Birmingham Area Youth Rowing Student and Parent Handbook
Introduction

Rowing has been described as the "ultimate team sport" because each rower's individual effort, no matter how great, must harmonize with that of every other rower to create the smooth, synchronous flow of a winning boat.

Successful rowers develop a deep practical understanding of the power of teamwork. They learn to build and perform as a team, and they learn to deal with the common obstacles and problems that impede teamwork. Rowers learn a kind of mental discipline that stands them in good stead in any endeavor they may undertake.

Rowing is the ultimate team sport, on and off the water! Our rowers make the boats go fast when they work together. However, it takes an even bigger crew of parents and volunteers working together to make the whole team function smoothly. The easiest way to get involved is to plan on attending the regattas to support the team, and help out with the necessary operations.

Mission Statement:

Birmingham Area Youth Rowing (BAYR) is a community based, not for profit organization located at the Lake Purdy Boathouse on the beautiful Lake Purdy. BAYR’s mission is to provide rowing programs in a positive and competitive environment for all ages. Our Goal is to promote teamwork, strong character, personal integrity, fitness and good nutritional habits. We encourage all members to actively volunteer and be involved in their community. We provide an environment where rowers of all ages can work together in a constructive team environment, fostering personal and social skills of significant value that are essential to our community.

Coaches

BAYR is extremely fortunate to have a talented, experienced and dedicated coaching staff.

General Information

What is Rowing?

In rowing, boats are divided into two categories, “sweep rowing” and “sculling.” In sculling, each rower has two oars each about 9.5 feet long. Sculls can be “singles”, “doubles”, or “quads”. In a sweep rowing, each rower has only one oar, 12 feet long. Shells come in "pairs" and “fours” with or without coxswain, and “eights” with coxswain.

In both kinds of racing boats, rowers are able to take long and powerful strokes with the oars because their feet are tied into shoes. They move back and forth on seats that roll on a track about 2.5 feet long with swivel oarlocks.

The racing shells themselves are light and streamlined, made out of carbon fiber or of a thin
composite less than 1/8 of an inch thick. For example, an 8-oared shell is 62 feet long, weighs less than 250 pounds, and can carry a crew weighing as much as 1,800 pounds.

The common racing distance is 2,000 meters. Under good conditions, an 8-oar crew can row this distance in less than five minutes at an average speed of about 14 mph.

**Boat Positions**

There are eight rowing positions in a racing shell. Seats 1 and 2 are referred to as the bow pair.

This pair is special, as they, “set the boat”. Rowers in these positions must have smooth and fluid technique. Seats 3, 4, 5 and 6 are referred to as the power, or engine seats. Rowers in these positions must be large and strong. Seats 7 and 8 are referred to as the stern pair. They set the stroke rate for each side of the boat. The number 8 seat is usually the hardest to row. Bow seats require fluid and consistent rowers. It is important to remember that all three sections of the boat are equally important. A good winning boat consists of eight people rowing together as a team under the direction of their coxswain.

The coxswains are team members who are often overlooked, receiving little praise or encouragement (other than being thrown into the water to celebrate a boat’s victory). The coxswain is the eyes and ears of the boat. The coxswain has to be a good motivator because, once the race begins, the coxswain is the only one who can talk to the rowers.

The coxswain must guide the boat to the starting line and get the boat lined up. Once the race begins, the coxswain talks to the rowers, telling them where they are in relationship to the other boats and how much farther they have to go. A coxswain must know rowing technique, so that if a correction is necessary, he/she will know what to do and why to do it. It is vital that the coxswain communicates with the rowers in a motivating way. The coxswain steers by giving directions to the rowers and by keeping the boat in the proper lane to avoid penalties.

In Sculling, rower’s positions are also counted from the bow of the boat. In a double, the bow is seat 1, and the stern is seat 2. In a quad, the bow is seat 1, and the stern is seat 4.

**Fundamentals of Racing**

In general, there are two seasons for rowing. In the fall, “head” races are conducted. The two most popular head races are The Head of the Charles held in Boston and The Head of the Hooch in Tennessee. In a head race, crews race in staggered running starts for time over winding river courses lasting several miles. These races usually take between 15 and 20 minutes. These head races require great endurance.

The spring season is sprint season. Crews are held stationary at the start and take off on the commands of the regatta official. Should a crew anticipate the command and cause a false start, the starter or referee will call all crews back to the start. A crew assessed two false starts may be disqualified. Once the race has begun, only the referee may stop the crews. A referee in a motor launch follows the race. The referee is the sole authority on whether the crews are complying with the rules of racing. The boats must stay in their lanes. However, crews that
stray out of their lane will not necessarily be penalized as long as they do not interfere with or impede any other competitors. A group of judges at the finish line determines the order of finish and records the times. The winning boat is the one whose bow crosses the finish line first.

A good crew must be precise. The oars and rowers must move together as one. At the beginning of the stroke, the oars should catch the water quickly. During the stroke, the oar blades should remain buried. At the finish of the stroke all oars should leave the water together without splashing. Between strokes, on the recovery, the oars are turned parallel to the water. This is called feathering and the purpose is to cut down wind resistance and avoid hitting the water. As the rower approaches the catch, the oar is squared up again.

While the finish is obviously an exciting part of any race, the start is often the most thrilling part of rowing a race. The sight of six eight-oared shells pounding off the line at forty or more strokes a minute is one of the most exciting moments in crew. Even the most inexperienced spectator can spot a good crew. A well-rowed shell will run smoothly through the water with very little check between strokes.

**BAYR Code of Conduct**

A successful crew requires discipline and cooperation on the part of all rowers, coaches and parents. Adherence to the following disciplinary rules will ensure that BAYR remains well respected in the local community as well as the larger rowing community.

**General**

1. Respect for people: Coaches, teammates, volunteers, chaperones, are expected to be treated in a courteous and respectful manner at all times.
2. Foul Language: Language that is foul, abusive or disrespectful to others is not permitted at BAYR Crew. This includes all practices, bus rides, regattas and BAYR Crew events.
3. Respect for property: Rowers will respect all property and equipment of BAYR Crew and the Lake Purdy Rowing Club. Rowers will not damage, alter, or remove any property that is not their own. While on regattas trips, rowers will respect the property of hotels and buses.
4. Illegal activities: Tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs and controlled substances are all strictly prohibited.
5. Personal Decorum: Public display of affection is not acceptable when involved in any crew function. After three warnings a parent conference will be held.

**Behavior Guidelines for Rowing Events**

**Local Regatta Rules (no overnight stay)**

1. No student athlete, under ANY circumstances, will drive him/herself to any away regattas unless in the Birmingham area. The rowers will be transported to and from away regattas by BAYR parents if not in Birmingham area. Carpooling will be arranged
by the coaches or carpool coordinator. Once assigned to a vehicle, you must return with that same vehicle unless other arrangements are made and approved in advance with their coach.

2. All athletes are expected to attend all regattas unless the absence has prior approval of their coach.

3. All athletes are to remain with the team at all regattas. Athletes will remain for the last event in which BAYR has an entry and assist with de-rigging and loading boats and equipment unless otherwise approved by the Coach.

4. Rowers are to refrain from public displays of affection (kissing, petting, and inappropriate touching).

5. Rowers shall adhere to the team dress/uniform policy while attending and participating in all BAYR activities/regattas/while on team travel.

**Regatta Rules for Overnight Stays**

1. For all races, rowers are expected to remain at the race site until the event is concluded and all equipment is packed and loaded.

2. Rowers may not leave the race site, hotel or planned activity without permission from the head coach. Also, parents may not give their child permission to leave the race site, hotel or planned activity without consulting the head coach.

3. When coaches are not present the head chaperone is in charge.

4. The curfew the night before an overnight race will be at the discretion of the head coach.

5. In the event a rower displays non-compliance with published guidelines for conduct on an overnight trip, that rower may be asked to room with their parent(s). If the offense is severe enough the parent will be asked to take the athlete home.

6. Room assignments will not be changed without the permission of the head coach, but visitation from other same gender BAYR athletes will be allowed PRIOR to curfew.

7. Under no circumstances will visiting rooms of opposite gender be allowed at any time.

8. Under no circumstances will BAYR athletes be allowed to leave their assigned room AFTER curfew. In the case of emergency, please contact a coach or chaperone.

9. A rower allowing anyone other than a member of BAYR to visit his or her room is in violation of the BAYR Conduct Code.

10. The head chaperone, in conjunction with the head coach, will oversee the organized activities in which the rowers will participate, accompanied by chaperones.

11. When buses are used, there will be a head bus chaperone that will be responsible for all decisions while traveling by bus.

12. During bus trips, rowers will only be allowed to go to designated restaurants. Other establishments in the area are off limits.

**Rower Responsibilities**

Have You Got What It Takes? Have you got what it takes to be a team player in rowing? To be a part of an energetic and enjoyable crew takes consistent effort and a lot of thought. Here are some things to think about:

**KEEP YOUR WORD** – Only promise what you can deliver. If you promise to meet the group at
a certain time, be five minutes early. Be consistent in your actions.

**CARRY YOUR FAIR SHARE OF THE LOAD** – Both on and off the water the term “pulling together” is very appropriate. Don’t expect others to pick up the slack.

**BE A FRIEND** – Take your other teammates’ best interest to heart.

**NEVER MAKE A FELLOW ROVER LOOK BAD** – Praise in public, criticize in private. If you have concerns with a fellow rower, discuss them in private with the coach.

**GO ABOVE AND BEYOND** – Deliver more than you promise. Volunteer to help out the team. Your fellow rowers will be there when you need them.

**LIGHTEN UP** - Rowing is a sport to be enjoyed. Try not to get stressed out over situations or people. Interact with your team. You’ll learn about them as well as about yourself.

**CAN YOU SWIM?** Rowing is a water sport. For your safety it is important that you can swim. Be sure to notify your coach if you can’t swim.

**TRAINING AND CONDITIONING** - Training and conditioning are important for each rower’s performance. All aspects are equally important; nutrition, rest and exercise. All rowers need plenty of sleep. Sleep is important to rowers because it gives their muscles time to recover and rebuild. A consistent amount of sleep each night is more important than one long night before a race.

Diet should be high in protein and carbohydrates, including lots of fruits vegetables, white meats (chicken and fish) and complex carbohydrates like pasta, potatoes and rice. A good breakfast and lunch is a must. A healthy snack low in protein and fat before practice is recommended for energy.

The night before a race it is important to avoid heavy, greasy foods and heavily sugared, caffeinated drinks.

Lightweights should maintain their weight. NO CRASH DIETING!!!!!

**DRINK PLENTY OF WATER!!!!!**

**Practice Rules**

Absences, defined as non-emergency and no prior coach notification, by High School and Middle School athletes, are never acceptable. Absences are, however, inevitable and sometimes necessary. It is important to understand rowing is a sport where each large boat requires 9 rowers in attendance. If one is absent, 8 people do not get to participate in practice due to the absence of one person. If we cannot plan ahead for the absenteeism, it may be to the detriment to 8 other rowers and possibly the team. If an athlete misses a practice the week before a race, the athlete will not race. **Consequently, rowers will text their Coach no later than 24 hours before the start of the practice to inform them (or leave a message) that**
the rower will be absent.

**Not attending practice has the following effects:**
- The absent athlete does not develop when they do not practice.
- Other athletes are unable to practice.

**Not attending practice may or may not have the following effects:**
- The absent athlete is removed from a boat and replaced by another athlete for practice.
- The absent athlete is removed from the boat and replaced by another athlete for a race.

**Cancellation:** On the water practice continues in all weather conditions, except lightning. Indoor practice continues in all weather conditions.

**Practice Schedule:** Additional practices may be added if deemed necessary by the coaches

- **High School:** starts September 6th
  - Monday-Friday from 4:30-6:30pm
  - Saturdays from 7:30-9:30am

- **Middle School:** starts September 10th
  - Tuesdays from 4:15-6:00pm
  - Saturdays from 9:00-10:45am

**Practice Site:**

Lake Purdy Rowing Club, 3780 Boat Launch Rd, Birmingham, AL 35242

**What Athletes Should Bring to Practice:**

- Flip flops or water shoes
- Running shoes with dry socks
- Towel
- One 7/16”, one ¾” and one adjustable wrench
- Change of dry clothes
- WATER! Each rower is responsible to bring his or her own water each day. For health reasons, drinking from another rower’s water bottle with or without permission is prohibited.

**Dress Code**

- Men: feet protection, rowing shorts or uni-suits (or biking shorts, or long spandex shorts), shell shorts, tank tops or t-shirts. Men may remove shell shorts IMMEDIATELY prior to shoving off from the dock. **No thin under armor style compression shorts.**

- Women: feet protection, sports bras (or equivalent), row shorts or uni-suits (or biking shorts, or long spandex shorts), tank tops or t-shirts.

- Prohibited at BAYR:
1. White or otherwise sheer spandex, this includes sport bras
2. "Altered" (i.e. shortened or trimmed) garments revealing or immodest clothing
3. Thin under armor style compression shorts.
Athlete Parking and Parent Pick up and Drop Off

- Parking for all athletes will be provided at the Lake Purdy rowing site. Carpoolers are appreciated.
- The 10MPH Speed limit along Lake Purdy access road will be obeyed.
- No loud music or cell phone use when on the site
- Be courteous and friendly to all neighbors
- Parents need to be at the facility 10 minutes before the end of practice to pick up their athletes.

Regattas

Regattas are unlike other sport competitions. Generally speaking, regattas are ALL day events and ALL 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. Rowers are not dismissed until the boat trailer as well as the food trailer is loaded and the coaches dismiss everyone at the same time. Parents volunteer at the food trailer to provide healthy food throughout the day.

Regatta Supplies for Athletes

- Uniform and appropriate foot wear
- Personal water bottle
- Sunscreen
- Bug Spray
- Sunglasses and/or hat
- Pillow and blanket
- Dry change of clothes
- Sweatshirt, jacket, rain gear
- Homework/books/games/cards
- Money for regatta t-shirts

Regatta Supplies for Parents

- Portable chair
- Shade tent (usually parents share these)
- Binoculars
- Personal water bottle
- Sunscreen
- Bug Spray
- Sunglasses and/or hat
- Sweatshirt, jacket, rain gear
- Homework/books/games/cards
- Money for regatta t-shirts and food
**Regatta Food**

Food at regattas is arranged by the food committee. ALL athletes must pay for food at each regatta.

**Parent Participation at Regattas**

Parents are encouraged to come early on race days and stay for the entire day.

Parents should not get involved in the coaches’ decisions regarding boat assignments for any given race. Please do not approach any coach on race day for any grievances. Parents should not try to talk to coaches or athletes at the boat trailer as they prepare for or finish races.

Regattas are not the appropriate time or place to discuss issues with the coaches, as they are focus on the day’s events. Please set up an appointment to discuss issues.
Glossary of Rowing Terms

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 (2 rowers, sweep, no cox).
2+ Symbol for a —coxed pair (2 rowers, sweep, cox).
2x Symbol for a —double (2 rowers, sculling).
4- Symbol for a —straight four (4 rowers, sweep, no cox).
4+ Symbol for a —four (4 rowers, sweep, cox).
4x Symbol for a —quad (4 rowers, sculling, no cox).
4x+ Symbol for a —coxed quad (4 rowers, sculling, cox).
8+ Symbol for an —eight (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.
Bow The front of the boat. Also the term used for the person rowing in —1 seat.
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-suhn] 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.
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. 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 [guhn-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 starboard 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. Foot stretchers 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.