

SHHS CREW PARENT ORIENTATION PACKET

WWW.SHAKERHEIGHTSCREW.ORG

WHAT IS CREW?

Crew is the sport of competitive rowing. In the Cleveland area we row on the Cuyahoga River. Rowers sit in long, narrow boats called shells and race against rowers of similar age, weight and ability. The concept of rowing and the basic stroke may appear simple, but there's an enormous amount of skill involved in propelling a foot-wide shell through the water with 12-foot oars. It takes teamwork, endurance, strength, balance, concentration, and the will to win. Four major factors determine the speed of a shell – timing, form, power and conditioning. For good timing, all rowers hit the catch (when their blades enter the water) together and the bodies of the crew should move in unison. Power comes from both upper body and legs. Few sports are as physically demanding as rowing.

Racing shells are classified by the number of rowers. There are one, two, four and eight person shells. Rowers control a single oar (sweep rowing) or two oars (sculling). Fours and eights have a coxswain (generally pronounced “cox-n”). The Coxswain steers the shell and communicates to the rowers through an on-board PA system. The coxswain is a critical part to winning.

Crew isn't for everyone. Crew requires discipline and time commitment to be successful. Crew is a three-season sport with 5000 meter races in the fall, winter workouts, and sprint racing (1500-2000 meters) in the spring. Unlike other team sports where every athlete may be able to compete in every competition, the number of team members, racing shells available and events within a meet can affect boat assignments. There are times when the scheduling of races and the number of rowers may prevent the coaches from boating all girls in a particular regatta. The coaches try very hard to avoid this and it is a rare occurrence.

For more information on the sport of rowing, check out U.S. Rowing, at www.U.S.Rowing.org.

PRACTICE

Attendance. The coaches expect regular attendance at practice and regattas. If a team member is unable to attend practice, she should notify the coaches prior to practice. Participating in a race depends to a great extent on attendance. Rowers must attend a minimum of 80% of practices to be placed in a boat for a regatta. Better than 80% attendance is expected. Rowers are expected to attend all scheduled regattas. Exceptions are made for religious observations and significant family events.

ON THE WATER – FALL/SPRING. During the Fall and Spring the team practices on the Cuyahoga River, launching from the Cleveland Rowing Foundation Boathouse – 1948 Carter Road in the Flats. The girls are driven by a Shaker Heights School District bus driver to the boat house during the week. The bus leaves the high school promptly at 4:00 pm from the south side of SHHS and returns at approximately 7:00pm. (Due to the construction in the fall of 2007, the bus will pick up/drop off from the north side of SHHS.)

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

The bus was late returning back to the school, why?

On occasion the team will encounter a barge on the river, which for safety reasons, requires the crew boats to go to a safety spot along the river and wait until the barge passes. Sometimes this

can delay the team from returning on time.

Where should my daughter go from 3-4pm?

Girls frequently do school work or go to club meetings before practice. They can go to conferences with their teachers or study in the school library. Time management is another advantage of high school athletics.

Can my daughter drive to practice with another team member?

Due to the heavy traffic downtown at 4:30, it is the policy of the team that girls should not be driving other girls to practice during the week. In special situations, with prior parent and coach approval, permission can be granted.

What should my daughter wear/bring?

The girls need to wear clothing prepared for the weather. The girls row in all weather (including rain), except lightning and extreme cold. They need clothes for warmth as appropriate, water bottles, a snack, and homework to do on the bus. They should wear lycra shorts in the boats and no overly loose-fitting shirts. Many girls wear gym shorts over the lycra until they step into the boats. Loose fitting clothing will catch in the boat's sliding seat.

How should my daughter get to the boathouse when there are Saturday practices?

There is no bus on Saturday, so the girls drive in car pools or take the Rapid in a group.

SHHS – Winter workouts. During the winter, after a break from the fall season, the team works out at school doing aerobic conditioning, weight training and erging. (The ergometer is a special type of rowing machine which simulates rowing in a crew boat). The effectiveness of the winter workouts will be shown in the results of the spring regattas.

THE COACHES

Sharon Romilly: Head Coach, rowed at WVU and also rows on the Cleveland competitive crew team. Sharon is a USRA Level I certified coach and started with the SHHS crew in the spring of 2002.

Bob O'Connor: Assistant Coach, with over xx years of experience in sweep rowing and sculling. Bob also rows on the Cleveland competitive crew team and is a USRA Level I certified coach.

REGATTAS AND ERGATTAS

SHHS Crew is part of the Midwest Scholastic Rowing Association, which includes 50 high schools in Ohio, Michigan, Western Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Indiana. There are only three other high school crew teams in the Cleveland area (St. Ignatius-boys, Cleveland Scholastic Rowing Association-open to high school girls, and Burning River-open to high school boys). There is one competition in Cleveland, the Head of the Cuyahoga, in Fall. One of the exciting aspects about crew is traveling to away regattas. All spring regattas are at out of town venues. Our river is "too crooked" to sprint race 1500 meters. Venues generally include Columbus, Pittsburgh, and Detroit. Also, during the winter there are two indoor competitions on the erg (rowing machines) called ergattas. The team typically competes in two ergattas: one in Pittsburgh and one in Cleveland.

The crew team relies heavily on parent volunteers. A volunteer coordinates out of town travel for the team which usually leaves the night before the regatta, stays together in the same hotel and returns to Shaker the following evening. The girls will travel in large passenger vans driven by

parent volunteers, and on occasion (2 night or particularly distant regattas) a private bus. This guarantees that all rowers are present and ready to row early Saturday morning. For the indoor regattas, the girls are not required to travel the night before. To share the responsibility, each rowing family is expected to drive and support the team at least one regatta a season. Parent volunteers also buy and prepare food for the team, load the trailer with supplies, put up the team tents to provide shelter for the team and family members, and drive behind the truck and trailer which transports the boats to the regatta. The team pays a Shaker School District employee to drive the truck/trailer to bring the boats to the race site.

Races are usually by size of boat and by rower's status. There are races for 4 seat boats and for 8 seat boats. Novices (first year rowers) race separately from varsity and junior varsity rowers. Although there may be college teams and master teams at some regattas, SHHS only competes against high school teams or college teams with girls under 19 year of age (junior teams).

The fall races, called head races, are 5,000 meters and based on elapsed time. The spring races, called sprint races, are 1500-2000 meters, are side by side and based on which boat crosses the finish line first. Some races involve heats, others are finals only. Medals are awarded to all members of boats that finish 1st-3rd in race finals.

There is a website, www.regattacentral.com which lists most regattas, their dates, locations, directions, teams competing, and a few days after the regatta, the results.

I have other children it will be difficult for me to leave home for a night to attend a regatta, so what should I do?

Siblings, friends and family are welcome. Many parents are in the same situation, and as a result bring the siblings to the regatta. The regattas are in park like settings with lots of open space; the kids have a great time and hang out with the other younger siblings. Many younger siblings look forward to these regattas as fun and parents look forward to them as an opportunity for family bonding. As we travel to other towns where grandparents and other family members live, they frequently join us as well.

My daughter does not want me to go to the regatta, what should I do?

As we all know, teenagers frequently like to demonstrate their independence from their parents; however, most are truly pleased when their parents attend. Seeing how hard your daughter is working, how capable she is, and the team camaraderie is a wonderful experience for parents. The team is dependent on parent support, and all parents need to share in this endeavor.

What do I need to know about regattas?

It is important to let the girls relax and focus on their races. In particular avoid the temptation to run down to watch your daughter while she is launching a boat or when she is getting her boat off the water. The girls and coaches usually debrief near the boat trailers just after their races; it is best to let them have their space at this point. The coaches manage the girls during the regatta, keeping them aware of where and when they have to be. The parents' job is to provide the food and shelter and emotional support if needed and most importantly a hug after the rower has had an opportunity to take care of the boats and debrief with the coach. Girls are expected to remain during the entire competition, even after their event has been completed, to cheer on their teammates and help with equipment. Girls are usually expected to return to the boathouse after regattas in order to help unload the boats from the trailer.

How can I help?

The regattas are dependent on parent volunteers. In addition to driving and chaperoning the girls, regatta volunteer jobs include:

Before the Regatta : Shopping for the food, shopping and icing beverages, preparing soup or side dishes, purchasing/organizing disposable supplies, driving the equipment trailer to the regatta, and driving the chase car behind the boat trailer.

At the Regatta:Transporting the coxswains to their early morning meeting, picking up coffee for the adults, setting up tents, setting out, organizing, and replenishing the food, tearing down the tent site and packing everything back into the trailer. Most importantly: **CHEERING ON THE TEAM!!!**

What should we bring to the regattas?

Girls

Water bottle
Sunscreen
Extra clothes (For rainy weather)
Several extra pairs of socks
7/16 inch wrench (for rigging the boat)
Homework

Parents

Reading material
Water bottle
Binoculars (optional)
Folding Chair
Umbrella/poncho/rain gear
Crew roster with cell phone numbers
Directions to the hotel /race site (travel coordinator will provide)

TEAM VARSITY STATUS

Crew began eleven years ago as a club sport and is now a varsity sport at SHHS. Unlike other Varsity sports, crew has three distinct seasons during the year (the spring is the official varsity season). The school district covers the cost for the coaches in fall and spring and provides the bus to the boathouse and space for winter workouts. The team members are eligible for all the benefits of a varsity sport – varsity letters, etc.

UNIFORMS AND CLOTHING

During competitions, the girls must wear the SHHS crew uniform. The uniforms include a red tank top, long sleeved top, and black spandex shorts. Other optional clothing includes SHHS crew hoodie sweatshirts, sweatpants, hats, t-shirts, and long sleeved shirts. After the first year of rowing, a crew member is eligible to purchase a rowing jacket, called a Stevenson. One uniform usually lasts a rower for her entire high school rowing career.

PARENT GROUP

It is the responsibility of the parents to cover the cost of the equipment and support out of town travel. To meet these needs, the parent group meets regularly (7-8 times a year), is organized into committees and expects parents participation in fund raising and support in out of town travel.

EXPENSES

There are dues for each season, fall, winter and spring. Additionally, rowers pay travel expenses for each regatta they attend. While the school pays for the bus to the boathouse and coaches in fall and spring, the team members pay to cover the costs of the boathouse fees, boat transportation to the

regattas, hotels for the truck driver, coaches and players, regatta entrance fees and food for the team. The parent group does fund-raising to reduce costs and to raise money for equipment purchases. A parent may choose to make a contribution in lieu of fund raising.

COMMUNICATION/CONTACT INFORMATION

The team maintains a website providing background information, updates, team photos and forms: check www.shakerheightscrew.org. Additionally, it is critical for each rower and parent to participate in the Yahoo! user group for SHHS Crew in order to receive communication and information.

CLEVELAND ROWING FOUNDATION

The Cleveland Rowing Foundation (CRF) is the umbrella organization for the only rowing boathouse in the Cleveland area. Member organizations include the area high schools and colleges with rowing programs and the Western Reserve Rowing Association adult programs. The boathouse provides the space to store our boats and trailers, and the launches (which the coaches use to ride along side the boats). SHHS and the other school programs pay per capita dues on our rowers to cover our portion of the expenses to operate the boathouse.

HELPFUL ROWING TERMS

Bow: The front section of the boat, the first part of the boat to cross the finish line.

Bow ball: A small plastic ball affixed to the bow for protection and to help determine winners in close races.

Bow pair: The two rowers (1, 2) in the bow of the boat (in an 8). Responsible for the balance of the boat.

Catch: Point of the rowing stroke where the blade enters the water.

Cox Box: Portable voice amplifier which allows the cox's commands to be heard by the rowers.

Coxswain: Person who steers the shell and is the on-the-water coach for the crew.

Crab: Rowing error that occurs when a rower cannot remove or release her oar at the finish of the stroke, causing the blade to act as a break. A severe crab can cause the rower to get hit with the oar, and even knocked out of the boat.

Engine room: In an eight, the middle four rowers (3, 4, 5, 6). Usually the largest and strongest rowers.

Ergatta: Indoor rowing meet.

Ergometer: "Erg". A rowing machine with a flywheel and digital readout that resembles the rowing motion.

Feather: to turn the oar so that the blade is parallel to the water.

Head Race: Usually 5K, timed races, not head to head. No heats. Usually held in the fall.

Launch: Motorized boat used by the coaches in practice and the referees in a regatta.

Lightweight: Rowers under 135 pounds in the fall, 130 pounds in the spring (women).

Novice: Rowers in their first year of competitive rowing.

Oar: What the girls row with. Consists of the handle and the blade. They are not paddles!

Open weight: Not lightweight.

Port: Left side of the boat when facing forward, in the direction of the movement of the boat.

Power 10: A call from the coxswain for the rowers to give 10 hard, powerful strokes. Often used in passing.

Release: Point of the rowing stroke where the blade leaves the water.

Rushing: Rower moves too quickly along the seat tracks into their catch.

Scull: Boats in which the rowers use two oars each.

Set: Balance of boat.

Settle: Usually the middle of the race where the stroke rate slows down.

Shell: Boat used for rowing.

Split Time: Amount of time to row 500 meters.

Sprint Race: 1.5K to 2K races, conducted in heats, with finals. Usually held in the spring.

Stevenson: A rowing jacket that girls can purchase after they have completed two seasons (not including winter).

Stroke Rate: Number of strokes per minute.

Sweep: Boats in which the rowers use one oar each.

Stern: The rear of the boat, the direction the rowers are facing.

Stroke seat: The rower directly in front of the cox, seat 8. The stroke sets the rhythm and the other rowers follow.

Stroke pair: The stroke and the rower behind her (8, 7) who work in coordination to set the rhythm of the boat.

Walk: To pass another boat.