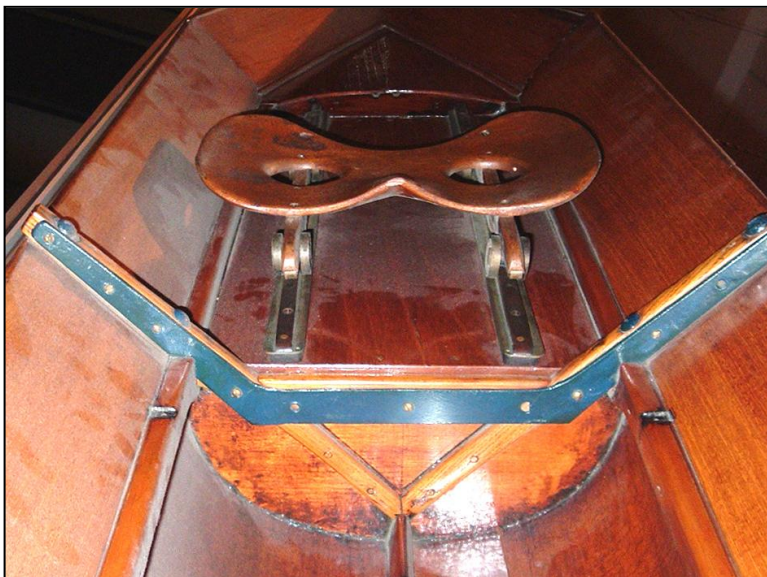
“That was my cue. I resolved to become a rowing pendulum, if possible, as I realized that the nearer I approached the action of that most useful part of the clock, the better sculler I would become.”⁶²⁵

So Hanlan strove to row with no beginnings or endings, no abrupt motions, no explosive efforts, no rush out of bow and no rush into the stern on the recovery, just plenty of back swing in both directions. He transformed an aggressive he-man sport into a ballet. No wonder his contemporaries were at a loss for words.

Jim Rice: “Whatever I know of rowing I learned from Hanlan. I stick to the Hanlan style and shall always stick to it, for I believe it is the best method in the world to pull a boat through the water.

“When I say ‘pull the boat through the water,’ I touch on one of the secrets of Hanlan’s success. Many oarsmen are not so much on pulling the boat as they are on pulling the oar through the water. There is a great distinction here, and I try to impart it to all my boys.”⁶²⁶

Joy believes that it was Hanlan’s work on his pendulum swing that taught him to coordinate the action of legs, back and arms, and that this skill would eventually give him the huge advantage he enjoyed over his contemporaries.



Patrick Okens

Ned Hanlan’s Single (in later years)
Canada Sports Hall of Fame, Toronto
23” slides

Even Longer Slides

But we have not reached the end of Hanlan’s innovations, for those fourteen-inch slides would not allow Hanlan’s knees to reach “under his breastbone.” In fact, they would only allow shin angles at the entry of up to -45° , quite similar to the position shown in the photograph of Charles Courtney in Chapter 11.

The shin angle shown in the photo of Hanlan at the beginning of Chapter 10 would have required a slide length of at least twenty-three inches, which just happens to be the length of the slide in the Hanlan single shell on display in the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame in Toronto.

So apparently when Hanlan wrote in 1898 about his experiments with George Warin in extending slide length, he was telling only the first chapter.

However, it was his time practicing the pendulum method on fourteen-inch slides that perhaps laid the foundation for his later

⁶²⁵ Hanlan, p. 2

⁶²⁶ Rice, James C., op cit.

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success on twenty-three and ultimately twenty-six inch slides.

Joy states that “Hanlan serves as an excellent example of an athlete who is a keen observer of his own body movements and the movement of the shell. . . . From old photographs of Hanlan, his erect yet relaxed posture and totally extended body are evident.”⁶²⁷

Adjusting the Load

But solving one problem with longer slides in 1875 had created another problem unforeseen by George Warin, the builder of Hanlan’s first shell. His longer slide had created a longer stroke in the water, and his longer stroke had created a heavier load. This was the same problem that had confronted T.S. Egan at Cambridge four decades earlier when he adopted the longer-reach stroke he had observed in Metropolitan crews.⁶²⁸

Hanlan came up with a solution.

Hanlan: “At that time, the standard oar was 10 feet 3 inches long, with three inch [wide] blades. I got from Mr. Warin a pair of sculls 9 feet 6 inches long, with six and one-quarter inch blades.

“They called me ‘the kid with the big sculls,’ and the other rowing men laughed at me when I appeared on the scene with the new oars.”⁶²⁹

Interestingly, what his competitors noticed was the wider blades. Hanlan’s more important innovation was in changing the load. The standard scull of the day was 123” long with 30” inboard with the center of area of the blade approximately 12” from the tip, yielding a **load ratio**⁶³⁰ of about **2.8**.

Hanlan’s new oars were 114” with 32” inboard,⁶³¹ but the center of area of his blade would have been several inches closer to the tip. By removing eleven inches from the outboard loom of his oars, he had lowered his load ratio to below **2.3**, an almost indescribably huge reduction which allowed him to row a smooth, accelerating pullthrough through the much longer arc created by his pendulum swing.

This was much of Hanlan’s secret!

In 1897, he described his advantages over his opponents in Philadelphia in 1876 to journalist Harry Clay Palmer.

Hanlan: “I was a better sculler than any of them, in a scientific point of view, and I had a better rig than any of them. I had studied the art of sculling and improved my fittings. I had a longer slide than any of them, I had a shorter foot-brace [footstretchers placed closer to his stern stops] than any of them, I also had shorter oars.

“Everything they had was on the lines of the old style of rowing. I improved on the old English rigging; I altered the rigging of my boat, except the old thole pins. Swivel oarlocks were not thought much of then. I bought myself new oars, and altered the angle of my foot-brace from about twenty [degrees] to about forty [degrees], and these little things helped me. I did this without any previous teaching.

“My style of rowing was then far ahead of that of anybody else, and with the alterations I had made it would have been a wonderfully strong young fellow who would have beat me.”⁶³²

Hanlan’s Greatest Innovation

In speaking of the lessons passed down from Ned Hanlan, English professional

⁶²⁷ Joy, *Hanlan*, pp. 5-6

⁶²⁸ See Chapter 6.

⁶²⁹ Hanlan, p. 3

⁶³⁰ per Purcer, p. 17, load ratio is defined at outboard minus 2 cm over inboard plus 2 cm.

⁶³¹ Crowther, p. 243

⁶³² Qtd. by Palmer, p. 661

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sculler **Ernie Arlett**,⁶³³ who coached champion crews at Northeastern University in Boston during the 1960s and '70s, wrote of "getting the true feeling of a boat running, instantaneous application of power from the legs, transmitted through the body with clever hands to the blades, which are drawn through in one piece, finish well-drawn home."⁶³⁴

Leg power "transmitted through the body with clever hands." Legs, back and arms all involved concurrently from the instantaneous entry right through to the finish. No one in history up to the 1880s had ever rowed in such a manner.

And "finish well-drawn home" admirably describes *Schubschlag* acceleration to the release.

Schubschlag

Significantly, when it came to force application, Hanlan had come to the same conclusion that T.S. Egan had forty years earlier, *Schubschlag* rather than *Kernschlag*.⁶³⁵

The Police Gazette: "He does not kick his stretcher, or shove his feet against it with anything like a jerk; but he sets them against it and pushes with the heaviest and mightiest force he can possibly apply, much as a man pushes with his legs and feet upon the floor when he bestrides a half ton and lifts it – if he can.

"This supreme push, far more forceful than any sudden kick could be, throws every ounce of pressure against that fulcrum that he can possibly impose. Hence he gets more

power into his work than any less effective pusher could get, and it rushes him forward accordingly."⁶³⁶

What contemporaries would have seen in observing a sculler like Ned Hanlan accelerating smoothly to the finish would have been the absence of expected explosive effort at either end of the stroke, absence of the initial leg drive or heave of the back toward the bow early on and then back toward the stern in a ferryman's finish, a boat moving without the aggressive stop-and-start stern check at the entry they were used to, perhaps even a "haunted boat?"⁶³⁷

Bill Sanford, head coach at Syracuse University during the last third of the 20th Century, provides an additional clue. His most famous predecessors at Syracuse were **Jim Ten Eyck**, Ned Hanlan's close friend and coach, and **Ned Hanlan Ten Eyck**, Jim's son, Ned's godson and namesake.

"When I began coaching at Syracuse, I did some research on Ned Ten Eyck, and I found he had a reputation as a beautiful sculler. He used his back and legs

together at the entry, used more layback than you see today, and focused on being as smooth and efficient as possible."⁶³⁸

It seems reasonable to presume that the young Ned had learned a thing or two from his godfather.



Alama, *Mark of the Oarsman*

Jim Ten Eyck

⁶³³ See Chapter 116.

⁶³⁴ Qtd. by Ferris, p. 92

⁶³⁵ See Chapter 6.

⁶³⁶ Harding, p. 27

⁶³⁷ Qtd. by Kelley, p. 33

⁶³⁸ Bill Sanford, personal correspondence, 2004

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Crowther

Ned Hanlan Ten Eyck, Wachusett Boat Club, Worcester, Massachusetts
1897 Diamond Sculls Champion, Henley Royal Regatta
-30° layback

And Ned Hanlan Ten Eyck was indeed a great sculler. He was undefeated from 1895 until his retirement in 1901. In 1897, he became the second foreigner and first American ever to win the Diamond Sculls at Henley.

Crowther: “At the time he was only eighteen years old, but he won his heats easily and then beat **Harry Blackstaffe**⁶³⁹ [later the 1908 Olympic Singles Gold Medalist] in the finals by a length and a half in 8:35, then a record for the course.”⁶⁴⁰

Sanford’s description contains two crucial points: concurrent use of back and legs, agreeing with Woodgate, Lehmann,

Joy and Arlett, and more layback, agreeing with Woodgate.

Crowther: “Ten Eyck’s style was extremely smooth. He derived much of his power from strong arms and shoulders.”⁶⁴¹

This description suggests a surging pullthrough with a strong draw to a strong release.

Now the clues are all there. Ned Hanlan’s secret wasn’t **stroke length** because his opponents could quickly copy that.

It wasn’t **strength**. He repeatedly humiliated great champion scullers up to four inches taller and twenty-five or more pounds heavier than he was.

⁶³⁹ See Chapter 23.

⁶⁴⁰ Crowther, p. 185

⁶⁴¹ Crowther, p. 186

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It wasn't **training**. He was often a reluctant trainer.

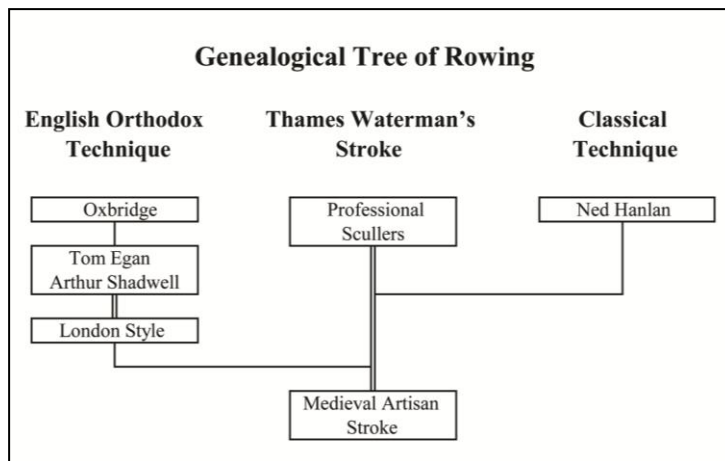
It had to be something special about his smooth, steady "haunted" force application without stern check, something which must have caught the eye but defied explanation, something which flew in the face of conventional wisdom, *flew in the face of common sense!* Otherwise, it would have been figured out right away.

But it had already been described forty years earlier by Tom Egan and Arthur Shadwell. It was **Schubschlag!**

Hanlan: "A sharp, clean 'catch' of the water; a powerful, steady, horizontal stroke, with an application of the whole force at the moment of immersion."⁶⁴²

The force application lesson of *Principles of Rowing* had been forgotten in the decades after 1846. Hanlan rediscovered it on his own.

Genealogical Tree of Rowing



By the 1870s when Ned Hanlan arrived on the scene, **English Orthodox Technique** had been gestating for nearly half a century since it emerged from the primordial ooze of medieval artisan rowing and took its first halting steps as the London Style. It had

evolved as it migrated to Oxford and Cambridge and then to Eton. It had evolved through the amazing improvements in equipment, added generous layback and absorbed the sliding seat.

By the end of the century, however, we shall discover that it had begun to earn its name. It had become the true "orthodoxy" of the sport of rowing, conservative, established doctrine with increasingly rigid rules.⁶⁴³

We shall further discover that English Orthodox Technique will continue for generation after generation with adherents showing ever increasing passion. In fact, its spiritual and lineal descendents remain robust into the present, nearly two centuries after it began.

If we imagine a genealogical tree of rowing technique, English Orthodox Technique was the first great branching of the Thames Waterman trunk, whose artisan roots can be traced back to the Middle Ages.

Classical Technique

With the Thames Waterman's Stroke and English Orthodoxy making up the two main branches of our young evolutionary tree, a third branch was brought to life by **Ned Hanlan**, and we shall discover that perhaps three-quarters of the world's rowers of the 20th and 21st Centuries can trace their techniques directly back to him.

We could call it the Hanlan Branch, the Hanlan Technique, but it has become so much larger than one man in one time. In fact, as the decades have passed, the name of the man who started it all has now faded. Most rowers today don't even know Hanlan's name, let

⁶⁴² Harding, p. 7

⁶⁴³ See Chapter 17.

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alone his role in every single stroke they take.

Accordingly, with the benefit of hindsight, I call Ned Hanlan's long-slide⁶⁴⁴ concurrent *Schubschlag* approach to boat moving the **Classical Technique** of rowing and sculling.

In the history of rowing technique, if the

Thames Waterman's Stroke was the first truly great evolutionary step beyond the mediaeval artisan stroke, English Orthodoxy was the second and Classical Technique the third . . . **and it was also the last!** We will discover that everything today goes back to these three branches of the genealogical tree of rowing.

⁶⁴⁴ long for the era. In the 1950s, slide length would lengthen yet again.

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