

The road to the WU23

A little over two weeks to go until the race for which I've been training incredibly hard since October last year. The race for which I nearly froze my fingers off during winter practice. The race for which I endured all those heavy sessions on the erg. The WU23 is coming.

How did the preparation go up until today? I set my goals for this rowing season last October. That goal had been in my mind for months. In July last year I took part in the WU23 in Brest, Belarus, in my single scull. That was my first World Championship since I was too old to be a junior. In Brest I became second in the B-finale and I immediately knew that I wanted to compete in the single scull the following year. The goal being the A-final.

Fortunately my club 'Njord' has several varsity rowers who are also dreaming of an international rowing career. In order to face the cold of winter and help each other reach our goals together we formed a group of single scullers, called the 'Scullgroup'. This group is, among others, coached by Nienke van Zijp en Evi vd Graaf.



After a long winter of hard training the 2k season finally arrived, with the very first race being one of the most important: the Dutch Championships for small boats (1x, 2-, and 2+). I entered into the women's senior A scull field to compare myself with the Dutch elite. This was a good occasion to see what my position was. In order to prepare for this spectacle the Scullgroup went to Hazewinkel in Belgium for a long weekend. After this training camp I felt ready for the championship. This feeling seemed justified as I took the bronze medal behind Chantal Achterberg (silver) and Claudia Belderbos (gold). This victory made me want more and gave me the feeling that I was on the right track.

After the Dutch Championships the tickets for the first international U23 event, the Hugelregatta in Essen, were divided. I could race the single scull. Once in Essen I was very excited! I felt good, was confident, and it was fun to compete in an international race once again. Competing in international races provides me with the experience which I can use very well for the WU23. Additionally, Essen was the place for which I could earn my ticket for the World Cup I in Munich. This was an extra reason to perform well. And perform I did. On both Saturday and Sunday I finished first.



A few days later, my coach, Nienke van Zijp, got a call from the national coach. Good news! I earned my place in the women's single scull field in Munich. When I saw the entries, I was a very excited, as this would be the opportunity to compare myself to the world's rowing greats. My goal, again, was to gain more international experience in the single scull. As World Cup I progressed, I started to get more and more excited. Where can you get better international rowing experience than on a World Cup?

After another training camp at Hazewinkel Marie-Anne Frenken, Nienke van Zijp and I left for Munich. Marie-Anne raced the lightweight women's single scull and I the women's single scull. Fortunately I already knew the course because I had rowed there several times before during my time as a junior at Die Leythe.

The championship started on Friday with the time trials. This means that you race your heat of six boats one after the other, instead of next to each other. This was quite an experience on its own. The

other races were raced in the normal way. Good thing, as the direct competition is what I like best about rowing! At the end of the championship I finished 4th in the B-final, taking 10th place overall. I went home satisfied and with a rich experience under my belt. After Munich it seemed I was still on the right track for the WU23. But what's next?

The final steps had to be made. At the Koninklijke Holland Beker I could earn my ticket for the WU23 by proving I was the best U23 single sculler. I finished 6th in the final. The best Dutch performance. What a relief! The ticket for the WU23 was secure and all the uncertainties disappeared.

After this long journey there is only one race to go. THE race for which I've trained so much and for which I've gained all the international experience. It is great that this championship takes place at our own, well known Bosbaan. A great chance for rowing lovers to come and look and, if possible, to be a volunteer. Are there people who want to hold my boat at the start or people who want to record the times? To all the volunteers, thank you very much! I realise that without your help this wonderful event would not be possible. But, before the championships start, I will first go to Hazewinkel for one last training camp. Let's make this a great event which we will remember forever!