

SIDELINES

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Emerald Sport Supplement

Best of the West: Women's light-eight crew team preparing for nationals, again

And then there were eight. And a coxswain, of course. Well, a light-eight and a coxswain, to be exact.

At the Dexter reservoir, their solitary boat glides across the smooth water, eight oars pulling in unison. And a coxswain calling out instructions.

Their coach, Dave Baugh, riding in what he calls their "jetson's coach launch," yells through a megaphone about glide, pace, drive, catch, and recovery.

And the Club Sports women's light-eight crew team rows on through their morning workout, motivated by their dedication — to each other and to their goals.

Earlier in the year, the team goal was to win the Pacific Coast Rowing Championships. They did that, becoming the first boat to win an eight-oar event at the Pac-10s for Oregon. In exchange, they earned the right to go on to the National Collegiate Rowing Championships on June 13-14 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Now, only two goals remain for the team: training to win the national title and earning enough money just to get to the race.

"(Raising money for the trip) is a team thing, as opposed to each individual having to raise any certain amount," Baugh says.

In the next three weeks, the team will need to raise between \$3,000-\$4,000 to help pay for traveling and living expenses.

Team members will be soliciting donations from various businesses and alumni through letters and personal contacts. They also hope to get some sponsors who may be able to get their names or logos on the team's boat while they are at the national meet, which will be televised by ESPN.

At Oregon, crew is part of the Club Sports program, and they receive only about \$7,000 from Club Sports in addition to money they raise themselves. Meanwhile, one of the strongest crew programs in the west, the University of Washington, operates with a traveling budget alone of about \$79,000, says Baugh, who was a coxswain for the Washington program for four years.

While the Washington program is considered to be a perennial powerhouse, the Oregon light-eight team has become a dynasty, of sorts, in its own right.

Last year, the Oregon light-eight boat finished second at the Pac-10 meet and earned a berth to the national regatta where they lost to Radcliffe.

Five of the eight rowers from last year's boat have returned this year, including three rowers who have been in the boat for three years. In addition, only one rower is a novice, and all of the other rowers have between two and four years experience.

Although the team members say the national meet "was in our minds a lot earlier this year just because we knew that we had enough returning people so that we could be a good boat," this year's trip to nationals may be most important to seniors Teresae Hukari and Gayle Johnson, both of whom have been on the light-eight women's boat for three years.

"It's our last shot," Hukari says. "It's pretty important," Johnson adds.

But besides being their last shot, the two also feel this may be their best shot at winning it all.

"This is the first time we have raced together for the whole season without changing the boat," Johnson says. "The last two years, we just kind of put a boat together for nationals and then took that over there."

To go along with the team's experience this year,

team members say their first-year coach has also helped them a great deal.

Baugh, a recently-graduated Oregon law school student, in addition to having rowed with the Washington team, also coached a women's masters crew in Seattle before coming to Oregon.

Baugh is the first coach in recent history to have come from outside of the Oregon crew program. Usually, the volunteer coaches are people who have rowed at Oregon.

"Just having Dave out was really encouraging because he helped us a lot from the beginning," say members of the team. "It is the first time we have had a knowledgeable coach as him. He's a great coach."

But while praise for Baugh flows freely, he also freely returns it, claiming this team has yet to peak.

"We definitely haven't peaked in terms of what we can do, so we have three weeks to find out exactly what we can do," Baugh says.

"They're definitely more dedicated because there are just the nine of them and there are no subs to replace them yet they know they have to keep working hard," Baugh says. "Like I said, rowing by themselves, they have a lot of savvy. For about a month, they have been

rowing good, and I still don't think they have peaked yet."

At their peak, the team hopes to cut its best time of 7:20.2 over 2,000 meters to about 7:15 at the national meet. But that won't be very easy: at the national regatta, they will have only one shot at it.

"It's kind of scary to think we'll be going all the way over there for one race," the team members say. Their race will be on Saturday, May 14, at 2 p.m., Eastern time. "We'll go all the way over there just to race for eight minutes."

"The Eastern crews are good, especially in the lightweight classification," Baugh says. "I can't really make a prediction because I haven't seen the other crews row, but we'll be in there. I just know from their attitudes and such that if it's close, they'll take it. They'll either get blown away or they'll take it."

Anyone interested in going out for crew next year should contact the Club Sports office in the basement of the EMU. A meeting for all those interested will be scheduled for early June.

Story & photos by Allan Lazo



Women's light-eight crew team: Teresae Hukari, Kris Sternberg, Sasha Stone, Teresae Bujacich, Lisa Woodworth, Kitty O'Doherty, Marge Kuehn, Gayle Johnson, Robin Hendricks.

