

# STROKEWATCH

BAY AREA ROWING CLUB OF HOUSTON • AUGUST 2008



## BARC'S OWN WORLD ROWER HELEN TOMPKINS !

By Heather Moore (Helen's first coach at BARC)

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When I first joined BARC, I wanted time to concentrate on my own rowing rather than the coaching I had done in Ohio. Somehow, however, **Theresa Tompkins** got her way (as she always seems to!) and the next thing I knew I was coaching kids again. We started with the basics and soon determined some basics needed to be relearned (left hand over right, not vice versa **Helen**!)

But soon **Helen** and her partner, **Aimee Beyers**, were progressing so that I could no longer keep up with their double while rowing my single. One of my most vivid memories of that first season was explaining how to steer down a racecourse. I told **Helen** that if she turned around and saw nice straight lines of buoys, she was doing great. But if she saw a polka dot pattern instead, well, that was a bad sign.

I think we all knew **Helen** was something special early on, and she has more than proved that. But what I wanted to do more than anything else as **Helen's** first coach was to make sure that rowing was fun. I didn't want her to feel it was something her mom made her do, but instead it was something she wanted to do. Talking to **Helen** before she left for Germany, I think I succeeded in my mission. I couldn't be more proud of her. ■

*Continued on page 2, see "US Rowing"*

Helen Tompkins from the USA showing perfect rowing form.

YOU ROW GIRL!



Continued from page 1

The following are excerpts from various websites: US Rowing, FISA, World Rowing:

**Helen Tompkins** (Friendswood, Texas) will race Hungary, Estonia, Serbia and Germany in the first of three heats of the women's single sculls. Last year, New Zealand won the gold medal. The top three finishers will advance to the semifinals, with the rest of the field racing in the repechages.

**Helen Tompkins** (Friendswood, Texas) finished fourth in the first of three heats of the women's single sculls to advance to the repechages. Germany's Julia Richter won the heat in an 8:16.99. The 2007 single sculls bronze-medalist from Hungary finished second in an 8:30.61, followed by Estonia in third. **Tompkins** clocked an 8:42.00 to finish ahead of Serbia.

"My stroke rate was 28 to 30 strokes per minute, which was too low," said Tompkins. "I need to be at a 32 to 34 and try to stay more relaxed. My focus tomorrow is to finish top three and advance to the semifinal."

One repechage meant that the aim for these athletes was to finish in the top three for a chance to race in tomorrow's semifinal. **Helen Tompkins** of the United States made no mistakes at the start and got out to an early lead. El Salvador's Olympic entry, Camila Vargas slipped into second with Ivana Filipovic of Serbia following in third. This is **Tompkin's** first international regatta and after warming up in yesterday's heat, Tompkins had dusted off any race nerves and was on target. As Filipovic and Vargas challenged each other, **Tompkins** stayed comfortably in the lead. **Tompkins**, Filipovic and Vargas advance to the semifinal.

#### Women's Single Sculls (BW1x) – Semifinals

Great Britain's Kristina Stiller is being groomed for her country's senior team. She has already raced this year at the Rowing World Cup in the single and this is her third year on the under-23 team. In semifinal two, Stiller took off in the lead, followed by USA's **Helen Tompkins**, in her first year racing internationally. Both of these boats settled into a 30 – 32 stroke rate pace through the body of the race with Katalin Szabo of Hungary back in third. Coming into the final sprint Stiller kept the pace on as **Tompkins** began to fade. Szabo took advantage of the situation and pushed hard. At the line Stiller crosses first, Szabo takes second and **Tompkins** holds on to qualify for the final from third. ■

### CONGRATULATIONS TO HELEN TOMPKINS 6TH IN THE WORLD!



A teenage Helen Tompkins at one of many regatta's when Heather was her coach.



Helen Tompkins of the USA is exhausted after the Senior BWomen's Single Sculls race at the World Rowing Under 23 Championship on July 19, 2008 in Brandenburg, Germany

## Heart of Texas—What Is It Like Rowing With the Great 8+?

By Andy Johnstone

### 41.2 Mixed Masters 8+ (Final) Sunday 1:18pm

1. C. LaBarre, Tulsa/BARC: 3:17.00 (3:18.20)
2. M. Flanagan, Texas Rowing Center: 3:27.01 (3:30.11)
3. C. David, Austin Rowing Club: 3:38.56 (3:41.66)
4. M. Amanda, Texas Rowing Center: 3:42.42 (3:50.82)
5. R. Opalka, Chesapeake Boathouse: 3:51.25 (4:00.45)
6. S. Botkin, Austin Rowing Club: 3:58.67 (4:00.07)
7. E. Peltier, Bay Area Rowing Club of Houston: 4:10.25 (4:34.45)



Great 8 competing at HOT in Austin, Texas

At this year's Heart of Texas Regatta I was given the great honour of stroking the legendary Great Eight. Finally I have undertaken the ultimate rowing challenge! The weather conditions of Sunday were blustery, but the GR8 8 took them in their stride as they expertly attached to the stake boat, Marylyn maintaining her famous iron discipline as cox. After an exciting start, the BARC seniors raced along the course with gazelle-like pace maintaining their stately rate of about 25. BARC won, of course thanks to **Lisa** sneaking into a somewhat less mature crew from Tulsa but I'm sure the most fun was had by the Great 8 who finished solidly some time after the other boats. After the race, the boat was quickly de-rigged and we returned to Houston after a very satisfying day's racing. I understand seat racing has already commenced (in a 4+) for places in next year's boat so see **Marilyn** for an opportunity to try out for this unique Sunday morning and once-a-year-in-Austin experience.■

## BARC's Boat Names (A series continued)

By Martha Hood

Each issue will discuss yet another bird species which is named on one of the Club's boats.

### "Pipit" - Vespoli 2x

Formerly known as the Water Pipit, this small sparrow sized bird is named for the sound it makes 'pipit'. It wags or bobs it's tail and is often seen in flocks walking in the grass in many parks in the area. Yes, it does not really hop, but walks. It breeds in the Arctic tundra and visits Texas during the winter on their long journey to Guatemala and El Salvador. Although I have never seen pipits in Clear Lake Park, these birds can be seen at other parks in the Clear Lake area.■



American Pipit formerly known as the Water Pipit

## Breaking News: Karl Zimmer Moves to New Mexico – Leaves BARC High and Dry!

By Hannes Hofer

In a very inconsiderate move, **KZ** decided in July to leave well paid job at BARC – eh.. NASA to pursue a dubious venture of building and selling alternative energy sources with family members in New Mexico. How could you do it **Karl?** with all we have done for you over the years!

Joking aside, the truth is that it is **Karl** who has done a lot for BARC over the years. He joined the club back in the early nineties, back when classes were still taught in eights. He liked the sport so much, he quickly began to take an interest – not just in the sport itself, but also in the running of the club. He soon began to apply his considerable talents and skills to building everything from docks to slings, and everything in between. He also helped repairing boats and oars and he often took charge when it came to setting out the course for the Space City Sprints, and he joined the BOD in several capacities, including President and Treasurer.

On the water, **Karl** rowed and competed on many different boats. He has traveled as far away as Boston and Atlanta to compete in National level regattas such as the Head of the Charles and the US Masters Nationals. He could also usually be counted on for the Rowing Marathon in Louisiana and for the various regattas in the Austin and in the Woodlands.

On a more personal note, **Karl** and I have been rowing partners on many crews for many years. Though we have not always agreed on everything, we have had a great friendship, and like most other BARC members I am going to miss seeing his face around the boathouse and on Mud Lake.

Good Luck **Karl!** ■



Head of the Charles, 2001



Pumpkinhead, 2001

Can you figure out which one is Karl?



Marathon Championships, 1997

## New Junior Rowers at BARC

By Hannes Hofer

Those who attended the spring regattas in Austin and at the Woodlands may have noticed entries from BARC in the some of the junior races, and wondered who that could be. Well, wonder no longer: **Addie** and **Cammy Brandfield-Harvey**, 13 and 15, are new members who recently joined BARC. They are not totally new to rowing, but attended rowing camps at at Rudgers (**Addie**) and Princeton (**Cammy**) last summer, they have also rowed singles at Houston Rowing Club, but came to BARC in search of coaching. BARC, of course, doesn't offer much in the way of coaching, but yours truly got talked into coaching once a week, so they joined and have been coming down to row the double on Sunday mornings. In addition to rowing on the water, they have been working on the ergometers at Rice University, to which they are neighbors.

At the Heart of Texas, **Addie** was supposed to have started in the Junior Novice Singles Race, but she accidentally wound up starting in the Varsity Junior heat, were she was unable to make the final. The girls also rowed in the Junior Novice 2x race where they came in fourth in their heat. They also attended the Woodlands regatta where they looked good, but failed to make the finals in the very competitive field.

**Addie** and **Cammy** have made a lot of progress while at BARC. They are planning on going to rowing camps again this summer, this time at Cornell and a perhaps at another place yet to be determined. ■



Stroke: Addie Brandfield-Harvey

Bow: Cammy Brandfield-Harvey

## Regatta Schedule



August 14-17

September 13

October 18-19

October 25

November 1-2

November 8

Master Nationals—Long Beach, CA

Steerhead Regatta—Fort Worth, TX

Head of the Charles—Boston, MA

Pumpkinhead—Austin, TX

Marathon Championships—Natchitoches, LA

Head of the Hooch—Chattanooga, TN

## Boat Reservation Schedule Update Notice

By Hannes Hofer

Dear BARCers

I have agreed to resurrect the BARC boat schedule.

If you want to row a club boat at a particular time during the week on a regular basis, please send an email to [schedule@barchouston.org](mailto:schedule@barchouston.org), containing the name of the desired boat, and the time and day you want to reserve it. The schedule will be posted at the boathouse and in the "members only" section of our website.

The rules are as follows:

- If a crew does not begin a session within 15 minutes of the scheduled time, the reservation for that session is forfeited.
- If a crew does not utilize a scheduled boat for three consecutive sessions, with the exception of bad weather, equipment failures or personal hardship, the reservation is removed.
- Changes to this schedule may be made by sending a mail to [schedule@barchouston.org](mailto:schedule@barchouston.org).■

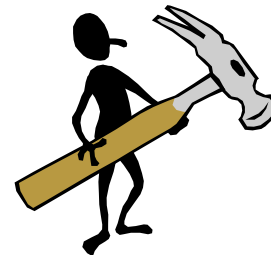


## Equipment Repair

By Larry Price

We are trying to keep all the BARC equipment in excellent condition to maximize members availability and rowing experience. Whenever you notice a piece of equipment in need of repair, place a red card "do not row" on the item and enter in the Repair Log on the desk. Please include enough information that we can correctly address the right item on the correct piece of equipment. We have recently touched up the singles, patched a few holes, replaced some shoes and are planning refurbishment of the Filppi double.

The club has a lot of excellent equipment which is continually being upgraded and with your help we will keep this valuable inventory serviceable longer. If you have any comments, just leave a note on the desk or the chalkboard!■



## Heel Ties: Who Needs Them?

by Margot Zalkind (Printed with permission of author)



When I first rowed in a sweep boat, archeological layers of duct tape were wrapped round and round the shabby, shredded shoes in the worn-out sectional eight (more tape than shoe). The frayed string pretended to be heel ties (when they were on). Now that I know better, I should have panicked. It was not until my first race (with referees checking heel ties, pre-launch) that I learned how heel ties kept the rower safe, when done right.

I have since spent many days as dockmaster and have been amazed by how many rowers (from teenagers to 80-year olds) have NO idea why the heel ties are there, or why it is bad if they are NOT. We see the annoyance of rowers when control commission interrupts their intent to launch and pulls them over. They run back to the trailer and grab shoelaces/rope/string/plastic ... anything to get heel ties on the shoes, and still may not know why.

### From the USRowing Rules of Rowing: Foot Release

*Where the feet of the competitor are held in place by footwear affixed to the structure of the boat, the design of such footwear shall provide for the quick release of the competitor's feet in case of emergency, without the use of hands. Any pull strings shall not allow the heel to raise more than three inches (7.5 cm) above the footboard to which it is anchored.*

I asked some savvy rowing historians about the history of the heel tie. USRowing Masters Committee member Norm Thetford of New Haven said, "I am pretty sure they came into being when a rower could not get out of a shell that had flipped. I saw the latter happen up in Toronto in 1985 at the FISA Veterans regatta when a four flipped. The oarsman reached down and just ripped the shoes out of the boat in his (successful) effort to get free. He was lucky and strong enough, but a weaker person might not have been able to do that, so the combination of Velcro closures and heel ties makes exiting the boat easier. With safety becoming a priority issue in the '80/'90s, the heel ties were considered the primary release and became required. The Velcro release is considered a secondary release."

Rowing history is well-documented by Bill Miller. He wrote, "Heel ties were used soon after the first track shoes were installed in boats instead of clogs. The first shoes I remember were in 1972. They were regular track shoes with tie-up laces and no safety release mechanism. It was clear at that time that there was a safety issue with these shoes. In 1973, European boat builders had specially-made shoes with Velcro heel releases where the heel of the shoe separated. Schoenbrod installed shoes in his eights about 1974 and for safety, he punched holes for heel ties. (For more Rowing History, visit <http://www.rowinghistory.net>.)

Rob Slocum, a masters sculler from Norwalk, said, "My heel ties used to be like most, 2-3" or so of slack, and, for me, useless in an emergency. In a race, I hit a buoy at the finish line, went over in a flash, and just about drowned. I mean that. I'd gone over before, but never when racing and always had enough breath to go under and release my heels by hand. In this case, I floundered in a panic until I realized I could get my arm around my hull. I was lucky. I got my breath back and released my heels. Ever since I've had tie-downs set at an inch or so. This also means when I finish a row, I just step out, like ski bindings." (Some less flexible rowers may need longer ties to allow their heels to come up at the catch.)

**ALWAYS:** Make sure your heel ties are on, secure, made of strong fiber and no longer than three inches. ■

*Margot Zalkind is the chair of USRowing's Safety Committee and Executive Director of the Foundation for Rowing Education, a non-profit organization devoted to safe rowing practices and an USRowing partner organization. This article is the first in a series of seasonal, safety-related articles written by members of the Foundation. If there is a topic you would like to have addressed, please email [Margot@rowingeducation.org](mailto:Margot@rowingeducation.org).*





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[www.barchouston.org](http://www.barchouston.org)

For membership information visit us  
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[membership@barchouston.org](mailto:membership@barchouston.org)

#### Club Officers

President Theresa Tompkins

Vice President Marilyn Bullard

Treasurer Becky Morlier

Secretary Zachary Putnam

Board Members: Peter Day

Carlos Westhelle

Larry Price

John Kowalsky

Membership Dir. Theresa Tompkins

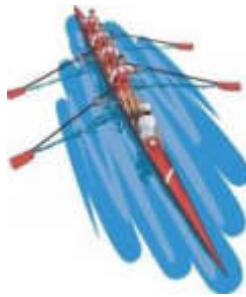
Rowing Dev. Hannes Hofer

Equipment Chair Larry Price

Newsletter Martha Hood

Webmaster Hannes Hofer

*BARC offers members the opportunity to sweep & scull. The club owns an eight, a four, quads, doubles, pairs, & singles, & can provide storage for privately owned boats. We also offer sweep & sculling classes, as well as 'Try It, You'll Like it' sessions for those new to rowing. Members' rowing objectives range from racing to recreation. BARC has a very good feeling of camaraderie & has frequent social outings.*



#### Rowing Quote

"Not everybody wins, and certainly not everybody wins all the time. But once you get into your boat and push off, tie into your shoes and bootstretchers, then "lean on the oars," you have indeed won far more than those who have never tried" --

#### Fun Stuff

We have BARC cards! They are in a box on the cubbies - help yourself, keep a couple in your wallet, pass them to potential rowers (everyone)!



*"The Best Little Oar House in Texas"*

[www.barchouston.org](http://www.barchouston.org) • Clear Lake Park, Houston, TX