

Deep Cove Rowing Club – April 2007

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

The following information is being provided to help parents and those new to rowing understand more about rowing, crew, and regattas. It is by no means complete and there may be differing opinions on some of the information provided. If you still have questions about rowing or the Deep Cove Rowing Club, please send an e-mail to the coach or one of the board members.

What does a parent need to bring to the regattas?

Bring chairs, binoculars, cameras, coolers for drinks and snack food. You may also consider bringing a book or needlepoint/knitting, Sudoku puzzles, crosswords or whatever else you enjoy to work on between races, but most of all, relax and enjoy watching your son/daughter perform.

Are there different classes or categories at a regatta?

Yes, rowers are categorized by gender, age, weight, and level of experience. Events are offered for both men and women in two weight classes (lightweight and heavyweight) in junior (high school age), senior and master (older than 27) events. For junior and senior teams, races are held for novice and varsity (experienced) boats. In the masters division, mixed races are held with crews comprised of an equal number of men and women.

For juniors, there are three age classes of rowing:

Junior A: Rowers cannot be older than 18 years old in the year of the regatta

Junior B: Rowers cannot be older than 16 years old in the year of the regatta

Junior C: Rowers cannot be older than 14 years old in the year of the regatta

These categories may be further broken down by level of experience/weight of the athletes:

Novice: Athletes must be new to the sport in the current school year

Lightweight: Maximum weight of any one crew member is 72.5kg for men, 63kg for women.

What kinds of boats are used?

Boats (or shells) are basically two types that reflect the two forms of rowing – sweep rowing and sculling. In sweep rowing, each rower has one oar about 12.5 feet long. In sculling, each rower uses two oars about 9.5 feet long. The term shell is often used because the hulls of the boats are only 1/8" to 1/4" thick to make them as light as possible. The smallest boat is a single scull. The largest boat, an "eight" is over 60 feet long but only weighs a little over 200 pounds. Listed below are the symbols and a very brief description of the boats that can be seen in a regatta.

Sweep Boats (one oar per rower)

(2-) Two rowers without a coxswain or a "pair".

(4+) Four rowers with a coxswain or a "coxed four".

(4-) Four rowers without a coxswain or a "straight four".

(8+) Eight rowers with a coxswain. (8+ always have a coxswain)

Sculling Boats (two oars per rower)

(1X) One rower or sculler or a "single".

(2X) Two scullers or a "double".

(4X) Four scullers or a "quad"

(4X+) Four scullers with a coxswain or a "coxed quad".

What is the bow and what is the stern of the boat?

The bow is the front of the boat or the first part to cross the finish line. The stern is the back or rear of the boat.

Which side is port and which side is starboard?

This can be a little confusing, especially for the rowers. The port side is the left side of the boat to the coxswain who is facing forwards or to the right side of the rower who is facing towards the rear of the boat. Starboard is the opposite side.

What is a coxswain (cox-n)?

The coxswain is the person in a “four” or “eight” or a “quad” who does not row, but who steers the boat and leads the crew. The coxswain is always a small person (Coxswains must be a maximum weight of 45kg for both boys and girls). During a race and in practice, they give rowers technical feedback and input. They also manage the strategy during the race and keep the crew at its best as exhaustion sets in. Becoming a coxswain is often a valuable opportunity for a person of small build to be involved in rowing. Both male and female coxswains are also recruited by colleges.

What is the Stroke?

This is the name given to the person sitting in the stern most seat (rear) in the shell. The rower sets the stroke rate, stroke length and rhythm for the rest of the crew (with the coxswain’s gentle advice when a coxswain is present).

What is the Bow?

This is the name given to the person sitting in the bow most seat (front) in the shell. The rower sets the course for the shell in non-coxed shells.

I heard that my son/daughter is rowing the “3 seat”. What does this mean?

This mean that he or she sits in the seat that is third from the bow. In an 8+, the seats are called bow, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, stroke (8) and cox; in a 4+, the seats are bow, 2, 3, stroke, and cox.

What is a crab?

A crab is a “problem” encountered by a rower when his or her oar gets “stuck” in or is “grabbed” by the water, usually right after the catch or just before the release. The momentum of the shell can overcome the rower’s control of the oar. It is caused by improper squaring or feathering of the oar and will happen to everyone who rows. In extreme cases the rower can actually be thrown from the shell, but this rarely happens. Usually the rower will be pushed back and the oar will go over their head. Rowers love to talk about “catching a crab” and it is usually funnier if the story is about someone else.

Thank you to the St-Andrew Rowing Club (Atlanta, Georgia, USA) for letting DCRC use their information.