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The St. Louis Rowing Club News



Spring Rowing

The club is growing. The news is good. And it's no wonder. Our coaching is top notch. The boathouse is gorgeous. Rowers are nearly race-ready. To develop as rowers, we clearly need coaching. The prospect of losing the head coach, John Wetzstein, demands immediate action from club members. For this reason, Steve Giddings has urged all club members to demonstrate support for John Wetzstein's visa application by writing elected officials in the US Congress. Please do. URLs follow.

Senator Bond

<http://bond.senate.gov/contact/contactme.cf>

Senator Talent

<http://talent.senate.gov/contact/index.html>

Congressman Clay

<http://www.house.gov/clay/contact.htm>

Congressman Akin

<http://www.house.gov/akin/emailtodd.html>

Your request need not be lengthy. You may also want to thank Senator Talent and Congressman Akin, who have already written detailed letters supporting the appeal. Steve will update us on further action alert.

Boathouse Update

St. Louis Rowing Club is now in the enviable position of occupying our wonderful new boathouse. The construction is mostly completed. Work to be done includes new vertical slats in the trailer storage area and final resolution of the mottled finish on the concrete exterior of the building.

As part of the ongoing use of the boathouse, Washington University and SLRC are completing an operating agreement. This will set out the various responsibilities and duties of the two parties to run the building and site in the most effective manner.

Finally (and I know I am preaching to the choir), SLRC has to raise the money to pay for our wonderful new space. Our long-term ability to own the space, to run an effective and growing program, and to purchase new equipment is directly related to our ability to raise money. The need is now, and it is critical and important. The formal fundraising effort has begun. All members will be contacted.

--Chuck Schagrin

Captain's Report

Now that spring rowing is here, it is time to review some basic rules for keeping the equipment in good working order. All the manufacturers say the single most important factor in keeping their products going without breakdowns is cleaning.

Wiping down the exterior of a boat is just the first step. Cleaning all the moving parts in the seat and slide assemblies and the oarlocks is even more critical. Using lubricants is NOT recommended, as they attract and hold dirt. I know it is a pain to go to slings on a regular basis, but it takes a lot less time from rowing than a major failure while on the water. Also, it is a scientifically proven fact that clean boats are 20% faster.

Please use the logbook to report damage to boats or items in the boathouse. When making notes, please print legibly. And be as specific as possible about any damage.

As we complete the work schedule and discussions with Washington University and the parks department, we will know better club requirements. I'll keep everyone informed about the needs for volunteers.

Thanks to those from the SLRC, Wash U. and St. Louis U., who helped move items from near the green gas shed into the pen. The place is really starting to look great.

I know everyone will be bringing their friends and family to visit our new rowing center. Please help keep it looking like the premier rowing site it is.

--Rein Zeidler

Lieutenant's Report

Attention Rowers:

Use the logbook to record time on the lake in club boats. This is extremely important in terms of the club's insurance coverage.

--Andrew Lambert

What I Learned at Camp

The Stroke

This is a continuation of my thoughts on the sculling stroke. It can pretty much carried over to the sweep oar, with the understanding that the geometry of the strokes are a bit different, the arc of the sweep oar constrained to a greater degree. The sweep inboard comes completely across the body. Because the catch and release angles are less acute in sweep rowing than in sculling, attention to the proper timing of the catch and release becomes even more important for sweep rowing efficiency.

This year, the training focus was on building core strength. The Canadians, Brits, and Australians have moved their emphasis in weight training away from arms and legs to hips, glutes, and abs. The legs naturally have the strongest musculature in the body. And the core musculature has to be built up some to absorb the impact of the leg drive and carry through the connection between the foot stretchers and the oar handle and pins without dissipation of force. Out with weights. In with Pilates, Swiss ball, and yoga.

The technique emphasis was on the timing of the catch and the release. I have been studying video clips by the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Western Ontario. These are 4-7 sec .avi files, 240 of them. If you

view them in sequence, as a play list, the remarkable thing is the constancy of rhythm. The rowers are sweep and scull, men and women, juniors to Olympians, side views, front views, overheads. The styles, strength, and accuracy of the blade work differ significantly. But the rhythm of the stroke, allowing the appropriate timing of the catch and the release, is virtually the same in every rower.

So what is the correct timing? When do you release? When do you catch? How do you find this rhythm? Some people call it swing and talk about it as some mystical experience that can be found only with Zen-like detachment and without conscious effort. Perhaps. But there are some practical hints to help you find the Tao.

You must start with a stable platform. You must sit up, and body angle must be established at the hips. The chest should be out, the shoulders relaxed, down and back.

First, sit at the finish, blades square and buried, leaning back to your natural finish angle. That is the angle you can maintain without losing connection.

How do you know when you have lost connection? It is when your weight comes down on your butt. If you wait until the weight comes off of your feet, it is too late. Weight transfer has happened, you are already too late. You have plopped into your seat and forced the bow of the boat down into the water, creating check, interrupting that blessed run that allows the boat to move forward through the recovery without loss of momentum. So, the release should occur just before connection is lost.

In sculling, your elbows should be out slightly from the body; so, your forearms are parallel with the handles. You can just push your forearms down to effect the release. Square the blade by opening your fingers and rolling the handle with your thumbs, which are over the ends of the handles. Push your arms away at the same speed that you drew in at the finish, not faster. "Quick hands away" as a concept is a misplacement of emphasis. It should be "quick hands at the finish". Draw in quickly at the end of the stroke to maintain that connection. Then push away at the same speed. Your hands away establishes the rhythm of the recovery.

Once your arms are straight, start to establish your body angle by leaning forward from the hips. You should feel weight transfer to the front of the seat and your heels pushing down in your shoes. Don't break your knees until you have your body angle. Once that angle is established, let the momentum of the boat carry you gently into the stern without more movement at the hips.

You should be squared up well before the catch. You should start your catch as your weight transfers from your heels to your toes as you move forward. At the same time, the seat wheels are making their last half turn towards the stern. The blade should slice into the water.

At the catch, don't push legs down until you feel the weight on the blades. The catch should be rock solid. It should feel very heavy. If your legs go down quickly at the catch, your timing is not correct. You have not established a lock on the water, and you are just pushing your seat back as you are rowing in with your blades. You should be strong at the catch. Time its application correctly. The catch really is the final portion of the recovery.

Starts

You can't win a race at the start, but you can lose it. Some facts. A boat ahead at the 500 meter mark wins at the elite level 85% of the time. A club-level boat ahead at the 500 meter mark wins 90% of the time. The number is higher for 1000 meter races.

The object of the start is to get the boat up to racing speed as quickly and as efficiently as is possible. Typically this takes 5-7 strokes depending on the type of boat, experience, and the strength of the crew.

There should be minimal body swing with the first several strokes. The motion makes the boat bounce up and down. You want it to go forward. Load before you pull. Otherwise, you just check the boat.

The first stroke should be long, using a squeeze to set the boat in the water. Grip the water with your blades. Pull too hard, and the blade rips through water and the boat stands still-- similar to a drag racer who breaks the wheels loose at the start. You must maintain traction.

The second stroke should be quick, half slide. But you should still take the time to catch the water and get a grip.

The third stroke should be longer on the slide, but still with little body swing. The fourth stroke should be full slide or close to it, still no swing. The next 5 to ten strokes are again fast and hard, with less back than usual.

After that, there should be a transition to full stroke, but maintain pressure and boat speed. This transition is crucial. Here you should be finding a rhythm and taking a ten to concentrate on the finish, sending the boat away with each stroke. You want to maintain boat speed while decreasing your stroke rate, but at the same time lengthening. You want to maintain the pace you establish until your finishing sprint.

Exercises

We don't practice starts nearly enough. Incorporating starts into every AT and interval work out by doing flying starts may improve race results. Focus on blade work and legs. Load your weight properly. Practice starts with your feet out of the stretchers.

For timing of the catch, row with square blades. Takes practice. To feel the load on the blade at the catch, do this exercise. Put your blade in the water, squared, at the finish. Push the blade in the water forward to the catch (as in backing but keep the blade in the upright position). Come to the catch position. Feel the load build on the blades as the boat moves backward while you are sitting at the catch. Wait until the load is heavy. Then stand on the foot stretchers. Every catch should feel like this.

For timing of the finish, row with feet out of the stretchers. And row at a rating as low as you can (without falling out of the boat). It takes about 5000 strokes for this to become second nature. I do almost all of my steady state work with my feet out.

Energy Considerations

The muscles have 3 different energy systems. Although we talk about them as being used in sequence, their use overlaps substantially (that is, each subsequent one kicks in before the prior one is totally depleted).

All of these systems use ATP as an energy source (ATP stands for adenosine triphosphate). ATP is broken down to ADP plus inorganic phosphate. The energy released is turned into mechanical force by the contractile proteins in muscle cells.

ATP can be generated in muscle by three different systems. For the first, creatine phosphate donates a phosphate to ADP to make ATP. This is a "freebie" because the end products of the reaction don't build up. Unfortunately, this energy source is available only for about 10-20 seconds. That's why you can pull really hard once or twice or three times without feeling tired or becoming short of breath. This is also referred to as the alactic anaerobic system.

The second system relies on the conversion of glucose to lactic acid. This doesn't require oxygen, but it isn't very efficient. For each glucose molecule, you get a net production of 2 ATPs. You also get accumulation of lactate, and its obligate cation, hydrogen (translate acid).

This is also referred to as the lactic anaerobic system. Acid accumulation is what makes you air-hungry and generally feel like s*** when you are working really hard. Though you haven't yet used up much oxygen, the excess acid in your system stimulates your brain to make you breathe hard.

When you breathe in and out, you blow off excess carbon dioxide, effectively removing free hydrogen ions from your system. It is the excess acid that makes you ask what the h*** you are doing in that boat and makes you want to stop. Most folks can keep this up despite the lactate/hydrogen ion level that develops for about 60-90 seconds full bore. This gets you to the 250-300 meter mark.

Just when you feel at your worst, your aerobic metabolism comes to the rescue. The aerobic system is much more efficient than anaerobic systems, but it requires oxygen (therefore, the continued requirement for heavy breathing). At full intensity, the aerobic system relies mostly on glucose (sugar). Instead of making 2 ATPs for each glucose molecule, you make 37-38 (depending on who you believe). Instead of making lactate, you make carbon dioxide and water (just like hydrogen powered cars).

This conversion requires a lot of oxygen. The oxygen delivery and oxygen extraction systems become limiting, so you can't do as much work as quickly using the aerobic system as the anaerobic system. The aerobic system also

burns up that excess lactate, which is why you begin to feel a little better after the first 400-500 meters. You want to maintain your pace during that transition. This takes more than a little will power and a lot of faith. Let me catch my breath and I'll see you on the water.

--Steve Giddings

SLU Crew Race Update

On March 28, SLU competed in the Washington University Invitational against Wash U, Creighton, Murray State, North Park, and the Universities of Missouri and Arkansas.

Of the five races that it entered, SLU was third in three (MN4+, WN4+, MV4+) and fourth in another (WN8+)...a good start, but there's obviously room to improve.

The SLU Crew plans to race in the Upper Midwest Collegiate Sprints in Omaha, the Mid-American Collegiate Rowing Association Regatta in Athens, OH and the Dad Vail Regatta in Philadelphia before its season comes to an end at the beginning of May.

St. Louis Sprints Race Results

The Fifth Annual St. Louis Sprints Regatta was April 17, 2004. All events were for juniors and were run on the 1500 meter course at Creve Coeur Lake. Crews from the Tulsa Rowing Club, the Rochester Rowing Club, and the Kansas State Rowing Association competed against SLRC entries.

First place finishers for St. Louis were the women's varsity eight, women's novice eight, women's single, and men's novice four.

Race results are posted on the SLRC website: http://www.slrc.net/events/stlouis_sprints.html

Congratulations!

Summer Race Schedule

April 24, 25, Oak Ridge, TN
Oak Ridge Scholastics (Juniors)

May 1, Columbus, OH
Governor's Cup Regatta (Juniors)

May 15-16, Cincinnati, OH
MJRA Championships (Juniors)

June 27, St. Louis, MO
Gateway Regatta (Juniors and Masters)

July 17-18, Chicago, IL
Chicago Sprints (Juniors and Masters)

July 31, Indianapolis, IN
Mid West Masters Regionals (Masters)

August 3-8, St. Catharines, Ontario

Royal Canadian Henley (Juniors and Masters)

August 19-22, Oak Ridge, TN
Masters Nationals (Masters)

Creve Coeur Lake Closings

The lake will be closed for other events on the following summer days: June 4 – 6, July 30 – 31, and August 18 – 23. No rowing will be permitted on these days.

Masters Race Sign-Ups

A sign-up sheet is posted at the boathouse. Masters are asked to sign up for races. John will set line-ups. The idea is that rowers will practice in set boats.

Once boats are set, master rowers will be expected to appear at every practice. If you are a master rower who is assigned a boat and cannot attend practice, notify John. John's email: johnniecanuck@hotmail.com

Calling All Coxswains

The Masters need coxswains. Will train. Requirements: None. If you know anyone interested in coxing, please tell John W.

Regatta Commitment Forms

For those of you parents with junior rowers who plan to race this summer, please return regatta commitment forms. You will be charged the cost of every regatta unless the Boosters have a record of your races.

Learn-to-Row

Our annual Learn-To-Row program for adults will be held in June, July, and August. Each session will be two weekday evenings and Saturday mornings. If you know someone interested in Learn-To-Row, please have them look on the SLRC website at www.slrc.net/classes/ltr04.html or call Scott Allison at (314) 965-9456. The classes cost \$200.00 this year.

Of course, we'll be looking for volunteers to teach the LTR classes. Please contact John Wetzstein if you can help.

--Scott Allison

National Learn-to-Row Day

The club will once again participate in USRowing's National Learn-to-Row Day. Clubs across the country will celebrate on June 12. The new boathouse will provide a terrific setting for this year's event. Please think about volunteering some of your time to make the National Learn-to-Row day a success.

--Scott Allison

Gateway 2004

The St. Louis Gateway Regatta will be Sunday, June 27. John Mason will co-chair the event with Megan Mraz.

This year's event coincides with the 100th anniversary of the 1904 Olympics, which had rowing events at Creve Coeur Lake. We hope to host many of the clubs from years past, and maybe a few new clubs.

As expected, we can never have enough volunteers. Any help you can provide will be greatly appreciated. I will provide detailed job descriptions in the upcoming weeks. If anyone has suggestions from past experience on how to improve the regatta, this is the time to let us know. I'll keep everyone posted as the regatta approaches.

--*John Mason*

CPR/AED Class

We had a great turnout for the March 20 CPR/AED class. Twenty-one people were certified in CPR and the new AED. Thanks to our instructors, Erin Hines and Meg Reisenberg. Great job!

Now that we're in the boathouse, the AED will have a designated location. It will be clearly marked. With our awareness up about the importance of knowing CPR, we plan to repeat the CPR class yearly.

--*Colleen Schulte*

Silent Auction

Every spring, the Boosters sponsor an annual dinner for athletes and their parents. This spring, it will be at Our Lady of the Pillar, 401 S. Lindbergh Blvd. on May 28. For the first time, we are preceding the dinner with a silent auction fundraiser.

We are asking club members to make gift donations. Gifts are tax deductible. If you wish, proceeds from your gift go to the Boathouse Fund. Please donate by May 1, if possible, so your items can be included in the printed auction sheet.

To contribute, please call Barb Johnson at (314) 862-0973. Thanks in advance.

--*Pat Hoye*

SLRC Boosters Recruiting

A big THANK YOU to all parents and rowers who helped at Sprints. On April 17, the Boosters also hosted a recruiting event. About 5 interested juniors and 3 adults visited the boathouse. Rowers showed them equipment and answered questions. The Boosters are hopeful that events like this will encourage visitors to support the club, with membership and donations.

The new Booster board will be elected in August, as the school year begins. Many of this year's board are parents of senior athletes and will be gone next year.

We need your help. Please consider volunteering. We need a treasurer, vice president, someone to update the parent handbook, and someone to solicit volunteers. We are also considering a grill team to prepare food at the away regattas.

If any of these jobs appeal to you, please contact Pat Hoye at 636-391-9633.

Thank You Kathy Giddings !!!

“St. Louis Rowing Club (SLRC) and The Washington University (WU) hereby confirm the understandings set forth below with respect to the proposal for development and financing of a shared community boathouse at Creve Coeur Lake.”

So begins the *Memorandum of Understanding*. This document, along with the Ownership and Operation Agreement, are the contracts on which the Community Rowing Center is based. This is a momentous occasion! The boathouse is built, and now we are “legal.”

While we all watched the building of the boathouse, few of us can appreciate the work required to support this project. And even fewer of us appreciate the thought and attention to detail of this work.

Thank you, Kathy Giddings, for the professionalism and extraordinary generosity you have displayed in handling these complex legal matters for the club. Your tireless efforts and dedication to this project are truly appreciated. We also thank your firm, The Stolar Partnership, for its support.

--Cathy Chamberlin

Boathouse Capital Campaign Committee: Moving Forward

The BCCC had its organizational meeting March 9. The enthusiasm and expertise this group brings to fundraising is truly inspirational. We've begun mapping strategies by looking at masters, boosters, SLU, and corporate and private giving.

Serving on this committee are (Boosters) Kathy Dabrowski, Gary Goldstein, Donna Harper, Mark Jordan, and Joe Rechter and (Masters) Dave Bentzinger, Dean Farmer, Margie Freivogel, Debbie Hall, Nancy Hazelwood, Chuck Schagrin, Bruce White, Steve Giddings, and Linda Greensfelder.

To date, two subcommittees have been formed: (And this is just the beginning!!)

Donor Recognition Subcommittee: This group is developing proposals for donor recognition at the boathouse. (See following newsletter article.) Serving on this subcommittee are (Boosters) Joan Bialzak and Dick Lammert and (Masters) Kathy Bosin, Kathy Halley, Michael Adrio, and Ann Samuels.

Marketing Materials Development: This group is reviewing marketing materials to be used in soliciting corporate donors. They will be updating our presentation to make it as polished, concise, and compelling as possible. Serving on this subcommittee are (booster) Gary Goldstein and (masters) Michael Adrio and Debbie Hall.

The ideas, energy and enthusiasm of the entire club membership are essential to the success of our fundraising efforts. In the short time I've been working on this project, I've been delighted by the willingness of members to get involved and give so generously of their time and talents. So when the phone rings or an email arrives or a friend corners you with a request to help on a project, please continue this wonderful trend by saying “Yes!”

And please don't forget to send a check to the boathouse fund. If you are a first time donor, welcome aboard! And if you've been supporting this effort over a longer period of time, thank you for your ongoing dedication and generosity.

--Linda Greensfelder, BCCC Chair

Donor Recognition Committee

People and businesses have been donating to a boat fund since 1993. A donor list will include the names of all givers since 1993 and the monetary range of each gift. Names (and future donors) will be displayed prominently on a wall presentation. Of course, donations can also be made without recognition, if this is preferred.

The committee would like suggestions on how to display donor names and giving levels. Possibilities for giving levels are [novice, junior, intermediate, masters, elite], [Gateway, Regional, National, World, Olympic]. We are still accepting suggestions.

There will also be some naming opportunities for equipment in the boathouse: oar brackets, boat racks, etc. Some of these have already been purchased. A list of those still available will be distributed to club members soon.

Please share your suggestions and opinions with committee members by May 15. You can email Ann at ransamuels@hotmail.com.

--Ann Samuels, DRC Chair

Fundraising via Credit Card

SLRC CardScrip Mastercard: MBNA is discontinuing this program. The club will continue to receive revenues from this card through the end of 2004.

New! Escript: By registering cards you have, you earn funds for the club at over 17,000 restaurants and hotels plus hundreds of retailers. Anyone, not just SLRC members, can register and designate the St. Louis Rowing Club as the bonus recipient. Learn more and sign up at www.escrip.com.

New! Schoolpop Visa: This program is similar to the expiring program. If you like to shop online, this is a particularly good card for you. No annual fee. This card can also be registered in the eScrip program, so your purchases can earn bonuses twice! To learn more and sign up, go to <http://www.schoolpop.com>. Or wait for more information coming soon from the club via email and snail mail.

Questions? Contact Linda Greensfelder at lgreensfelder@charter.net or 314-991-6969.

Fundraising: Concessions

SLRC will man concession stands at Busch Stadium during four Cardinals games. The dates of the games are June 16, July 3, August 8, and August 22. We need at least 10 volunteers working at each game.

Folks have already signed up, but we still need volunteers on July 3 and August 22. If you can help, please e-mail Barbara Seely at barbara.seely@eoc.gov as soon as possible. We'll have a blast! No Juniors please - must be 21 to sell beer.

--Barb Seely

Treasurer's Report

Response to our request for dues payment by our adult members has been good. Virtually all active members who intend to row this year have responded by sending in a payment. Invoices have been sent to the junior members for their spring season dues. Their dues checks are now being received.

Dues payments have provided us with a reasonable checking account balance to cover expenses the next few months. As we look ahead, however, we must minimize discretionary expenses to cover costs related to boathouse operations.

--*Scott Allison*

SLRC Phone Numbers

The new phone number at the boathouse is 314 878 7980. This number is not equipped with voice mail. If you need to reach a coach or make a last minute schedule change with one of your rowing partners, the official club number remains 314 434 8299.

About the Newsletter

Thank you for contributing to the SLRC newsletter. Articles are published as submitted, with a few exceptions. To submit an article for the 2004 June/July SLRC newsletter, attach a Word file to an email message, and send to me at: vogelka@charter.net on or before May 20.