

## **NRRC AGM – 20 November 2023**

### **Student Rowing Report for 2023**

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#### ***Race figures and notable successes.***

Over the last academic year, college rowing here in Durham has grown with clubs facing record numbers of sign ups and competing athletes. The influx of rowers has produced a rise in the standards of top crews. At head of the river, Durham colleges sent 30 crews, 11 women's 8s and 19 men's 8s, with 3 top 50 finishes and 14 top 100 finishes on the men's side and St Hild & St Bede finishing 143 for the women. Durham Uni and Newcastle Uni sent 7 Open 8s and 5 women's 8s.

Top crews are starting to become more ambitious such as the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Collingwood 8s travelling to France to race in the Trois chateaux head and winning. At WeHorr 2023 composite crews combining Marys, Grey and Snow, Trevs and Stevo are allowing more athletes to get race experience at some of the biggest events in the racing calendar and demonstrating how colleges are working together. Not only are top 8s seeing success, but second 8s are also becoming more competitive in lower bands. Collingwood's women's 2<sup>nd</sup> 8 saw victory at Durham Regatta which for many was the first pot at a rowing event since beginning the sport, a real victory for college novice programmes which is raising the standard of boats in lower bands. External help from local rowers in the form of coaching from Gabrielle and Alex, Masters rowers from DARC has been essential in raising the standards.

#### ***Senate affiliation.***

This success has reawakened Senate boat club, a squad which will look to unite the best rowers from all colleges to represent DCR on the national stage at BUCS and Henley. It's an exciting project that will likely retain talented rowers allowing them to compete at an appropriate level whilst keeping them involved in the running of college clubs allowing for the transfer of knowledge down to incoming novices and/or new members.

#### ***Recruitment & retention***

Novices continue to benefit from senior rowers taking part in college rowing as shown through the 50 4s competing at novice regattas last summer. Moving to the year ahead; high river levels have cancelled races such as senate regatta and we have had almost 5 weeks of river levels which have restricted crews from training, however with 830 new signups to row in Durham colleges the Wear will be as busy as ever. Colleges will be working hard to retain novices due to the lack of water time.

Rising numbers ultimately bring challenges. The demand for equipment is very high, and the knowledge of making smart investments in good equipment of the right standard that can withstand frequent use is a challenge for incoming presidents that only have one year to make their mark on their club. Boatmen workshops led by Mark French have been extremely valuable for ensuring college boatmen can maintain equipment to a safe standard and is hopefully something that can become more frequent.

College boat clubs, whilst a platform for rowers to compete at quite high standards and achieve personal goals, also form a large social and welfare part of university life, helping to support, encourage and celebrate individuals and crews. They remain open to all students and accept all levels of rowers.

### ***Looking forward***

Novice hours on the wear are working very well, when crews can get out, and it may be useful to publicise these so that other clubs are aware and can avoid those times if they wish.

The NRC have been extremely supportive by giving grants for level 2 courses to students and hopefully this can continue.

Advice about equipment such as shells will prove valuable in helping student run boat clubs make better investments.

Instances of coxes having insulting comments made towards them during weighing in is exceptionally damaging to the confidence of coxes who are so valuable to crews. This is certainly an issue which must be eradicated, conversation on the issue has already started.

### ***Finally,***

The Uni entrance to rowing is with the passing of a swim test being essential, unlike BR regulations. Despite high sign ups to novice programmes reports of students being turned away or anxious to attend the university swim test was apparent as not all students had swimming lessons prior to coming to university and so working with Team Durham to find funding towards swimming lessons to the level required to pass the swim test would see rowing become even more accessible and diverse.

In terms of the role of the student advisor, it's one that isn't very well known amongst student run boats clubs. An attempt to make it more well known and thus improving the extent to which the role can represent students more widely is something I will look to act on. Equally, expanding further than Durham and Newcastle would be ideal.