



Sammamish Rowing Association  
Junior Rowing Program  
Parent Handbook



Rev 09/09

## **Introduction**

Welcome to the Sammamish Rowing Association. The sport of rowing is demanding and richly re-warding, but also confusing to those new to the sport. This handbook will help you and your rower through the first year and beyond.

Sammamish Rowing began in 1995 and has become a regionally and nationally recognized competitive rowing program. SRA is consistently competitive at the NW Regional Championship Regatta and is often represented at the USRowing Youth National Championship Regatta. Many Sammamish rowers go on to row in college and have competed at the National and International levels. Don't be scared away by this high level of achievement. Anyone is welcome, everyone is encouraged, and all will row at SRA. The more you know about the program, the more enthusiastic you will become.

SRA is a community rowing association. It is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization. While we have an excellent working relationship with King County Parks & Rec we are not governed by them.

There are many clubs in the Seattle area, but SRA is the only rowing club on the Eastside. Our rowers come to us from Bothell to Renton, Kirkland to North Bend. All abilities and levels of experience have the opportunity to learn to row and compete.

## **Rowing at SRA**

Junior Rowers at SRA compete at different levels depending on experience, commitment and ability. Events at regattas are broken down along these lines. There are basically five levels of rowers:

- Novice – first year rowers are considered novices through their first spring season.
- 3V and 4V – rowers who have completed at least one spring season of rowing and are in the –third from varsity or –fourth from varsity boats.
- JV – the rowers who are one step from the varsity boat.
- Lightweight varsity - the fastest lightweight rowers. There is a lightweight category at the Youth National Regatta.
- Varsity – the fastest and most capable rowers.

US Rowing—Junior Weight Categories:

- Lightweight women must weigh 130 pounds or less.
- Lightweight men must weigh 155 pounds or less.
- Openweight rowers have no weight restrictions.
- The junior program is divided into 4 teams: Novice Boys, Novice Girls, Experienced Boys and Experienced Girls. There are 6 coaches: a head coach, assistant coach & novice coach for boys and for girls. The novice teams practice from 3:30-6:00pm, Monday– Friday. The experienced teams practice 3:30-6:00pm on Tuesday & Thursday, 3:30-6:30pm Monday, Wednesday & Friday. All of the teams have a combination of land and water workouts each week.

## **Absences & Tardiness**

Coaches expect all participants to attend scheduled practices and races. If an absence is unavoidable, it must be communicated to the Coach with as much prior notice as possible. Coaches will advise their teams how to communicate absences—typically a calendar is posted on the bulletin board for advance notice and phone numbers are given for last minute absences. Tardiness must also be avoided as it affects the entire team's practice. Multiple absences or late

arrivals, regardless of the reason, may affect your child's participation. Coaches ask that athletes arrive 5-10 minutes prior to the beginning of practice in order to change clothes and stretch. Also, please understand that practice may occasionally go 10-15 minutes beyond the stated end time.

## **Racing Seasons**

**Fall:** Fall season is the long distance training season for crews. Most fall races consist of long distance head races (between 2500 and 5000 meters) and results are calculated by time, not head-to-head competition. The starts are staggered allowing many crews to compete simultaneously.

**Winter:** (November -January) Crew practice consists of land workouts: rowing on the erg, weight training, and cardiovascular exercises such as running stairs. Rowers should continue conditioning to be in shape for spring.

**Spring:** (February-May) is the most competitive season for rowing. Races are straight and short, 1500 to 2000 meters, and boats race in lanes. In order to accommodate all the competitors, heats are often necessary. Spring culminates with the NW Regional Championships, usually held in Vancouver, Washington. Winning varsity boats are invited to attend the USRowing Youth Nationals held in mid June in Cincinnati, Ohio.

**Summer:** Summer season at Sammamish (late June-late August) is the shortest & least competitive season, but also a great time to start rowing and learn the basics. Summer is also the time when US-Rowing national regattas take place.

## **Clothing**

The best attire for rowing is clothing that fits close to the body, is flexible and can be layered for warmth. Look for Polypro, CoolMax, and Drywick fabrics as they keep the rower relatively warm when wet, and dry quickly. Oversized, baggy clothing can get caught in the wheels of the seat, so avoid bas-ketball style shorts or warm-ups. Shoes are not needed in the boat, but may get wet on the dock, so an older or less expensive pair is recommended. However, sturdy running shoes may be preferred for land workouts. Lastly, it is wise to bring a change of warm, dry clothes to put on after practice in case it rains or the boat is waked.

A clothing order form for each team is available on the SRA website & orders are typically due one week after the start of each season. There are a few uniform pieces which are required for racing.

## **Nutrition**

Rowing is a very demanding sport and the athletes will burn a lot of calories over the course of a work-out. You should encourage your athlete to carry a water bottle and drink lots of water during the day as well as eat a good lunch. Many teens don't always eat as well as they should at school. Try to make sure that dinners include protein, fat and carbohydrates. The energy systems that the athletes use require that they have water and carbs to generate the energy they need during a workout. Low carbohydrate diets are not recommended and fat intake (within reasonable limits) should only be an issue for lightweight athletes who are trying to make weight goals.

## **Volunteer Opportunities**

Much of SRA's success can be credited to the many volunteers willing to step forward and do what needs to be done. Whether it is working on race day, chaperoning at regattas, or procuring auction items, helping out at SRA is essential to the organization and rewarding for the volunteer. It is one of the best ways to quickly understand the unique culture of crew, meet other parents, chat with the coaches and get a grip on the rowing vocabulary. Check out some of the ways you can get involved.

We urge all parents to join our Yahoo group to find out about volunteering opportunities.  
<http://sports.groups.yahoo.com/group/srajuniors>

## **Regattas**

Generally speaking, regattas are all day events and rowers are expected to arrive to unload the trailer in the morning and stay to reload it once the team's last event has finished. Parents often help make these long days more pleasant by providing food and shelter from the elements. If you are a new par-ent, you can inquire with the current Jr. Parent Chair about how you can volunteer during regattas! Some things to pack to make your stay more comfortable:

- Portable chair
- Binoculars
- Warm clothes (including gloves/caps)
- Rain gear
- Light-weight clothing
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Blankets or sleeping bag for you or your rower to stretch out on
- Water and healthy snacks (food tent provided by parent group for rowers at most races)

A schedule of the day's races is usually posted online a day or so before the regatta and at a central tent or site at each regatta. At this same location, the results are usually posted.

**Dealing with Disappointment:** The nature of competition necessitates disappointment. It is inevi-table that your child will experience this during their participation in rowing. They may not make a certain boat, they may not achieve their desired erg score, and they may lose a race. It is important to be empathetic with your rower and allow them to come to you.

## **Athlete/Rower Characteristics**

Over the course of a rowing season, a coach has to take many factors into consideration when deciding where to place athletes for competition. There are several measurable factors that coaches can use, such as erg test times and attendance.

There are also several less clear-cut characteristics that a coach may use when deciding how effective a particular athlete is as a member of a racing boat. The following is a list of athlete/rower characteris-tics that a coach may take into consideration, along with erg scores and attendance, when deciding on where to place an athlete for a race:

**Relevance of height, weight and speed:** is a rower above or below ideal at his/her position? Can he/she overcome deficiencies and how?

**Quickness, agility and balance:** these factors involve things such as body control and movement skills.

**Instinct and intelligence:** ability to learn and retain what is taught in class, on water and at a re-gatta. Can he/she adjust and change quickly? Can he/she react to what is happening at the moment and on command? Is he/she disciplined or does he/she freelance and tend to do his/her own thing?

**Strength and explosion:** what type and level of strength does he/she have? Is it brute strength and does he/she have recoil ability of upper and lower body? Strength and explosion equals POWER.

**Body durability:** can he/she stay healthy? This does not revolve around toughness or pain toler-ance. Can he/she rehab and heal quickly and effectively to get back in the seat and avoid re-injury?

**Character:** who is he/she really, as opposed to how others see him/her? Is he/she a good partner, hard worker, team player? Can you depend upon him/her when things get tough or only if you are winning?

**Communicator:** does he/she speak with integrity of all team members? Does he/she advocate for his/herself? Does he/she go directly to the source? Does he/she always speak with the best interest of the organization, team, boat or individual in mind?

## **Sammamish Rowing Association Parent and Coach Relations**

*The Sammamish Rowing Association believes the sport of rowing and the unique team environment provided by the Junior crew will develop the character of the student-athlete and provide them with tools to succeed in life beyond the boathouse. We hope this procedure is helpful to parents and coaches trying to develop that character and create those skills in a less stressful manner. Thank you for your support and cooperation!*

Both parenting and coaching are extremely difficult vocations. By establishing an understanding of each position, we are better able to accept the actions of the other and provide greater benefit to the rowers. As parents, when your student-athlete becomes involved with SRA, you have a right to understand the expectations placed on your student-athlete. This begins with clear communication from the coach of your rower.

### **Communication Expected From the Coach:**

Philosophy of the coach.

Expectations the coach has for your rower and others on the team.

Practice times and schedules, also regatta dates and schedule.

Team requirements, i.e. fees, special equipment, off-season conditioning.

Procedure regarding injury to the student-athlete should they be injured during participation.

Disciplinary action that results in the denial of your student-athlete's participation.

### **Communication Coaches Expect From Parents**

Concerns expressed directly to the coach.

Notification of any schedule conflicts well in advance.

Specific concern in regard to a coach's expectations.

As your rower becomes involved with the team at the Sammamish Rowing Association, they will experience some of the most rewarding moments of their lives. It is important to understand that there will also be times when the experiences are difficult and challenging. At these times, discussion with the coach may be appropriate. **The first step in resolving an issue is for the rower to speak directly with their coach.** We want our athletes to develop the skills to advocate for themselves in rowing, at school, jobs and other aspects of life.

### **Appropriate Concerns To Discuss With Coaches**

The treatment of your rower, mentally and physically.

Ways to help your rower improve both athletically and academically.

Concerns about your rower's behavior.

### **Inappropriate Concerns To Discuss With Coaches**

Seat/Boat assignments

Other rowers

Race strategy

SRA coaches are professionals and make decisions based on what they believe to be the best interests of the team. From the list above you can see which situations are appropriate to discuss with a coach and which are inappropriate. Coaches do exercise their judgment throughout the course of a rowing season and their discretion, expertise, and professionalism must be respected regarding rowing matters. Issues surrounding the well-being of your student-athlete are appropriate to raise with a coach.

### **Procedures To Follow If You Have Concerns To Discuss With A Coach**

Please e-mail or phone the coach to set up an appointment. Contact information for the coaches can be found in the Parent Handbook or by phoning the SRA office @ 425-653-2583

If the coach cannot be reached or does not respond, please schedule an appointment with the SRA Director.

Please do not attempt to confront a coach before or after a regatta or practice. These can be emotional times for both parent and coach. Meetings of this nature do not promote resolution.

### **In The Event A Satisfactory Resolution Is Not Provided**

Call and set up an appointment with the SRA Director to discuss the situation.  
Contact the SRA Board. The Board, comprised of parents, adult rowers, and community members, governs the Sammamish Rowing Association. The Board will address matters that have followed the previous procedure of contacting the coach and Director.

Thanks to the Everett Public Schools for the majority of the above procedure. Their pamphlet on Parent/Coach communication was used in the creation of this document.

## **Eleven Insights to the Sport of Rowing** (from USRowing.com)

**1. Rowing is a total body workout.** Rowing only looks like an upper body sport. Although upper body strength is important, the strength of the rowing stroke comes from the legs. Rowing is one of the few athletic activities that involves all of the body's major muscle groups. It is a great aerobic workout, in the same vein as cross-country skiing, and is a low-impact sport on the joints.

**2. Rowers are probably the world's best athletes.** Rowing looks graceful, elegant and some-times effortless when it is done well. Don't be fooled. Rowers haven't been called the world's most physically fit athletes for nothing. The sport demands endurance, strength, balance, mental discipline, and an ability to continue on when your body is demanding that you stop.

**3. Sweep (like a broom) and Sculling.** There are two basic types of rowing: sweep rowing and sculling. In sweep rowing, athletes hold one oar with both hands. In sculling, the athletes have two oars, one in each hand.

**4. The boat.** Although spectators will see hundreds of different races at a rowing event, there are only six basic boat configurations. Sweep rowers come in pairs (2s), fours (4s) and eights (8s). Scullers row in singles (1x), doubles (2x) and quads (4x). Sweep rowers may or may not carry a coxswain (cox-n), the person who steers the boat and serves as the on-the-water coach. All eights have coxswains, but pairs and fours may or may not. In sculling boats and sweep boats without coxes, a rower steers the boat by using a rudder moved with the foot.

**5. The categories.** Rowers are categorized by sex, age and weight. Events are offered for men and women, as well as for mixed crews containing an equal number of men and women. (There are no mixed events for Jr. rowers.) There are junior events for rowers 18 or under or who spent the previous year in high school, and there are masters events for rowers 27 and older. There are two weight categories: lightweight and open weight.

**6. The equipment.** Rowing boats are called shells, and they're made of lightweight carbon fiber. The smallest boat on the water is the single scull, which is only 27-30 feet long, a foot wide and approximately 30 pounds. Eights are the largest boats at 60 feet and a little over 200 pounds. Rowers use oars to propel their shells. Sweep oars are longer than sculling oars, typically with carbon fiber handles and rubber grips (although some sweepers still prefer wooden handles). Sculling oars are almost never wood.

**7. The crew.** Athletes are identified by their position in the boat. The athlete sitting in the bow, the part of the boat that crosses the finish line first, is the bow seat or No. 1 seat. The person in front of the bow is No. 2, then No. 3 and so on. The rower closest to the stern that crosses the finish line last is known as the stroke. The stroke of the boat must be a strong rower with excellent technique, as the stroke is the person who sets the rhythm of the boat for the rest of the rowers.

**8. SPM not MPH.** Rowers speak in terms of strokes per minute (SPM), literally the number of strokes the boat completes in a minute's time. The stroke rate at the start is high – 38-45, even into the 50s for an eight – and then –settles to a race cadence typically in the 30s. Crews sprint to the finish, taking the rate up once again. Crews may call for a –Power 10 during the race – a demand for the crew's most intense 10 strokes.

**9. Race watching.** The crew that's making it look easy is most likely the one doing the best job. When watching a race, look for a continuous, fluid motion from the rowers; synchronization in the boat; clean catches, i.e. oars entering the water with little splash; and the boat with the most consistent speed.

**10. Teamwork is number one.** Rowing isn't a great sport for athletes looking for MVP status. It is, however, teamwork's best teacher. The athlete trying to stand out in an eight will only make the boat slower. The crew made up of individuals willing to sacrifice their personal goals for the team will be on the medal stand together. Winning teammates successfully match their desire, talent and bladework with one another.

**11. Rowing is the ultimate walk-on sport.** (It's easier to get started than you think.) USRowing is a membership organization that serves rowers of every age and ability from the beginner to the experienced rower to the national team. So, there's definitely a place for you. Binoculars help the viewer identify distant boats, a collapsible chair helps make a long day more comfortable, and this booklet will help a first time observer understand what is going on. There are numerous categories for races, as well as distances. At Green Lake the races are 1000 meters, at Brentwood in Canada, the races are 1500 meters, but most other races in the spring are 2000 meters. Varsity boys and girls times for 1000 m races are in the neighborhood of 3 minutes for varsity boys and about 3:20 minutes for varsity girls. For 2000 meters, varsity boys times are about 6 minutes, varsity girls times are about 7 minutes. Times vary depending on conditions, such as the weather and wind direction.

### **The Stroke**

The whole body is involved in moving a shell through the water. Although rowing tends to look like an upper body sport, the strength of the rowing stroke comes from the legs.

The stroke is made up of four parts: Catch, Drive, Finish and Recovery. As the stroke begins, the rower is coiled forward on the sliding seat, with knees bent and arms outstretched. At the catch, the athlete drops the oar blade vertically into the water.

At the beginning of the drive, the body position doesn't change – all the work is done by the legs. As the upper body begins to uncoil, the arms begin their work, drawing the oar blades through the water. Continuing the drive, the rowers move their hands quickly into the body, which by this time is in a slight "layback" position, requiring strong abdominal muscles.

During the finish, the oar handle is moved down, drawing the oar blade out of the water. At the same time, the rower "feathers" the oar – turning the oar handle – so that the oar blade changes from a vertical position to a horizontal one. The oar remains out of the water as the rower begins recovery, moving the hands away from the body and past the knees. The body follows the hands and the sliding seat moves forward, until, knees bent, the rower is ready for the next catch.

### **Ergometers (ERGS)**

Ergs are rowing machines used for training and to measure the strength of athletes. They simulate the rowing process and allow the coaches to assess athlete capability. Generally, the athlete is asked to –rowl either 2000 meters in the spring season, or 6000 meters in the fall season. The time taken to row those distances is then used to evaluate the athletes against each other. Lower times are an indication of the power the athlete can contribute to boat speed. Other factors, such as rowing technique, also determine an athlete's ability to contribute to boat speed. Erg times may be submitted to National Team coaches and to Universities for consideration for

those teams. Generally, for male rowers, 2000 meter erg scores range from 6:15 to 6:45 for varsity caliber athletes. Female varsity athlete's 2000 meter times range from 7:15 to 7:50. For 6000 meter pieces, the range is 20 to 22 minutes for a male varsity athlete.

## The Language of Rowing

The sport of rowing has been around for a long time and has developed its own, sometimes peculiar terminology. Here is a glossary to help you understand what your rower is saying.

**2-** Symbol for a –pair $\parallel$  (2 rowers, sweep, no cox).

**2+** Symbol for a –coxed pair $\parallel$  (2 rowers, sweep, cox).

**2x** Symbol for a –double $\parallel$  (2 rowers, sculling).

**4-** Symbol for a –straight four $\parallel$  (4 rowers, sweep, no cox).

**4+** Symbol for a –four $\parallel$  (4 rowers, sweep, cox).

**4x** Symbol for a –quad $\parallel$  (4 rowers, sculling, no cox).

**4x+** Symbol for a –coxed quad $\parallel$  (4 rowers, sculling, cox).

**8+** Symbol for an –eight $\parallel$  (8 rowers, sweep, cox).

**Body angle** The forward lean of the body from the hips that is achieved during the first part of the recovery. Also called –body prep. $\parallel$

**Bow** The front of the boat. Also the term used for the person rowing in –1 seat. $\parallel$

**Bow ball** A rubber ball used to protect the boat during a collision.

**Bow coxed boat** A shell in which the cox lays feet first in the bow of the boat. This position helps to reduce wind resistance.

**Button/Collar** A wide ring on the oar that keeps it from slipping through the oarlock.

**Catch** The entry of the blade into the water at the beginning of the stroke; the point at which the oar is placed in the water.

**Cox box** Amplification system with a headset, microphone, and speakers that allows the coxswain to convey instructions to the entire crew.

**Coxswain/Cox'n/Cox** [**kok-suh/n**] The coxswain commands the crew, steers the boat, and is responsible for the safety of the crew and the boat. During a regatta, the coxswain is responsible for implementing the race plan established by the Coach. Experienced coxswains are valued as Assistant Coaches, and the coxswain is the only one other than the Coach to tell the oarsmen what to do.

**Crab** Being unable to take your blade out of the water at the release. This action destroys the rhythm, set, run, and momentum of the boat and is often referred to as –catching a crab. $\parallel$  This can stop a boat dead in the water and can also throw a rower out of the boat.

**Drive** Power portion of the stroke. When the blades are in the water, the boat is in the ‘drive’ phase of the stroke cycle.

**Ergometer/Erg** The Concept II rowing ergometer. This machine is used to build and measure the endurance and level of fitness of the athlete. Erg scores may also be used to determine placement in a particular boat line-up. Ergs use wind resistance to replicate the sensation of water resistance felt while rowing.

**Feather** The action of rotating the blade so that it parallels the water on the recovery. This minimizes resistance to air and water.

**Finish/Release** End of the drive during which the blade comes out of the water in preparation for the recovery.

**Gunwale** [**guh-n-l**] The sides of the boat, the edge of the shell's cockpit. When rowers carry a shell to the dock, the gunwales rest on the rower's shoulders.

**Hold Down/Hold Water/Hold** The action of square the blade in the water to stop the forward motion of the shell.

**Inside Hand** The hand that is closest to the oarlock (right for ports, left for starboards).

**Lightweight** A term referring to the rowers, not the boats. There is a maximum weight for each rower in a lightweight event as well as a boat average.

**Masters** Rowers over the age of 27 (21 at some regattas)

**Novices/Novies** First year rowers. Novice designation lasts for the academic year, but does not carry over the summer.

**Oar (sweep)** Used in pairs, fours, and eights. Each rower uses one oar. Just over 12 feet in length, oars may be made of wood or carbon fiber. They are generally painted with the team's colors.

**Oarlock** Device that holds the oar and is the fulcrum for the oar. The lock consists of the pin and the gate. The gate is held closed by a threaded nut that is loosened to allow the rower to open the gate and insert an oar into the oarlock. The gate is then closed, and the nut is hand tightened.

**Port** Left side of the boat, facing the direction of travel (the bow). Red is the color that corresponds with port side.

**Power 10 (20)** A call for rowers to do 10 (or 20) of their best, most powerful strokes. A strategy used to pull ahead of a competitor or to focus the rowers' attention.

**Puddle** The disturbance left in the water by the blade as it is removed from the water. Puddles are visible during the recovery and help to gauge the 'run' of a boat.

**Recovery** This is the time from the release of one stroke to the catch of the next stroke; the time the blade is out of the water. During the recovery, the rower moves his or her body and seat into position to prepare for the next catch.

**Rigger** The triangular shaped metal device that is bolted onto the side of the boat and holds the oars.

**Rudder** About the size of a credit card, the rudder is part of the skeg that swivels to steer the boat. Sometimes, the rudder is separate from the skeg.

**Run** The glide that occurs during the recovery, or the distance the shell moves during one stroke. You can figure it by looking for the distance between the puddles made by the same oar.

**Scull** Oar used in singles, doubles, and quads. Sculls are 9½ feet long and may be made of wood or carbon fiber. Sculls have a smaller handle than a sweep oar, but the parts are the same as a sweep oar.

**Sculling** One of the two disciplines of rowing. Each person has two oars.

**Set** Set is the stability of the boat side to side, and its ability to ride level without leaning to the star-board or port. A boat is "set" by the rowers.

**Shell** Term used interchangeably with 'boat'

**Single** A shell with one rower (a sculler) who uses 2 oars to propel the boat.

**Skeg** A fin attached to the bottom of the boat near the stern that helps keep the boat on course and balanced.

**Slide Ratio** The ratio of time spent during the drive versus the recovery. The goal is to spend longer on the recovery than the drive. This maximizes the run of the boat as well as the amount of rest the oarsperson gets during the recovery phase of the stroke.

**Starboard** The right side of the boat when facing the direction of travel (the bow). Green is the color associated with Starboard.

**Stern** The rear of the boat; the direction the rowers are facing.

**Stretcher/Foot Stretcher** Where the rowers' feet go. Shoes may be permanently attached to the boat or adjustable straps hold rowers' own shoes to the footboard. Footstretchers adjust to accommodate rowers' height/leg length.

**Stroke** The cycle of the oar during rowing. One stroke consists of the catch, drive, finish, and recovery.

**Stroke Seat/Stroke** The rower who sits closest to the stern. The stroke sets the stroke rate and rhythm for the boat.

**Stroke Rate** The cadence of strokes per minute.

**Sweep Rowing/Sweep** One of the two disciplines of rowing where rowers use only one oar.

**Swing** The elusive feeling when near-perfect synchronization of motion occurs in the shell, enhancing the performance and speed.

**USRowing** United States Rowing is the governing body for rowing in the United States.

<http://www.usrowing.com>

**Weight (or Way) Enough** A command given by coaches and coxswains to stop an action.

Identifying Northwest Teams by Blades

Ashland High School



Lake Stevens Rowing



Bainbridge Island Rowing



Lakeside High School



Brentwood College School



Holy Names Academy



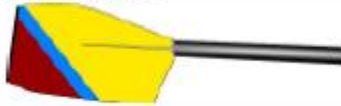
Commencement Bay Rowing



Lake Union Crew



Corvallis Rowing Club



Lake Washington Rowing



Everett Rowing Association



Marin Rowing Club



Green Lake Crew



Mt. Baker Crew



**Olympia Area Rowing**



**University of Washington**



**Oregon Assoc. of Rowers**



**Vancouver Lake Rowing Club**



**Oregon Rowing Unlimited**



**Vancouver Rowing Club**



**Pocock Rowing Center—Port**



**Pocock Rowing Center—Starboard**



**Rose City Rowing**



**Vashon Island Rowing**



**Shawnigan Lake School**



**Victoria City Rowing Club**



**Sammamish Rowing Association**

