

FOX CHAPEL CREW

Novice Parents' Guide to Everything You Never Knew You Needed to Know About the World of Rowing!

Family ID Registration

All athletes must register on the FC Athletics homepage (<http://fcasdathletics.org/>) prior to the start of the Fall and Spring Seasons. This includes the required annual sports physical.

USRowing Membership

All athletes must also join USRowing and complete all necessary waivers. Fox Chapel Crew is Organization No. 716.

Regatta Central

Regattas typically have their own website, but be sure to bookmark regattacentral.com onto your smartphone. This will provide you with realtime results and heat information.



Welcome

We are happy that you will be joining us for an exciting new rowing season. We hope that this handbook will answer a lot of questions. Please do not hesitate to ask questions if there are topics that we have not covered.

Rowing is a wonderful sport. Your child will grow and develop both physically and emotionally. Many of us who have participated in the sport as athletes and parents of athletes have come to believe that rowing is one the best uses we have ever made of our family's resources. Fox Chapel Crew has taught our children about discipline, motivation, respect, dedication, competition, winning and losing, humility, joy, teamwork and has established lasting friendships for both athletes and parents. The character development our young adults have gained has outweighed the financial commitment we have made. This benefit of rowing has been worth every penny and much, much more.



History of Fox Chapel Crew

The Fox Chapel Crew was created in the spring of 1995 with a roster of 8 girls and 5 boys, led by Head Coach Mark Bellinger. Our team has grown to include over 50 student athletes. We are a club sport affiliated with Fox Chapel Area High School and managed by our Board of Directors.

Fox Chapel Crew is not simply a team, but an organization of coaches, students, and parents. FC Crew parents play a fundamental role in the continuing success of the club. We encourage each family to become involved by volunteering in some capacity. Our parents have learned that participating in the crew experience provides a rare opportunity to mingle with their child's friends and share in their child's triumphs, building long-lasting memories. If only a few parents volunteer, the commitment for each is significant. When each family volunteers to do one or two jobs, the involvement is spread among the group, and the rewards are the greatest for all.

Rowing benefits its participants in ways that go far beyond fitness and competition. Discipline, leadership, dedication, teamwork and time management are among the skills developed during participation. Fox Chapel Crew rowers are consistently ranked at the top of their classes and have a record of academic excellence and scholastic leadership.





Where Does All That Money Go?!

These are some of the items that are covered by dues payments:

- Coaches' salaries
- Insurance for our boats and equipment
- Storage fees for our boats
- Membership to Three Rivers Rowing Association for each team member (as a member of FCC)
- Membership to US Rowing Association for our team
- Hotel and transportation fees for each race trip
- Food/snacks at race course
- Race entry fees and other race-related expenses
- Equipment purchase and maintenance

Membership Information

Forms, Waivers, Fees, and Dues

The Fox Chapel Crew, Inc. is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization supported by membership dues and fundraising. Membership forms and waivers are required for each season and are available before the start of practice for each season. All athletes must register with the Athletic Department via Family ID registration on the FCAHS Athletic Department web page by the deadline date set by the school.

Financial Obligations

Without a doubt, running a rowing program is expensive. With limited support from the school district, we raise money through dues and fundraisers. Our fundraising efforts include both mandatory and optional components. Each rower/family is required to complete mandatory fundraising or pay a mandatory fundraising fee as part of their membership. Optional fundraising supports the club and therefore requires help from the entire FC Crew community. FCC also gratefully accepts donations from individuals and businesses who would like to support our team. All donations to Fox Chapel Crew, Inc. are tax deductible.

Payment Plans & Scholarships

The club is willing to arrange payment plans to meet any family's budgeting requirements. Requests for payment plans and for partial scholarships may be made to the club treasurer at the beginning of each season. All information regarding scholarships and payment plans is confidential.

Giant Eagle Gift Cards: An Easy Money Fundraiser

Giant Eagle Gift Cards are the easiest way to help us raise funds. We earn 5% of the face value of every card! The gift cards can be used at Giant Eagle to purchase food, prescription medicines, gift cards to over 50 other stores and just about anything in the store except money orders. Gift cards also can be used at GetGo for gasoline purchases. Fuel perks are still earned on each purchase. Cards come in \$25, \$50, and \$100 denominations. Contact our head of gift card distribution to receive the cards in an easy manner. You can also set up a monthly standing order using a form available from the Giant Eagle Gift Card Chairperson.

Volunteers - Many Hands Make Light Work

Parent Volunteers are critical to the success of this club. We have no professional club managers.

Everything the club does is accomplished by parents like you, most of whom knew nothing about rowing when their children joined the team. You are required to fulfill two volunteer jobs per season or you will be assessed an additional \$100 fee. Volunteering is a great way to meet other parents who are a part of this wonderful sport.

What are these jobs? Is it really okay to signup for any job?

The really hard jobs are filled on a long-term basis by experienced parents. Pulling the trailer, requires a big vehicle with a tow hitch, and mad driving skills otherwise, you can sign up for any job. There is almost always someone with more experience there to help show you the ropes and the volunteer coordinators will explain what you need to know.

How do I Sign up?

You will be invited to sign up for volunteer slots via SignUp Genius. Please be respectful of others and complete the responsibility for which you signed up. Your child and the rest of the team are depending on you. If for some reason you cannot complete your duty, find a friend to fill in for you or let the Volunteer Coordinator know.

Child's Race Time Conflicts with my Volunteer Time

This can be a challenge since generally you sign up before you know what time your child is racing. Generally, the coach will give your child some idea of the time and the regatta website will have a general schedule. Also, all the other parents understand that you want to see your child race and are generally flexible about covering for you briefly if you need to step away to watch your child.

Wait, we Still Need More From You!!!!!!

Food, food, and more food. Boy, can these kids eat. There will be additional SignUp Genius forms circulated for each regatta requesting both perishable and non-perishable foods. We will have menus for each race and need some parents to cook in advance of the race day. If you are providing a main course, you can keep your receipts and submit them to our treasurer for reimbursement. Other food and drinks are donated out of the kindness of your heart.

Practice Information

Practice Facilities

The team trains at the Millvale facility of Three Rivers Rowing Association on the quiet channel beside Herr's Island. Located in Millvale's Riverfront Park under the 40th Street Bridge, the Millvale boat house is actually two buildings, one for storing boats and the other for training. The training center has two indoor rowing tanks that allow 16 people to simulate rowing. It also has a weight room, a large room with indoor rowing machines, lockers, showers, meeting rooms, and room to house equipment.

The boat house is shared by many teams and appropriate security measures should be observed. The locker rooms are open to all who use the facility, and rowers are advised to bring a lock and use a locker during practice. Locks may not be left on lockers overnight, and should be removed at the end of each practice. If a locked locker is not an option, rowers are advised to ask coaches where is the safest place to store valuables during practice. Valuables that have been stolen include goretex team

Fox Chapel Crew members are only permitted to be at or in the boathouse as a part of a coached practice, and an FC coach must always be present at each practice. We are guests at TRRA. Each team member should participate in keeping the facility clean and neat.

Directions to the Facilities

Take the Millvale exit from Route 28 South. Go straight at the STOP sign at the end of the exit ramp. After continuing straight, you must be in the right lane at the first traffic light. After the first light, there are three lanes, and then the lanes split. The far right lane turns right. You do not want to be in this lane. The far left lane must turn left onto Rt. 28 North. You should be in the middle lane after the first light, so that when the lanes split, you are in the right lane, which goes towards Rt. 28 South. Turn left after you pass through the second light. You will go under a railroad underpass and across train tracks at a sign for Millvale Riverfront Park. Once you cross the railroad tracks, you will go under a second overpass. At the STOP sign, turn right into the park and follow the road all the way to the end. You will see a red, white, and blue building which houses Three Rivers Rowing. The building behind the first one you come to houses our boats.

The Rowing Season

The rowing potentially season extends through the entire school year, with summer camps available. Most students commit to the fall and spring racing seasons, and the majority of them participate in winter training. A few substitute another sport for the winter, and some row only spring or fall.

Fall Season

The fall season is composed mostly of training and conditioning in preparation for “head” races and some sprint racing. Head races are timed races in which boats start one at a time down a race course (about 3 miles long), a boat starting about every ten seconds, as opposed to sprint races, which are side-by-side racing and generally take place in the spring. In the fall we attend the Head of the Ohio, our local race on the Allegheny River, and typically participate in some sprint racing with other local high school teams. The Allegheny Boat Race (boys) and Fall Classic (girls) are held in November. Our fall season ends with the Central Catholic Biathlon (indoor ergometer racing and a 6 mile run) in December.

Winter Training

Over the winter, the team works hard on technique and conditioning to build endurance and to be ready for a quick start in the spring racing season. The indoor season primarily consists of training on indoor rowing machines, called ergometers. The team trains by running, rowing on ergs, lifting weights, and rowing in the indoor tanks. Core training, calisthenics, and some yoga and stretching are pivotal.

The team will race at an indoor racing event once during the winter season. Scores compiled from erg training are crucial information for athletes interested in rowing at the college level.

Spring Season

Spring is by far the busiest season for high school rowing, with several sprints races, many of them requiring travel out of town. The season builds in anticipation of the Midwest Scholastic Rowing Championship in May, where the Foxes row against 50+ teams from across Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, and West Virginia. Finishing first or second in a Midwest final qualifies a boat to attend national competition at the Scholastic Rowing Association of America on Memorial Day weekend, the ultimate goal of every Fox Chapel rower and coxswain.

One additional note about the spring schedule: WE WILL HAVE PRACTICE DURING the beginning of SPRING BREAK. Spring break training camp is a very important element of the spring season, and can make or break the team's ability to race successfully in the championship season. Rowers should plan on being present for the practice days scheduled during spring break week.

On The Water

Commitment

Practice is the foundation of success in any sport. Rowing is a unique sport in regards to practice. If just one member of a boat lineup does not attend practice, the other athletes in that boat may be unable to practice. Therefore, all athletes are expected to attend all scheduled practices. Eighty percent of spring practices should be attended by those wanting to participate in the MSRA Championship Regatta in May. The coaching staff recognizes that legitimate conflicts arise and ask that athletes notify coaches in advance of an impending absence. Makeup workouts may be assigned by coaches when practices are missed.

Safety

When rowers train on the water, coaches accompany them in safety launches. The launches are equipped with safety gear and all coaches carry a cell phone. No rower is allowed on the water without the direct supervision of a coach.

Weather

On the water practice continues in all weather conditions when the water is considered safe for rowing by our coaches. Practice may be transferred to land in the case of high water flow, a particular problem that we are most likely to see in the spring. Cancellation of water practice is at the discretion of the coaches. Unless otherwise announced by coaches, athletes should report to the boathouse for practice in any weather. Land practice may replace practice on the water on inclement days. Notice of practice cancellation on school days will be made by an announcement at school and by email or text to the crew.

When classes at FCHS are cancelled or early dismissal from school is made for weather reasons, practice will be cancelled as well.

Swimming Test

Basic swimming skills are required in the unlikely event a rower should go into the water. A swimming test is required for each rower.

Practice Clothes, Water Bottles & Sunscreen

Rowing gear can be as minimal as a pair of shorts, tank top or t shirt, and a pair of socks. Clothing should be close-fitting to minimize wind resistance and to prevent clothes from getting caught in the slides of the seat and oar handles while rowing. Slip-on sandals that may be worn over socks are important. Sandals can be slipped off just before getting into a boat and slipped back on again before carrying the boat up from the docks. Tennis shoes should be brought to every practice in case erging or running is required.

Layering of clothing usually works best for colder weather practices. Rowers will be instructed how to dress for the cold. Rowers are encouraged to always bring a bottle of water, even on cool days when there is not much sun. Sunscreen should be in every rower's bag.

Combination Lock

Be certain to have your athlete bring a combination lock for the lockers in the locker room. Many teams share this space and it is critical to keep valuables safe.

Is it okay to come in the boathouse to get my child after practice?

Not really and not unless the other members of your child's team have left. The coach is probably talking with him or her and your presence can be disruptive and/or embarrassing. It's always a good idea to bring something to read in the car while you wait. Please pick up and drop off rowers in front of the Millvale boathouse, not back by the boat shed. Coaches try very hard to finish practice on time,

Communication

The nature of any team sport makes communication critical. Our VP of Communication will send emails to rowers and parents as necessary to inform rowers and parents of important issues. Coaches will communicate directly with rowers via email or text or tweet as necessary. We treat all athletes as adults as much as possible. When an athlete has a question or needs to miss practice, that communication should go directly from the athlete to the coach, not from parent to coach. Athletes are expected to know the schedule and team rules, own their own participation on the team, and act responsibly towards coaches and teammates. Check out our website (www.foxchapelcrew.org) for more information, including calendars and links to team photos.

Carpooling

Carpools are a necessity in order to transport rowers to and from practices, and are especially critical for ninth and tenth graders. Carpooling is a necessity. Drivers should be aware that, even if their own child is ill or cannot attend practices, other athletes in the carpool still need to get to and from the boathouse, so alternate arrangements must be made when necessary. Due to the nature of water practice and the need to share docks and docking with many other teams, ending exactly on time is difficult even when coaches plan well. Parents who are scheduled to pick up crew members after practice should not be surprised if practice runs a bit long on occasion.

Travel and Racing Information

Races are a part of both fall and spring seasons. Even novice rowers race and compete in events specifically designed for novices. All rowers on the team are expected to attend each race. When a rower is training for a particular season it is assumed he or she will attend the races on the schedule unless the coach has been notified several weeks in advance. If you cannot attend a race for any reason, please notify your coach as soon as possible.

Fox Chapel Crew travels as a team, with parent drivers or a charter bus. We work to hard keep travel costs per rower as low as possible. Rowers are never permitted to drive themselves to an out of town regatta.

All rowers must travel with the team. If a parent or guardian wants to make special arrangements for an athlete to travel home from an event separate from the team, arrangements must be made with the Travel Coordinator prior to the event. A release form must be signed and given to the Travel Coordinator BEFORE the date of the race. The athlete can only leave the event separately from the team when a Coach and the travel coordinator have signed the form and released the athlete from the event. Traveling home separately from the team is discouraged as all athletes are responsible for de-rigging the boats and getting them onto the trailer. This is an important responsibility in being part of a team.

Trip Itineraries

The Travel Coordinator will make all necessary arrangements for crew participants' transportation, accommodations, and restaurant reservations. Information containing departure and return times, what to bring, where we are going, and where we are staying, will be emailed to parents approximately a week before the trip. For economical reasons we attempt to do many out-of-town regattas in one day, leaving in the early morning and returning in the late evening.

Chaperones and Travel Rules

Chaperones experience a most rewarding volunteer experience. Chaperones are entrusted with the safety and well-being of the rowers. In the absence of coaches, the Travel Coordinator and Chaperones act as team authorities. Chaperones are to be respected by athletes and should always respect athletes in return. For out-of-town regattas, we require at least two adult chaperones to ride the bus.

When staying overnight, students are housed four to a room. Room assignments for rowers will be set prior to the trip. Rowers must lodge in assigned rooms. No room switching is permitted. No girls are permitted in boys' rooms, and no boys in girls' rooms. Parents are not permitted in rower rooms.

All rowers are required to be in rooms at a time set by coaches at the Team meeting. Lights are out at the time set by coaches at the team meeting. All rooms are to be left in a neat condition when we leave.

All rowers are to recognize that their appearance and conduct represent our team, school, coaches and parents.

Packing for the Regatta

Be Prepared! Consolidation is the key to ensuring everything that went to the regatta comes back home. Don't bring anything of value.

General

- Pack everything in a big gym bag and line the inside of the gym bag with a plastic bag and pack all clothes inside so if it rains, the nice dry clothes won't get wet.
- Pack a big garbage bag, preferably clear, that your rower could put their whole gym bag inside, so if it's really pouring it won't sit in a puddle.
- If your rower brings a phone, put it in a Ziploc bag—again, in case of rain.

Items to Pack for Racing

- Uni or tank and spandex
- Long sleeved non-cotton shirt—to row in on cold or wet days

Items to Pack for Before and After Race to Avoid Getting Chilled

- Sweatpants
- Sandals
- Fleece jacket
- Extra socks—hiking type or non-cotton
- Rain jacket/pants
- Extra shirt—non cotton
- Towel
- Hat—baseball cap for sunny days, warm hat for cold days
- Warm Jacket & Gloves
- Sneakers for warm up run & second pair of shoes for wet weather- rain boots etc.

Other

- Sleeping bag and pillow (in waterproof bag)
- Spending money for food on the road & to purchase regatta paraphernalia
- Something to pass the time (music, cards. HOMEWORK)
- Water bottle **(we are phasing out having disposable water bottles at races)**
- Sunscreen/ Lip balm

Label, Label, Label

Your athlete's brand new Crew Clothing looks like an awful lot like the other 50 rowers clothing making the trip. The solution? Label! Those headphones every kid has for the bus ride? Label! Uniform? Definitely label! Your efforts will save you the cost of replacing items.

Typical Rower Race Day

A one-day race day usually starts very early; the bus will leave from FCHS around 3-4am and arrive on site around 6-6:30 am. Rowers will gather at the boat trailer to unload, rig and meet with their coaches.

Chaperones will help the food committee set up breakfast and put up the tents. When rowers meet with their coaches they learn their race times, plans, etc. and are told when to meet back at the boats prior to racing. Many rowers will race several races on race day depending on the length of the race, regatta schedule, and equipment demand. Coxswains are in charge of keeping their particular boats together.

Towards the end of the regatta, the team will begin to de-rig the boats and load them onto the trailer. Parents/chaperones will break down the tents and pack up the equipment trailer. This process usually takes at least one hour after the final event. The entire team travels home from the regatta together unless the head chaperone permits athletes to ride home with parents by a pre-arranged plan, which includes a coach and the Travel Coordinator signing the release form.

Boat lineups

Coaches spend weeks working on boat lineups. Coaches need to balance between trying to allow each athlete to race, and finding the fastest lineups to put in a race. Especially in the Spring season, as we work towards qualifying for SRAA Nationals, setting lineups becomes more competitive. Making lineups can be a difficult task for coaches. Athlete attendance at practice, athletic ability, daily work ethic, the will to improve, coach-ability, attitude, technique and fitness, erg scores and ability to make a positive effect on boat speed are all coaching considerations for seating in a boat. **Lineups are a coaching decision and are not subject to debate.**



What Spectators Should Bring

Here are some items you may want to bring to a regatta.

- Chairs to spend lazy afternoons by the water during regattas
- Binoculars, if you have them
- Sun Glasses and a hat and SUNSCREEN
- Blanket
- A book or an iPod
- Camera, the team needs pictures of the novices in action
- Rain gear, including boots
- Bicycles work well at many venues so you can see more of the race
- More clothes than you think you'll need. The temps can change dramatically throughout the day.

The Ins and Outs of Regattas

Your first regatta can be a little overwhelming as there are a lot of racers and spectators. Most regattas are free for spectators and are a lot of fun to attend. Look for our food tent or the crowd of people in red and black clothing.

Race Information for Parents

Each regatta follows a similar format but each venue has its own schedule. Most of the regattas have event information online. Coaches will register boats for specific events in the regatta several weeks before a race. A heat sheet will be created by the regatta organizers that will post the start times for each heat or event, and will be available on the regatta website a day prior to the event.

The final race schedules are posted a day or two before the event. It is only then that we have a good idea of when each rower will race. Because rowing is very weather-dependent, delays in the event schedule are likely in many weather conditions. It is for that reason that we encourage rowers not to plan other activities on race days. When we travel, our return times to Pittsburgh are only estimates, and rowers will call when they are about an hour from town. If we are going to be late returning home we will certainly have the rowers call parents.

Is it okay to go over to the boat trailer to wish my child and the team good luck?

No. The kids and the coaches are busy before the race and the area around the trailer is generally very crowded. Although you stopping by will only take a few seconds, there are eight other kids on that boat and several other boats – a parade of well-meaning parents is not really helpful. Also, the same applies for congratulating the kids after a race – the kids will return to the food tent as soon as they are through with the post-race activities.

Arrive Early!

Parking is often an adventure at regattas. If there is a race you want to see, get there in time to find a parking spot, walk to the water and scope out the best viewing spot. The time it can take to do this should not be underestimated. And for planning purposes, assume everything will be running on time, even though you'll soon learn that's rarely the case.

The boats are really far away- how can I find FC?

If you printed out the heat sheet from the regatta website prior to the race, you can check a specific race to see which lane FC is in. If you did not, there is usually a parent around who has and will let everyone know.

Second, every rowing team has their oars painted in a unique way and wears a unique team uniform. Generally, these designs can be seen from fairly far away. Below is an image of that shows how the Fox Chapel Oars look.



Who is ahead? It is so hard to tell!

This is one of the real challenges in being a rowing spectator. Binoculars will help, choosing a landmark on the opposite shore and trying to see who passes it when can help. Some parents will move farther down the race course toward the finish line. And remember – the races are long, the boat that is ahead early or midway through the race may not be by the time they get to the finish line.

One parent explained it like this, “If they look like they are not working that hard and you don’t see a lot of extra motion or splashing, they are probably doing well. If it looks like they are working really hard, aren’t moving together and you see a lot of splashing – they are probably having a rough day.”

What is a Head Race?

There are two main types of races – sprints and head races. A sprint is what you think of as a race – everyone lines up at the start and the first one to cross the finish line wins. Sprints for scholastic races are 1500 meters.

A head race is a race in which the rowers all start at the same place but at staggered times. The first boat goes and then the next boat chases it down the course while in turn being chased by the third boat and so on. You generally do not know who wins until the end when the times are announced. Head races are pretty boring to watch – the only excitement is when one of the boats catches the boat ahead of it. A head race is generally longer than a sprint (about 3 miles).

Are races ever canceled due to inclement weather?

Yes, and this is not unusual, many times related to high winds. Generally a regatta will proceed unless and until the officials determine that it is unsafe. Sometimes a decision will be made that it is not safe for novices, but is okay for more experienced rowers. We have all been at regattas in the rain and the cold – so remember, bring clothes appropriate to the weather and bring more layers than you think you will need.

Is there a junior varsity (JV) boat?

Junior varsity is an event class in many races. The novice teams are made up of boys and girls new to rowing. After their first year of rowing (sometimes sooner), a rower will move up to varsity. Junior events exclude seniors, and JV may in

Should I yell out my child's name when they go past?

Probably not. Rowing is a team sport and the kids learn to take pride in their accomplishments as a team. Generally, there will be groups of Fox Chapel parents, siblings, grandparents and friends in groups along the shoreline, screaming, “GO FC,” “Let’s go, boys (or girls, as the case may be) and similar sentiments. Cow Bells are also popular but discouraged by coaches. All of us cheer for all the kids, the idea is to be the loudest cheering section at the regatta!

Is it Okay to Eat at the Fox Chapel Tent?

Yes, the food quantities are estimated assuming that families and other guests will be eating. Some key items are usually held back for the kids – who generally will eat little or nothing prior to racing. Please come and hang out with the other parents at the food tent – it is one of the real pleasures of regatta days!

Can I Bring Alcohol to the Regatta?

No.

Questions Every Non-Rower Has

How can rowing practice be on the land?

Rowing involves stamina, strength and technique. Running, weightlifting and rowing on a rowing machine help to build these. The work done on land helps to maximize the experience of being on the water. Also, a lot of the team bonding happens during these on land activities.

Why do kids roll their eyes if I mimic rowing by moving my arms back and forth or comment on how they must be building up their arm muscles?

Although it is not obvious when you are watching someone row, rowing is a pushing sport not a pulling sport. Most of the power comes from the rower's legs (about 60%), followed by the core muscles (about 30%) and the arms (about 10%). Since only rowers know this, they feel much smarter than you when you talk about their arms (which ARE getting much stronger by the way!).

What is an erg?

An ergometer or "erg" is a rowing machine. Erging is rowing on a rowing machine. The rowing machine measures the time you rowed and how much power you generated and calculates a presumed distance rowed from that information.

Can you really learn to row on a machine?

You can't learn everything but you can learn a lot. The erg allows you to get a feel for how the parts of the stroke fit together without having to worry about the motion of the boat or coordinating your actions with another rower. Also, erging builds stamina and strength.

How come when I ask my child about practice, (s)he starts spouting off random strings of numbers?

Honestly, many of us spend over a year just nodding our heads and trying to judge from our child's expression whether we should look happy or sympathetic.

So your child probably says something like:

"We did 2 times 3K and for the last 500 of the second piece I pulled a 2:15:8." Or "we did 5 by 5's and I broke 2".

When the kids practice indoors on the erg, the coaches instruct them to do sets of exercises (called "pieces") that are either to see how fast (s)he can do a preset distance or how much distance (s)he can cover in a given amount of time. Usually a piece is done multiple times in a single practice with short rests in between.

- The first number is the number of times the piece is done.

- When a number has a “K” in it – the piece is a test of how fast your child can row a certain number of kilometers (rowing always measures in kilometers or meters). So in the example above the kids rowed three thousand meters two times.
- When there is not a K after the second number – the piece is a test of how far your child can row in a certain number of minutes. In the case above they are rowing for five minutes five times.
- The last number represents the time it takes to row 500 meters (also called a “split”). The time is measured in minutes, then seconds, then tenths of a second. In the first example, it took the rower 2 minutes, 15.8 seconds to row the last 500 meters. In the second example, the rower had some portion of the piece where s/he was rowing at a pace at which s/he would complete 500 meters in less than 2 minutes.

What is a 2K test and why is my child FREAKING out about it?

A 2K test is the standard method of comparing the power of various rowers; it is sort of the SAT of rowing. It is a test of how fast a rower can go 2000 meters on a rowing machine. Although a good 2K time does not guarantee that someone will be a good rower on the water – it is indicative of their power which is a very critical element of rowing.

It is often dreaded by rowers because, first, it is HARD. Rowers are expected to give it everything they have – imagine sprinting for seven to ten minutes! Second, it is fairly public – your teammates know how well or poorly you do. Finally, it is a key element in how coaches evaluate rowers and is used by them to help determine what boats rowers will be placed in.

What's a PR?

PR is an abbreviation for Personal Record. It refers to the best time a rower has gotten on the erg for a particular type of piece. A PR is always good news. A PR on a 2K is great news!

Practice on the Water

Rowing shells (boats) are called by the number of rowers in the boat. Most novice rowers row in an eight person boat (“an eight”) so all the following answers refer to that size of boat.

Starting Line



Finish Line way the heck that way!

What does it mean that my child is a “starboard”? A “port”?

Starboard is a nautical term that mean the right side of a boat from the boat's point of view. Because rowers sit backwards in the boat, this can be confusing since the starboard side of the boat is on the rower's left. Port is the term for the left side of the boat (on the rower's right).

Each rower uses one oar. Rowers whose oars extend from the right side of the boat are called starboard rowers or “starboards”. Rowers whose oars extend from the left side of the boat are called port rowers or “ports”.

Most rowers feel more comfortable on one side or another and usually settle into being a port or starboard rower. It is not uncommon for a coach to switch a rower from one side to the other – especially when the rower is a novice.

I was watching practice and only six of the rowers were rowing. Why?

The rowing stroke is a highly precise and technical set of movements and can be challenging to learn. It is more difficult to learn if the boat is leaning to one side or the other. For this reason, one or more pairs of rowers may be asked to sit out for a period of time to “set” the boat – i.e., help stabilize it - while the others work on their stroke. The people sitting out are rotated so everyone gets more or less the same amount of time rowing.

Why does my child row in a different seat every day?

In rowing the idea is for all eight rowers to be rowing in perfect unison, with no motions that interfere with the forward motion of the boat. That being said, the different positions in the boat have slightly different roles to play. Although, any rower should be able to row any position, the coaches will switch the rowers among seats to find out which rowers excel in which positions and which combination of rowers can move the boat fastest.

All the rowers need a combination of strengths: technique, rhythm, power, balance, and the ability to adapt to the motion of others. Each seat makes slightly different demands on the strengths of the individual:

- Eight seat, also called stroke, sits in the rear of the boat (or “stern”) nearest the coxswain (see below). Since everyone sits backwards this is the rower that all the other rowers must follow in order to row together. The stroke must have strong technique (since the others are matching his or her motion) and a good sense of rhythm (since s/he is responsible for adjusting the stroke rate in response to instructions of the coxswain).
- Seven seat rows on the opposite side of the boat as stroke (i.e., if the stroke is a starboard, seven seat will be a port and vice versa) and, like stroke, needs strong technique plus the ability to mirror the motions of the stroke (but on the opposite side). All the rowers on who row on the same side as the seven seat mirror his or her actions. Stroke and seven seat together are called stern pair.

- The four middle rowers (six, five, four and three seat), while still demonstrating the combination of strengths, are generally the most powerful rowers, with six and five the stronger pair. You will sometimes hear the middle rowers referred to as the "engine room."
- Bow pair (pronounced bough) is made up of two seat and bow seat (who is for some reason not called one seat) and amongst the pair's other strengths, excel at "setting" or stabilizing the boat to ensure effective forward motion.

How come my child is working out on land today and many of the others are on the water?

There are many reasons why a rower may not be "boated" (assigned to a boat) on any given day. First, there are only certain number of seats and not everyone can go out every day. Coaches try to be fair in making sure that everyone gets their share of time on the water. Second, for safety reasons, there needs to be a certain number of coaches out on the water per number of boats. With brand new novices, there are fewer rowers on the water per coach. Finally, the coaches will use their discretion in whom to place in a boat and someone who misses practice, is chronically late or slacks off during practice is less likely to get put on a boat.

What does a coxswain (Pronounced Coxin) do? It looks pretty easy.

It is NOT easy. The coxswain or "cox" is the person in charge of the boat and the rowers, who sits in the stern (back) of the boat and is the only person without an oar and the only person facing forward. Coxing is hard because there are so many varied responsibilities:

- Steering – an eight person boat is almost 60 feet long – longer than anything most of us have ever driven. Now imagine driving something that long where there is a delay in the steering, may have more power on one side (which pushes your vehicle to the opposite side), is greatly affected by wind and tide, and instead of an accelerator and brakes you have to control speed by telling your vehicle to speed up/slow down and use more/less power. Oh, and did I mention that you are probably short and can't see the front of your vehicle over the heads of the eight people in front of you but must avoid hitting logs and other debris at all costs?
- Running drills – At typical drill in a boat will be to have six rowers do one part of the stroke for X strokes, then add in another part of the stroke for X strokes, until the rowers are doing the full stroke. Pairs of rowers are switched in and out so that every rower does the drill three times and sets the boat one time. The cox (while still steering) has to keep track of the number of strokes and switch rowers in and out of the drill. Alternatively, a drill will be for rowers to row at a set rate (e.g., 20 strokes per minutes, and after X strokes increase the stroke rate to 22 strokes per minutes.) In this case the cox (still steering) is counting strokes and watching the monitor to keep track of the stroke rate.
- "Coach in the Boat" – the coxswain is also responsible for giving feedback to the rowers. S/he can tell whether they are moving together, whether they are at the correct stroke rate, whether one side of the boat is rowing more powerfully, etc. Additionally, the coxswain is expected to be able to motivate the rowers – knowing what to say when they are ready to give up, or bringing them back into a unified

motion when they lose focus. In a race, the coxswain is responsible for the execution of the race plan and for making adjustments to reflect the actions of his or her own rowers and that of the competitor boats.

- Safety of the Boat – the coxswain has overall responsibility for the safety of the boat when it is on the water, coming into dock and being moved on land. The cox is the person you will see walking by the boat when the other are carrying it, giving instructions to the rowers to make sure they are all moving together.

Why do I sometimes see the coxswain raising his or her hand while in the boat?

The coxswain raises his or her hand to signal to a coach or race official that they have heard an instruction and understand it. In races, the coxswain will raise a hand to let officials know that the boat is not ready to begin the race. After a race, a coxswain may raise his or her hand to indicate a problem with a crew member or to protest the results of a race.

Is the boat likely to tip over?

No. Most people go years (and perhaps their whole rowing career) without having a boat tip over. Also the eight is the most stable type of boat which is one of the reasons it is used for beginners. Although the boat is thin, the oars extending out on either side provide stability and make it fairly difficult to tip over an eight person boat.

Why does my child refuse to wear gloves when it is cold?

Rowers don't wear gloves. The explanation is usually something along the lines of, "it ruins the feel of and connection with the oar."

I asked my child if they had paddled well during practice and s/he got mad at me. Why?

When rowers are told to paddle, it means that they can row slowly and without much pressure. A paddle is a rest stroke. To imply that someone was paddling when they should have been rowing is something of an insult – sort of like asking a sprinter how they enjoyed their stroll around the track.

What if I have more questions?

There is lots of good rowing information on line, you can ask your parent coordinator, ask another parent at a regatta or after practice – or ask your child!