

Wilderness in historic win

By PHIL MANGELSDORF

It was a case of one crew finally leaving the wilderness, and another experienced crew showing just how it's done, at the Schools Annual Head of the River Regatta at West Lakes yesterday.

Wilderness won the girls' first eight for the first time while St Peters won the boys' race for the 33rd time to continue its remarkable domination of the event.

The eight crews in the boys' race took four attempts to get a start from 2000m line.

Saints and Princes on opposite sides of the course showed the early speed narrowly from Pembroke and Scotch College which won the event last year.

By the 500m mark Saints and Prince Alfred had cleared away from the rest by a distinct margin but then Saints took a stranglehold on the race as they kept building on their lead from the 500m mark through to the 1000m halfway mark.

Saints had established a clear boat-length lead but it seemed doubtful they could continue to hold off such a classy field.

But Saints continued to row away and increased their lead, powering away to win by nearly two lengths from Prince Alfred College with Pulteney Grammar School improving to take third place going past the disappointing Pembroke and Scotch crews.

The girls' first eight, with just six crews, started after just two attempts and was very even for the first 260 metres.

Pembroke pulled away to hold a narrow lead over Walford, which had won this race for the past five years, and then Wilderness as they approached the 500-metre mark.

But then Walford pulled past Pembroke and held a narrow lead on Wilderness

which also passed the Pembroke crew as it faded out of the picture.

Wilderness slowly pulled up alongside then went past Walford.

Wilderness and Walford raced stroke-for-stroke for over 100 metres but it was Wilderness which gradually forged a metre in front, then two metres, then four metres and had nearly half-a-boat length lead at the half-way mark.

Wilderness seemed to sense victory and maintained its stroke rating as it continued to widen the gap.

Walford fought back, using all their experience in the closing stages of the race, but it was not enough to overhaul Wilderness.

Wilderness had a big day with two other victories in the first four and under-14 quad scull, making it the school's most successful Head of the River ever.

Walford had to be content with a win in the second eight when it beat Pembroke for the first time for the season.

St Peters also had two major victories in the open age classes, scoring a big win in the second eight and also taking the first fours.

Prince Alfred College won the boys' lightweight fours in fine style and the under-14 quad scull by an even bigger margin.

Pembroke showed its potential when its crews dominated the under age events, winning the boys and girls under-15 fours with the boys scoring in the closest race of the day by just .04 seconds from the unlucky Unley High School crew.