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QUICK CATCH!



Community Rowing in the Nation's Capital

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www.capitalrowing.org

The Rows of Oxford: Capital's Very Own Old Blue

INTERVIEW BY HOLLY GERBERICH, Competitive Women's program

It's a race so famous that it is simply called The Boat Race.

2008 marked the 154th anniversary of this notorious competition that began as a big idea between two childhood schoolmates who ended up at the rival universities Oxford and Cambridge. One challenged the other to a boat race and thus the tradition began each year, with the loser from the previous year challenging the winner for a re-match.

It is by far, the world's most popular regatta – and not just within the sport, but with the general population of the UK. An estimated quarter of a million people line the Thames River in London each year to view the competition which includes only four crews and two races. The television viewing audience in the UK is another seven to nine million.

The event also includes a Veteran's Race that takes place two days prior to The Boat Race. It was organized 12 years ago by some "Old Blues" (as Oxford alumni are called) that wanted to have a reunion at the time of the Race.

This year, Capital Rowing Club's Duncan Spencer returned again to become, at 67, the second oldest competitor (he kindly reminded me that his mate Alexander Lindsay was the oldest at age 72). Duncan recently took some time to chat with me about this remarkable experience and his rowing life.

Holly Gerberich: How many Veterans' Races have you rowed?

Duncan Spencer: Every year since 1995 – that was the year of the 1965 crew reunion. The last three have been very disappointing. Cambridge has been very well organized and trained all winter. Oxford put together a crew at the last minute, practiced once or twice and then raced. Since there are so many Americans that come to row, it is nearly impossible to get our crew together for more that.

Cambridge has beat Oxford for the last three years! Overall, they have eight wins to our five.

Even though the Veteran's Race is minor addenda to The Boat Race and the secondary Isie Goldie race, veterans' rowing overall

has evolved to higher standards. Ten years ago, it was a smaller, less intense event.

And this year, you were not the oldest rower, even though one website mistakenly reported that you were?

I was not the oldest! Alexander Lindsay, 72, was the oldest to row in the Veteran's Race this year. I first rowed with him at Henley in 1964. He was a member of 1960 British VIII Olympic team.

We should not be rowing with the 40 and 50 year-olds, but there is desperation to find people who can row this race year to year.

Tell me about the day of The Boat Race.

It's a terrific hoot! I love going back each year.

"In this sport, you have to drink the cup of humiliation down to the very dregs. If you are not willing to be beaten, you will not get ahead."



1964 Oxford Crew at The Boat Race, with Duncan Spencer at stroke. Cambridge pulled out the win that year.



Fifty-five years after learning to row, Duncan is still bringing home the hardware. Here he shows off medals won at the 2007 Masters Nationals in Oak Ridge, Tenn.

I have dozens of lifelong friends from my three years there and the bonds and the experience are truly unique. I also have a sister in London, and when I go there, I visit as many friends as possible.

The Boat Race day is like a national holiday. There are over a quarter of a million spectators – something unimaginable in U.S. rowing. It's like a mob scene ... the entire city pays attention. And there are only four crews competing!

The Oxford Old Blues hire a large boat from which to watch The Race. After, the University Boat Club hosts a black tie (and riotous) Boat Race dinner in a posh, downtown hotel. Only on the 150th anniversary of The Boat Race (2004) were women invited to the Dinner (aside from the few women who have actually participated in The Race – several coxswains and one Old Blue, Nick, who, now trans-gendered is called Nicola). I took my 15 year old daughter (at the time) that year.

After that is the Ball – for both schools – which is a big affair. I don't go to the Ball these days, but I did when I was in school, and it was always a drunken rout.

How many Boat Races did you row while at Oxford?

I rowed in three boat races – 1963, 1964 and 1965 and we won two of those four.

What was The Boat Race and rowing like in the '60's?

Everyone is going to laugh. It was another age.

Race training was very much like it is today. The only difference is that the training now is much more intense and much more scientific. We paid little attention to a good diet or even exercise outside of rowing or running. No weights, no heartbeat monitoring, no professional coaching.

Old Blues had amateur coaches. None of them were paid. Neither the Oxford nor Cambridge boat clubs are supported by their universities. They have to buy everything themselves. In fact, until the 1980s when very welcome TV sponsorship came about, all the costs of The Boat Race were met by the members of the two clubs. It is still one of the biggest free sports events. Before that it was a terrible scramble to get donations.

Professionalism in rowing has increased enormously. Everything has become more expensive. Everyone has started to hire professional coaches and buy better equipment. This has brought a much higher class of sportsman into the game. In the last seven years, the standard of The Boat Race has been nearly at the Olympic level. Almost every member of this year's crews will be trying out for the national team.

Where else have you rowed over the years?

I rowed at Yale before Oxford. Yale was once a great rowing school. But a man named Kingman Brewster was elected president and he hated rowing. Yale lost the Harvard race for 18 years after he was elected.

I worked as a journalist for 13 years, dur-

ing which I rowed just a little at Potomac (Boat Club). It's only been the last 15-20 years that I've really got back into it.

When did you first start rowing?

I started at a boys' prep school in Massachusetts in 1953 when I was 13. My Scottish father was in the shipping business and came to the U.S. after WWI. He always loved water sports and he taught me to row when I was very young, so it was natural to take rowing where it was offered. And I love boats, I always have.

Where are all of the rest of the rowers in your age group?

There are a great many of people my age still rowing. I am not sure why our club is so thin in geezers, but there are a bunch at PBC (Potomac Boat Club). It may have something to do with this city. DC is a workaholic's paradise.

Masters rowing is more and more fun every year because I've gotten to know more and more people in my age group – you know they are going to see each other at various races.

I've always been fond of rowers – they are some of the finest people I've ever met. In this sport, you have to drink the cup of humiliation down to the very dregs. If you are not willing to be beaten, you will not get ahead in this sport. It's a no excuse, racing sport. You can't blame the ref, luck or anything else.

How long will you continue to row?

I don't think will do too many more years of sweep, but I will continue to scull. As Dave Challinor, a member of PBC who recently died said: the main thing is to keep going.

So who won The Boat Race this year? Oxford did, by six boat lengths. And due to the appalling windy and rainy rowing conditions, their time of 20 minutes and 53 seconds was the slowest since 1947.

How to Go Out in a Single and Not Tip Over

Thanks to Michael Brown (Club PM, Sculling & VP – Operations) and Ashley Doherty (SAW, Sculling), Capital has three new additions to our sculling fleet – and new oars to boot!

BY SAMEERA HASAN, MICHAEL BROWN AND ASHLEY DOHERTY

Did you walk into the boathouse at the beginning of May and nearly run into a bright yellow single in the middle bay? Thanks to Michael Brown and Ashley Doherty, Capital's newish novice sculling program has three new flat-bottomed training boats.

Most rowing camps teach sculling using these boats, and as skill levels progress rowers move up to the thinner racing shells. They are also excellent boats for recreational sculling.

Ashley raised the possibility of donating a novice/recreational shell last summer. With his mind always on Capital's fleet, Michael started to keep an eye out for a possible boat and noticed the Zephyr for sale at Craftsbury around Thanksgiving 2007. When she agreed to donate the boat, Michael started thinking of doing something similar since, by coordinating their two donations, they would really make a difference for Capital. This

January while rowing at the Florida Rowing Center, Michael spotted the Maas 24 and the other Zephyr.

Delivery from Craftsbury was repeatedly delayed. The shell was finally delivered to Baltimore and the driver explained that they had been unable to find the boat onsite. As it turned out, one of the Zephyrs had been put on wrong rack and was mixed up with the racing shells. But as luck would have it, the boat was unwrapped to show a brand new boat or one that had just barely been rowed.

Florida Rowing Center delivered their other two shells a week later, and just in time for our first Novice Sculling class session.

Ashley selected the name "Capital Nation" for her Zephyr. Michael will name the other the "Capital Donation." The Maas will be known as the "Siberian Express" on behalf of Michael's two daughters, both of whom come

from Siberia.

Michael and Ashley have further enhanced the donor spirit amongst Capitalists! Since the sculling boat donations, Capital has also received donated sculling oars (courtesy of Michael Brown), cash donations for a new launch engine, and many man-hours of donated time to install and reconfigure racks for the new boats, to train the new novice scullers, to paint and prep the new oars, and so on. Many thanks to all Capital contributors – whether you give back with your time, money or both!

Sculling program member Rob Best takes to the course at the 2007 US Rowing Masters Nationals in Oak Ridge, Tenn.

Inset: An example of the Peinert flat-bottomed training boat, recently added to Capital's small boat fleet.



Photo: Rachel Freedman

CRC EVENTS



Photo: Rachel Freedman

A hearty collection of medals won by Capital Rowing Club at a past Charm City Regatta.

**Sat. 6/21
Charm City Sprints
Baltimore, MD**
Hosted by Baltimore Rowing Club. Contact your program representative for more information.

**Mon. 6/23
Novice Sculling
(Mon/Sat.) begins**
Contact michelle_fryc@capitalrowing.org for more information or to volunteer.

**Wed. 6/25
Novice Sculling (Wed./Sun.) begins**
Contact michelle_fryc@capitalrowing.org (sculling) for more information.

**Sat.-Sun. 7/05-06
Independence Day
Regatta
Philadelphia, PA**
Hosted by the Schuylkill Navy of Philadelphia. Known as the People's Regatta through 1957, this regatta has been held continuously since 1880.

**Sat. 7/12
Capital Sprints
Anacostia River**
Hosted by Capital Rowing Club. Volunteers needed! Please contact your program rep for volunteer information.

**Sat. 7/19
Competitive Team Erg
Test #3**
Location: Anacostia Community Boathouse.

**Sat. 7/19
CRC 20th Anniversary
Gala - 8:00 p.m.**
The Studio Gallery
2108 R St., NW
Washington, DC
(near Dupont Circle Metro)
Cocktails, music and silent auction. Sponsors include Surreal Vodka, Budweiser, SmartWater and Carafe Wines. For more information, contact Windy_Shepard@capitalrowing.org.

For more information on these events, visit www.capitalrowing.org.

To submit photos for inclusion in the events calendar, or elsewhere in *Quick Catch*, please email freerayn@capitalrowing.org.

NOVICES DUKE IT OUT

Weekend, Weekday And WeCanRow Classes Meet on Anacostia

BY DORENE HANEY, Competitive Women's program

The second annual 11th-Day Novice Regatta and BBQ on May 17 featured two exciting novice races, and the inauguration of Capital's new, ginormous smoker-grill.

It was a beautiful, sunny day, and we had a great turnout from CRC. WeCanRow (WCR) was having their learn-to-row weekend, and plenty of WCR participants and alumnae were on hand to cheer on their boats. There were two 8s races, with three boats each. The first race was between the weekend novice class (coxed by Mae Wu, Comp Women), and the WCR program. The WCR boat got off to a strong start, but the others kept up, and the weekend novice boat started walking before the bridge. Despite a valiant effort, the weekend novice boat didn't manage to catch WCR, missing 1st place by half the bow deck. The weeknight boat was a close third, making for an exciting race.

The WCR boat swapped out four rowers, the weekend boat swapped out six, and all three raced again. The weeknight boat gamely rowed a second 1,000m race immediately after the first, with no fresh legs to help out!

The second race was rendered far more exciting by the appearance of power boats, one of which motored directly between two of the racing boats. The WCR coxswain recovered nicely and their boat moved up at the finish, but couldn't catch the weekend boat. The rowers were exhausted but enthusiastic – as befits the most exciting 11th-Day Regatta ever. (Ok, ok, there have only been two; but still ...)

Everyone had a great time, and I'm happy to report that the new grill/smoker is amazing. Dan Croghan and Peter Courtney (Comp Men), fired it up and it makes a pretty impressive mess-o-smoke! The rowers, their family and friends devoured an impressive quantity of burgers and hotdogs, but the grill and her crew were able to keep up with the demand.

Thanks to the grill crew: Janet Fitch (Comp Women), who towed the grill into place; and Danimal, Peter and Joe who cooked up a storm without burning their eyebrows off. Thanks also to the finish line crew: Julie Peterson (Comp Women) and Magnus Carlsson (Club AM/Sculling), and the Vanna White of the awards dock, Holly Gerberich

(Comp Women).

Also, thanks to Jeff Davis (Comp Men), our very own paparazzo, who captured the action; and Dave Barksdale (Comp Men), who contributed drinks and guard dogs. Thanks to coaches Bob Brady (Comp Men) and Austin Middleton for acting as officials, and warding off the power boats that appeared.

And last, but by no means least, the coxswains, who earned their Hello Kitty tiaras on Saturday (in which they looked quite fetching), and during this entire class, with their tireless volunteer efforts and their patience and good cheer: Mae Wu and Sameera Hasan.

The second weekend novice class is going on now, coached by Austin Middleton and Bob Brady. We look forward to having everyone come down and get a piece of the action, 9:00 a.m. to noon, Saturdays and Sundays (except July 5). This class will be having its graduation regatta/BBQ along with the whole club at Capital Sprints on July 12, when we put the new grill to its club-wide test. See you there!



Photo: Jeff Davis



TEST YOUR CAPITAL I.Q.

Do you know your Capital Trivia?

CRC was founded in 1988. Who is the only original Capital member still rowing with the Club today and which program does this rower belong to?

The first two current members to respond correctly will **get \$1 off of their next race fee.**

Email your answer to: secretary@capitalrowing.org.

** Newsletter Committee, Board members, and the provider of this Capital fact are not eligible to win.

May Capital I.Q. Answer: Kelley O'Connell (Comp Women) correctly replied that in 1999, at the 12.5 mile-long Wye Island Regatta, Capital's Intermediate program (predecessor to Club AM) entered a mixed 8+ that ran aground during the race. Kelley and Jeff Loftus, the provider of this Capital fact, were the ones who had to jump out of the boat when it got stuck.

FRIENDS OF CAPITAL

This year's 20th Anniversary Capital Gala Fundraiser, on Saturday, July 19, promises to be one for the ages. In planning this event, CRC's Development Director Windy Shepard (Comp Women) and Social Director Dan Croghan (Comp Men) have received loads of support from the following beverage sponsors:

Surreal Vodka
Budweiser
SmartWater
Carafe Wines

The next time you order a beverage, make an effort to support those who help support us!

(If you drink, please do so responsibly and take a cab or the Metro.)

COACHES' CORNER

Tips on Making Your Training Most Effective

BY COACH ELENA BRATICHKO with SAMEERA HASAN, Competitive Women & Sculling programs

Capital's Competitive Men's and Women's coach and former Olympian Elena Bratichko, was interviewed for this month's Coaches' Corner article. Here she stresses the importance of obtaining and maintaining flexibility by incorporating stretching into your rowing workouts.

While the April and May Coaches' Corner pieces focused on transitioning into on-the-water training and getting into shape for the sprint season, this month Coach Elena decided to focus rowers' attention on flexibility.

While admitting that she's no doctor, Coach Elena wants rowers to know that flexibility keeps people healthy. For rowers, constantly leaning to port or starboard works one side of the body, but does not build muscles equally. After a rowing workout, it is imperative for rowers to do "self alignment" exercises immediately after rowing. These exercises only take about 5 minutes to do, but save rowers from having problems that arise from being out of alignment. After rowing, your muscles are inflamed. Coach Elena says that even if rowers don't feel it at the time, they'll feel the pain later. She recommends the following five exercises to self-align and to increase overall flexibility that is so needed in rowing.

TOE TOUCH:

(without shoes, preferably)
Standing position, with bent knees, put fingers under the sole of the feet (reaching under the toes, from the front). Slowly straighten the knees, going up vertebrae by vertebrae.

TORSO STRETCH:

Standing position with legs spread more than shoulder-width apart, point one foot forward and the other to the right (so that foot is perpendicular with the other, forward-facing one). Extend the arm up so that body is in a straight line from the right-pointed foot all the way to the right hand and hold. Then, bring the arm down behind the back and open up the chest to stretch the shoulder, chest and torso. Switch sides and repeat.

LAYING TORSO STRETCH:

Lay down slowly, vertebrae by vertebrae. Bring the right ankle up to the left knee. Making sure the shoulders remain on the floor, bring the right knee down to the floor, crossing the body. Return slowly to the upward position, switch sides and repeat.

LAYING SPINE STRETCH:

Lay down slowly, vertebrae by vertebrae. With your arms on the floor beside you, slowly lift your pelvis up and down using your spine. Next, with your arms now outstretched and reaching forward, slowly lift yourself up and down using your spine.

The final recommended stretching exercise may be done when first getting up (before you put on your shoes) or when on the dock,

prior to getting into your boat.

While standing (without shoes), take one foot and curl it under so that the big toe's nail is touching the floor (or dock.) Then, reach up with that side's arm, stretching that side of your torso. Switch feet and repeat. You should feel this in your hip flexor muscles and also in your torso.

In summary, increased flexibility means increased control over your body motions, which leads to increased control in the boat. These simple and quick exercises are designed to correct a rower's body after working muscles on one side of the body more than the other. This "self-alignment" will help reduce soreness and prevent injury, in addition to adding flexibility and gaining even more control over your body.