

Greetings Moorestown rowers and families! Welcome to the Moorestown Rowing Club. The next several pages should answer many of your questions and cover some of the basics as they pertain to rowing in general and Moorestown specifically. It is designed mainly with novice rowers and parents in mind.

First off, my name is Rich Henderson and I am the Head Coach and Program Director. I have been a part of the team since the fall of 2008 and during my time with the program I have been lucky enough to have coached at all levels. I have been very impressed with the level of commitment from the kids and families since arriving, and I look forward to continued success within the program. If you have any questions that aren't answered here or on the website, please feel free to contact me at [coach.rich.mrc@gmail.com](mailto:coach.rich.mrc@gmail.com).

## **The Team**

I'd like to begin by first clarifying that while we are the Moorestown Rowing "Club" we are in fact only open to kids who are students at Moorestown High School. It's a bit of a misnomer, and USRowing officially refers to us as "Moorestown High School/Rowing Club." This distinction is important because nearly all of the races we will compete in this spring are open only to high school teams, NOT club teams. In fact, we will only see club teams at Cooper Cup and, if anyone is lucky enough to qualify, USRowing Youth Nationals.

Our team is split up into four smaller teams...You will hear us refer to the "varsity" and "novice" squads for both boys and girls. This is a bit of a short-cut for the following: The varsity team includes not only our varsity kids but also our lightweights and junior varsity rowers. The novice squads include both novice and freshman. In rowing, anyone can be in a varsity boat regardless of age or weight. Lightweights include everyone under a certain weight (girls 130 pounds and boys under 150 pounds,) and any age. Junior varsity is anyone who is not a senior with no weight requirement. A novice can be any age but it must be their first year of competitive rowing. It's important to mention that novices can be anywhere from freshman to seniors. A freshman rower may be a first year rower but doesn't have to be...If an athlete rowed prior to high school, they may compete as a freshman but perhaps not as a novice (this depends on the regatta.) This is a bit confusing, but your coaches will clarify more as the season goes on.

## **The Season**

As you may have noticed, we begin our "spring season" in January. It's only unusual for a crew program to begin in January because most teams don't end in November...Many of the teams that we will be competing against run year-round. We understand that there are members of the team who participate in winter sports, and those kids are excused from practice when necessary. They are, however, encouraged to make it to practice whenever possible. Once their season has concluded, they are required to attend daily practices. In the meantime, varsity rowers who compete in a winter sport may approach their coach to complete the day's workout during second session under the guidance of the novice coaching staff if that is something that they want to do. This courtesy is extended only to winter athletes while they are in-season.

As stated, our spring program begins in January in our erg room. The practice schedule is posted online. The erg room has approximately 40 ergs (what we call rowing machines,) some free weights/dumbbells, and reflective vests for the kids if we choose to send them for a run. There are also restroom facilities. This year, we have an AED and all coaches are CPR/AED certified.

We are planning on making the move to the boathouse in mid-February, but that obviously depends on if the river is thawed or not. If we can't row yet, we'll continue in the erg room

until the weather will allow us to go outside. It's not uncommon that for the first few weeks of water practice we have a couple of erg room days thrown in due to foul weather. Plenty of notice will be given if we do plan to do this. The schedule shifts slightly once we go outside, so again, check the website for practice times.

The online schedule includes all of our races. About those races...The first "race" you'll see is the Haddon Hammer. This is a 2000 meter erg race, meaning it happens on a rowing machine in a gym at Haddon Township High School. We've had a great deal of success at this event, winning multiple team titles as well as individual medals over the years, and I'm hopeful that we will continue to have success here.

The first on-the-water races we'll compete in are the Manny Flick races, or just simply the "Flick's." There are five Flick races and they'll grow in size dramatically from the first through the fifth. Starting with the third Flick they begin splitting into gender-specific AM and PM sessions. The boys will race in the AM for the third and fifth Flick and they will be in the PM for the fourth Flick. The girls, obviously, will be racing opposite the boys. These races are only warm-up's to the racing season. No medals are awarded and there are heats only - There are no finals. Kids may only race once. If your child is a lightweight, they will have to weigh in beginning with the third Flick. Typically there is only a single, early morning weigh-in period so even if you're racing in the afternoon you may have to come to weigh in bright and early. As is the case in all scholastic events, each race is 1500 meters.

During the Flick series, the squad coaches will get an opportunity to try out different lineups, work on technique, and sure things up for medal season. Don't be surprised to see major changes week-to-week during this time as we all try to get the pieces to fit together in the best way possible.

We also tend to head down to Lake Lenape for a race. The format there is similar to a Flick race and we treat it as if it were another Flick. The only reason to go is that it's more laid back, it's a change of pace for the kids, the venue is beautiful, and it's a good time to get together with the shore schools and do some South Jersey racing.

As we move into medal season, you should see lineup changes slow down a bit...This is because the coaches have used the past several weeks getting everything together and now it's time to set a crew, fine-tune them, and figure out how to get the most speed possible out of them. Additionally, this is the time of the year when the head coaches of each squad begin to focus more closely on the high-priority boats in preparation for these medal races and the assistants take the reins with the crews who are in more of a growth/developmental stage of competition.

These medal races include Garden State Championship, Cooper Cup, Philadelphia City Championship, and Stotesbury. Additionally, there is Scholastic Nationals and USRowing Youth Nationals. The last two regattas are only for qualifying crews. The Cooper Cup and USRowing Youth Nationals, because club teams compete, are 2000 meter races.

## **The Sport**

The sport of rowing is divided into "sweep" rowing and "sculling." We don't scull: in our boats each rower uses only one oar. Additionally, each boat has a coxswain steering and calling out instructions. Sculling means each rower uses two oars (and no coxswain.) Sculling boats are smaller than sweep boats - There are single, double, and quadruple sculls. We row only fours and eights. There are a couple of reasons for this. The first reason is that it just makes sense for a team of our size...The rule on the Cooper River is that each coach can only be responsible for two boats on the water. If we had 100 kids and they were all rowing singles and doubles, you can imagine how many coaches we would need. By focusing on rowing

eights, each coach can go out with up to 18 kids at once (versus a maximum of 8 if we were sculling.) Another reason is that collegiate rowing is all sweep rowing. The women's NCAA Championship and men's IRA Championship (there is no NCAA Championship for the men,) race only eights and fours, with the eights being the "priority" boats that everyone is aspiring to get in to.

## The Crew

As I mentioned above, each of our boats goes onto the water with a coxswain. Typically, the coxswain is the smallest person in the boat. The coxswain's most obvious job is to steer the boat, however their most important job is to keep the crew safe. This is because they're the only member of the crew facing forward. Additionally, because they are the "coach in the boat" it is also up to them to run the practice/race as planned and make corrections in the boat as necessary. Because of all of these duties, it is vitally important to the safety of the crew that they are alert at all times and paying attention to what they are doing. In addition to these duties, they also have a "cox box" that feeds them information to report back to the crew. This small computer not only amplifies their voice through speakers but also records the strokes per minute that the crew is rowing at and keeps time for pieces. Just to give you an idea, a top crew should be rowing over 40 strokes per minute at the start, settle into the mid-to upper-30s in the body of the race, then back over 40 for the sprint at the end. In an eight the coxswain sits in the stern (back) and in a four they sit in the bow (front.)

Whether an eight or a four, the crew is numbered from the bow to the stern. See the diagram on the next page. The member closest to the stern is called "stroke" and the person closest to the bow is called - wait for it - "bow." Because all of the rowers are facing the stern, everyone can see stroke seat and so that is whom they follow. The person sitting just behind stroke is always rowing the other side, and together they are known as "stern pair." Likewise, there is a "bow pair." We also refer to "stern four," "middle four," and "bow four" in an eight. It is very important that stern pair be able to both row in perfect unison as well as have the ability to hit the proper stroke rating during the body of a piece as called out by the coxswain. The two of them together (with direction from the coxswain) set a cadence that the crew must follow in order to achieve success.

## The Equipment

All of the racing shells that we own are manufactured in Connecticut by Vespoli. The eights that you see are roughly 55 feet long and weigh slightly less than 200 pounds. Our fours are about 42 feet long and weigh about 120 pounds. Each boat is just barely wide enough to sit in, and it's wider in the middle than at the bow and stern. As far as cost goes, eights are roughly \$36,000 and fours are about \$32,000.

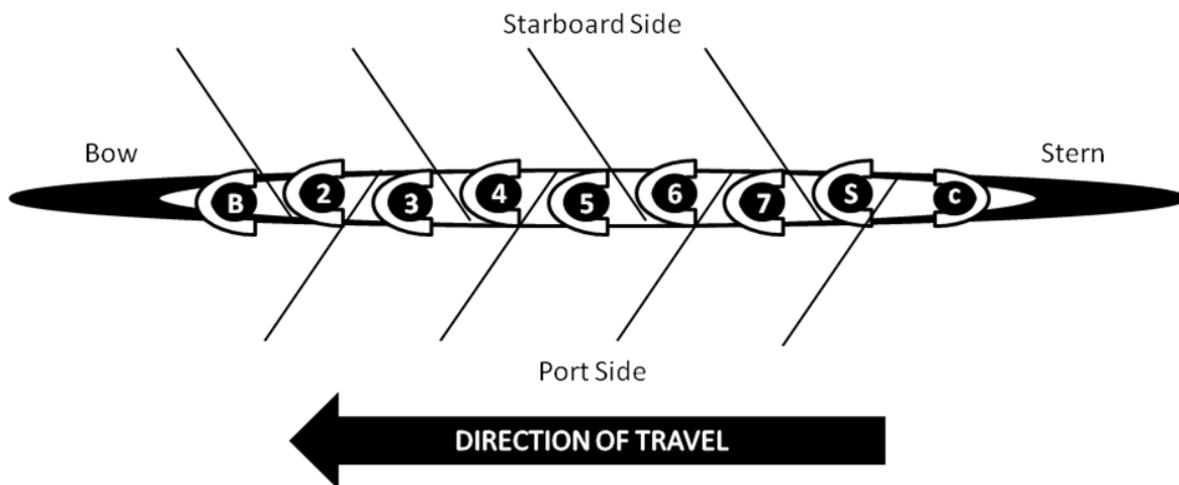
Our older boats have "Euro" style riggers while the newer boats all have "wing" riggers. Neither are included on the diagram because I'm not that good at computer animation. You'll know there is a difference as soon as you see them - The Euro riggers bolt onto the side of the hull while the wing riggers span the width of the boat and attach on to both gunwales (the upper ledge.)

It's very likely that all of our boats will be "port" rigged. This is standard, and means that stroke seat is rigged to row on port side. The seats then alternate port/starboard all the way back to bow seat which is on starboard side. This means that even numbered seats are port while odd numbered seats are starboard. Again, this is typical. There are other arrangements with "buckets" where it doesn't alternate all the way down the boat, but that is rare and usually unnecessary. It goes without saying that there are always the same number of ports and starboards, they just may be slightly out-of-order.

In the boat, you'll notice that the seat is on wheels...This is why rowers have big, strong legs. Additionally, the shoes are attached to the boat. Because of this, you'll want your athlete to wear socks to practice.

To accommodate different body types, everything in the boat is adjustable. The rails the seats slide on move back and forth. The shoes adjust back and forth as well as up and down. The riggers adjust up, down, in and out, and the wing riggers even adjust back and forth. The adjusting of this equipment isn't something that your kids have to worry about...That's the job of the coaching staff.

The other major piece of equipment is, obviously, the oar. All of our oars are made by Concept2 in New Hampshire. The price for a set of unpainted oars is close to \$3,000 with shipping. We have both "Smoothie2" and "Fat2" blades...The different designs have a different feel in the water and the coaches decide which design best suits each particular crew. Regardless of the blade design, all oars are roughly 12 feet long. Fours use slightly shorter oars than eights and girls use slightly shorter oars than boys. Like the rigging in the boat, they too are adjustable. We can make them longer or shorter, we can adjust the distance from the collar to the blade, and we can further adjust the distance from the collar to the handle. It is even possible to adjust the pitch, or angle that the oar enters the water. All of this is done to change the feel and help the rowers row more efficiently.



### Important Notes

Practices are never optional. As noted above, unless you're competing in a winter sport, you must be at practice every day. Because of the nature of the sport, if you slack off others are going to have to row you down the river, and that's not fair to them. If you are sick and cannot come to practice, you must inform the coaching staff by email that day, preferably by noon so that they will have the opportunity to try to make other arrangements for your crew. If one person is missing, it is likely that the rest of the members of the crew will be running that day. Email addresses for the coaches can be found on the website.

Races are never optional. Check the website and know that you must attend each race including the Haddon Hammer.

Spring Break is mandatory. This isn't unusual for a spring sport. We will have our last practice before Easter on Thursday and then we're off until the Monday afternoon after Easter. That gives you a few days to get away. You may not extend this break in any way without consequence. Note that practice times have been adjusted and lengthened during Spring

Break. Again, if you miss practice time there will be consequences: If you miss one practice you will sit out a race, if you miss two practices you may be removed from the team.

If you are sick or injured and cannot participate in practice, you may not attend practice. This isn't punishment, it's just preferable to keep athletes who are not participating from interfering with those who are. It also gives you time to recuperate. If you miss practice due to injury or extended illness, you will be required to submit a doctor's note clearing you for full participation in athletics before you may return to practice.

If you have any problem or question, take it first to your squad coach. If they are unable to satisfy you, bring it to the head coach's attention. At that point, if you still don't feel you've received a satisfactory answer, a board member can be involved in helping to resolve the matter.

Part of the registration process requires you to get all of your paperwork cleared through the school nurse. You may not participate until this is done. Know that just because you are participating in another sport doesn't mean that you are clear - There are forms that must be completed each season as well as forms that must be completed specifically for Moorestown Crew regardless.

Boat lineups are determined by the coaching staff and coaching staff alone. A lot goes into determining who makes the crew, and those are coaching decisions which are made with the "big picture" in mind. Erg times, technique, dedication, and attitude all come in to play when we put initial lineups together. Seat racing will occur throughout the season, and we've come to see that more often than not the winners in seat racing tend to be the kids who are a good balance of the above attributes. It's important to realize that we coaches have no "agenda" other than making Moorestown Crew the best team it can be.

Over the past few years we've been good neighbors in the boathouse despite being the largest team. This doesn't happen by accident. Your coaches will demand that you act respectfully towards them, each other, and everyone you come in contact with while you represent Moorestown Crew. Boathouse rules will be communicated to you all clearly and we will enforce them daily. We will all be training our tails off in the hopes of beating our neighbors, but be good sports about it and follow the rules both in the boathouse and on the river so that nobody can claim that we're "bad sports."