

crew

Crew team gets by on guts and bare necessities

By GREG TAUBE
Of the Emerald

In 1972 the Oregon crew gained national notoriety when Sports Illustrated did a story on the team and their coxswain, Vicki Brown. She was the first female to compete in a men's crew race in the United States.

Since then, not much has been heard of crew around Eugene, and frankly, there hasn't been much to say. A 1974 victory at the Western Sprints is the highlight of an unspectacular last few years. New coaches show up every year with big plans for the future, but after one frustrating season, their dreams crushed, they quit.

The situation at Oregon doesn't have much to offer a coach. Pac-8 schools such as Cal and Washington work with budgets in excess of \$100,000 per year while the Ducks get about \$5,000 a year, lowest in the league. The team practices at Dexter Reservoir, 20 miles from school. They can't afford to buy their own boats so they rent old ones that are constantly in need of repair.

Last year the team suffered through another losing season. Surprisingly, coach Mike Johnson came back. Now he has the distinction of being the first Oregon crew coach to return for a second year since 1971. Why did Johnson come back?

"The disadvantages at Oregon can be looked at as advantages. I don't think a big-tie program is necessarily good," said Johnson. "When I rowed for Cal, we had the best equipment and facilities but with it came a win-at-all-costs attitude. People get more out of rowing when the pressure to win isn't so great. They can relax and enjoy the sport for its beauty," he said.

"Also, you can't expect to win in this sport in one year," he added. "It takes awhile to learn to row effectively. Most of the people we have this year are new but they're improving all the time. At least we now have a basis from which to build."

The financial situation of the team is improving too. After doing numerous cleanups following football and basketball games and track and gymnastic meets, the team bought 20 new oars. This doesn't quite bring them up to Washington's level, but it's a start.

One problem the sport has always faced is finding enough qual-



Rowing on a crew team can be strenuous, as can be witnessed by the facial expressions of the rowers in the near boat. Oregon's Club Sports crew team survives on only about five percent of what some of the West

Coast powers, namely California and Washington, get by on. However, through hard work, things are starting to improve for the crew team.

ity athletes who are willing to put in the time and effort required. Three hours a day, six days a week for most of the school year is quite a commitment to a sport most people know nothing about. So, what is the attraction of crew?

"One of the best things about rowing is that almost everyone starts in college so you are even with everyone," said Mike Holcomb, two oar in the lightweight eight. "With a situation like that, it pretty much comes down to which team works the hardest."

Holcomb ran track in high school and his first two years at Oregon.

"It (crew) is a much more team oriented sport than track," he said. "If I screw up, it screws up seven other guys and I'm always very aware of that."

Heavyweight stroke Lance Baughman agrees. "Crew is probably the ultimate team sport. We pull for each other because you can't let the other guys down. If one guy lets off, gives into the pain, everyone suffers."

Very few college oarsmen ever row before they get to college. Primarily athletes in high school in other sports, they want to continue their athletic careers, but in a new direction.

"Rowing requires strength, endurance, body control, flexibility and mental discipline," says Baughman. "Races are so long that it becomes a mind game to keep going, but it's a great feeling afterwards, win or lose, if I know everyone in my boat gave it all they had."

Paradoxically, rowing is one of the most physically demanding sports while being virtually injury free. It doesn't tear the body down like some sports nor does it put extreme stress on any one particular muscle group. The entire body must move in a fluid, rhythmic motion, so flexibility is important. Power generates from the legs and lower back with the arm and shoulder muscles used to guide the oar and finish off each stroke.

Last Saturday the Ducks raced Stanford and Oregon State at Dexter. Their inexperience showed as they were beaten by both schools in the heavyweight race and by Oregon State's lightweight in the 160 pound competition.

Oregon's performance might

have disappointed some people but it was an improvement over last year. Eleven of the 16 Oregon oarsmen had never rowed a race before and when one considers it takes more than a year to learn to row, there is cause for optimism. Especially when nearly everyone plans to return next year, including Coach Johnson.

In the immediate future, the Ducks travel to Corvallis Saturday for the Corvallis Regatta. This is traditionally one of the largest rowing events in the Northwest. Crews from Washington, OSU, Western Washington, Humboldt State, Pacific Lutheran, and Seattle Pacific will compete along with Oregon.

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