



Hi,

We always say that we row in all weather except lightning but this weekend mother nature stopped our races for the first time in my memory which admittedly only stretches back to 2004.

This weekend we started our races with our girls G1. There was a strong wind causing a little rough water but nothing too exciting as the girls launched. All the other boats were launching behind.

At the start of the race our girls were showing the benefit of the time spent at Oakridge as they rowed a solid start to move out in the lead over Essex. Coming down the course our G1 was steadily moving out ahead. The wind decided to test their oarswomanship ☺. The wind gusts grew longer and stronger, whipping up sizable waves that started to slap against the boats. The undulating water made it difficult to ensure that blades were in the river for the drive. The varying water pressure on the oar and the slowing of the boats by the gusts of wind was disconcerting for the rowers.

Our girls kept going and even seemed to bite into the challenge. The Essex boat had more trouble keeping their rhythm and the Andover boat moved farther ahead. It was a longer than usual race with Andover crossing the line in 6.31.4 and Essex finishing at 6.43.9.

At this point the forecast was for even stronger winds and the decision was made to stop the racing. You could feel the palpable disappointment at the coaches delivered the message to the boats on the water and they turned reluctantly like lions who had lost their prey towards the boathouse. They rowed slowly down the river hugging the bank for shelter.

There will be more good and more bad weather this season. There will be more races to be rowed.

Before the races we had the pleasure of dedicating a new boat for the boys' program. It is important to have fast boats. We need to be able to field 16 racing boats. With 16 boats we would need 2 new boats every year to keep our racing fleet less than 8 years old. In recent years we concentrated on raising funds from parents and alumni for the boathouse and then the wakeless launches. In the last couple of

years Cathy Rasenberger led a program to raise money for new boats. With all the kind donations we have manage to buy 3 new boats for the girls and one new racer for the boys.

Today was the day to dedicate the new Haraka 2014 generously donated by Rome and Lisa Arnold. Rome shared his experience of crew at Andover in the 70s reminding the current athletes that he rowed out of a somewhat less luxurious boathouse. The essentials of physical effort and team work have not changed over the years and for his son, who graduated last year, the effort was rewarded with an Interschols championship. The new Haraka was then taken for maiden row on the Merrimack. She flew through the water like a dolphin that escaped from captivity.

A huge thank you the volunteers who provided food over the weekend. Thanks to Liesl and her helpers who organized the dinner on Friday night. This will become a new Andover Crew tradition of team dinners at the boathouse on Friday evenings.

Thanks to the parents who provided food for the Saturday races and to Cathy, Ann, Suzanne and Carol who helped run the food table on Saturday. Feeding almost 150 hungry rowers is a challenge.

And now on with the racing season....

When racing seasons starts the coaches try to construct fast boats. This means assembling groups of 4 ports and 4 starboards plus a coxswain for each boat. It is not as simple as giving ergs tests and picking the top scores for each boat. For a boat to have speed it must be balanced side to side and bow to stern. Some rowers are naturally ports or starboards. A few are bisweptual, a lovely word that means they are equally good t rowing on either side. The middle of the boat usually has heavier stronger rowers. The ends tend to have more skilful rowers or at least that what I am told by people to row in these positions. Picking a boat is a combination of science and magic. Sometimes seat racing is used to make the final couple of choices.

The boats will continue to change during the season in part because the rowers improve at different rates and especially in the lower boats because the coaches want to give racing opportunity to as many as possible. This is especially true for coxswains in lower boats. All this changing makes life complicated for the parents and supporters. You have to explicitly check every Friday with your rower to know if they are racing. The number of boats we race each week depends on the competition available. The coaches try to race as many boats as possible.

New parents will notice that they have to learn a new vocabulary. There is a guide on the website if you want to surprise your rower with your extensive knowledge of the sport. You will also notice their hands. Course rough blistered hands are normal for rowers. They wear these calluses with pride. You may also hear about rowers throwing up after erg pieces or races. The action of competitive rowing tends to induce this. You will notice that we differentiate between pre-race food and post-race food. This is, in part, to minimize the probability of throwing up during or after a race. The food afterwards is important to the recovery of the body after the exertion of rowing 1500 meters as fast as the mind will allow.

And so to this coming weekend. We are off to Kent. We will be racing B1 to B4 and G1 to G4 from 12.30 pm to about 4 pm. The Kent school is on the western edge of Connecticut. It is a very long day for the rowers and the post –race food is very important because they have a long drive back to Andover. We need volunteers to bring food and to run the food table when you favorite athlete lands after the races. Please go to the [Race Food menu](#) and see what you can bring.

The Kent team is always very good. Their race course is challenging because of the bends and dead water. Our coxswains have to ensure that the Kent boats do not push them out of the river current. We have attached a coxswain’s sketch of the river.

Kent is about 90 minutes drive from New York but about 3.5 hours drive from Andover. So we expect our supporters from the Tri-State area to come up to the races.

From Boston you head to the I-90 going west. You can with take the I-90 to the end of Massachusetts and then drive south to Kent or you can take off onto the I-84 and drive north at the end of Connecticut. Google says the second option is faster. For directions check our [Directions Link](#) on the website.

As you arrive at Kent after you cross the bridge just at the school turn right and drive past their white boathouse. We will set up our tent and trailer on the grass in front of their Gym. The boats launch near our tent but they race from there downstream and supporters have to drive to the finish line to see the last 500 meters. This best viewing place is right at the finish line.

Our B1 will race for the Dent Oars and our G1 will race for the Hart Perry Trophy. John Dent is a wonderful gentleman who coached at both Kent and Andover in the early 70s and retired to Cambridge UK. Hart Perry was a long time coach at Kent, a good friend of Andover Crew and a giant in rowing worldwide.

This race against Kent will be our first real measure of where we stand in the long road to Interschols. Kent are always our rivals at the beginning and the end of the season.

This is a big day for our team. We need all the supporters we can muster to yell GO BLUE! to encourage our boats to victory. Come on down and cheer for Andover.

Go Blue!!

Sam & Rosy

***Sam & Rosy Darby P’07***  
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