

# Brazil

## looks to the future

**Brazil is not short of rowing. With its many rivers and the need to cross these bodies of water, rowing becomes a necessity. The flat water version of rowing that is known at the Olympics and on the international racing scene, is less common. But Brazil is preparing for a big rowing push that has plans in place through to 2016.**

Rowing in Brazil is concentrated in just a few pockets of activity. The country has three training venues based in Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and Porto Alegre. They are centred in these three large cities due to the rowing clubs' connection to major football clubs. There is also a regional influence on rowing centred around Italian and German colonisation. This has meant that the sport is stronger in the southern parts of the country.

Currently there are 495 rowers registered in Brazil, 35 of them are at the senior level. The top rowers, following the results of the regional championships, receive aid from their clubs (financial or otherwise). There is also a federal government programme that supports a number of athletes that have recorded favourable results. "The reality for the majority of athletes is hard," says Julio Noronha who was Brazilian Rowing's technical director and now works for the Brazilian

Olympic Committee. "They need to be training and studying or working at the same time."

The biggest idols in Brazilian rowing are the Carvalho brothers who are two-time Pan American Games champions (1983 and 1987). They also finished seventh at the 1987 World Rowing Championships in the pair.

Noronha admits that Brazil has a number of hurdles when it comes to the development of the sport. Noronha notes that it lacks an outlet in the school and university system. "We don't have a culture for sport to be practiced and encouraged at school and university," he says. "Rowing is basically initiated through the football clubs."

Brazil, however, can claim a degree of success at the Beijing Olympic Games. The country qualified a lightweight women's double for >

Brazil's Thiago Gomes and Thiago Almeida competing in the lightweight men's double sculls at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.



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> the first time. "That was a great evolution for us," says president of Brazil's Rowing Federation, Rodney Bernardes de Araujo. They also qualified three other boats: the lightweight men's double and the men's and women's single.

De Araujo, however, is cautious to talk about improvements and says that last year's Olympic results have actually stimulated Brazilian rowing to make changes for the next eight years. The eight years are part of their push towards a podium finish at the 2016 Olympic Games which, they hope, will be staged in Rio de Janeiro.

"Our national federation has hired one of the technical coaches from the French team, José Oyarzabal, so that with his experience in seeking and training athletes, and the knowledge acquired with the French Olympic team, he can be the cornerstone of our team for the next two Olympic cycles," says De Araujo.

"The work begins now and we expect to present better performances and revitalise the Brazilian rowing team at the South American competitions in 2009 and the Rowing World Cup and World Rowing Championships in 2010."

On top of this Brazil has been leading the way in adaptive rowing in South America. At the

2008 Paralympic Games, Brazil earned a medal in the trunk and arms mixed double sculls. "We are hoping to show adaptive rowing strength at the international competitions in 2009 based on the team that went to Beijing in 2008," says De Araujo who wants to encourage more adaptive disabled athletes to choose rowing as their sport.

FISA's development manager Sheila Stephens Desbans has been working with Brazil for a number of years and has noticed the progression: "The Brazilian Rowing Federation has been making many efforts over the past few years to further develop their rowing programme through coaching education activities, adaptive workshops and also the general synergies around organising and hosting a Pan American Games in 2007 and a bid for the 2016 Olympic Games."

"There is a long, long tradition of rowing in Brazil as in many other Latin American nations and a great deal of accolades on a regional and continental level, but now the federation is trying to focus on more international results. We saw some really interesting developments in the past few years and we are sure we are going to be seeing more success from Brazil."

2007 World Champion in the arms only women's single sculls, Claudia Santos from Brazil.



■ M.S.B.