
STROKEWATCH



NEWSLETTER FOR THE BAY AREA ROWING CLUB OF HOUSTON

February 2001

The BARC Annual Meeting

The BARC annual meeting will be held on Monday February 26th at Bradley's Restaurant at 515 West Bay Area Blvd.

Social hour will begin at 6:00pm, followed by dinner (not provided by the club) at 6:30pm and the formal meeting at 7:30pm. An open forum will follow the formal meeting.

The results of the most recent BARC survey will be discussed at the meeting.

The board of directors encourages you to attend and share your thoughts about the club's future!

Your participation is the future of BARC.

Interested in Running for a BOD Position in BARC?

Several positions on BARC's Board of Directors will need to be filled in February. Elections are scheduled to take place at the Annual Meeting on February 26th. According to our Bylaws, BARC's BOD is composed of 8 individuals: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and 4 BOD Members. The positions needing to be filled in February are:

- Vice President
- Treasurer
- 2 BOD Members

If you are interested in one of these positions or would like to nominate a BARC member, please contact Claire Sweatt at 713-729-2470 or csweatt@swbell.net

Space City Sprints

It's almost Regatta time again!! Clear your calendar for **Saturday, April 28, 2001**, and join us for our annual running of the Space City Sprints rowing regatta.

This year Space City Sprints will feature a 1000 meter course and a variety of events from singles to eights. The format will be similar to last year's regatta with a single fee for each participant for the full day of racing. We'll also hold a drawing to pick crews for a repeat of the mixed club 8+ event. Stay tuned for more detailed information later.



Also in this Issue:

Dr. Simon talks square blades
Tour Rowing
Houston's Olympic Bid
Water Levels
.. and more



Bay Area Rowing Club of Houston
P.O. Box 580374
Houston, TX 77258-0374
Telephone: 281-326-5098
<http://www.barchouston.org>

For membership information call Jeff **281-326-5098** or email jefftave@ghg.net

Club Officers:

President	Karl Zimmer
Vice President	Claire Sweatt
Treasurer	Tom Heig
Secretary	Pam Falk
Board members:	Jack Quigley
	Nadia Hijazi
	Doug Bradt
	Jeff Tave
Membership Dir.	Jeff Tave
Boathouse Man.	Ed Hippe
Newsletter	Hannes Hofer
BARCware	Theresa Tompkins
Webmaster	Hannes Hofer

From The Board:

By Claire Sweatt

BARC Membership Survey

Thanks to everyone who completed the BARC Membership Survey! 53 surveys were returned. The information will be tabulated and shared with members at the Annual Meeting on February 26th and in the next newsletter. The Board will use the information to guide future club directions and decisions.

Rowing Classes

It's almost that time again...time for the 2001 Rowing Class season to begin. Class dates are being finalized and will be posted on the BARC website (www.BARCHouston.org) We will once again offer the Try It You'll Like It Classes for individuals wanting to see what rowing is all about. The 8-hour Sculling Classes will be offered monthly for folks seriously interested in joining BARC and rowing on a regular basis. We are also looking into offering a Sweep Class - it's been years since we've done that! Calls and e-mails will be coming your way asking you to assist with the classes...please say "Yes!"

BARC Membership Reminder

BARCers, please be sure all new members contact me via phone (281-326-5098) or email (jefftave@ghg.net) once they complete their paperwork. That way I can ensure that they are entered in

the BARC Member database for future contact by pony-mail, e-mail, and phone. Also, before any prospective or new member uses club equipment or facilities, they MUST fill out a waiver. This is required by our insurance carrier through US Rowing.

The BARCalendar

Date	What?	Contact
Feb. 18, 9:30	Rice/UT/Tulane Regatta, Mud Lake	Hannes Hofer 713-664-7784
Feb.26, 6pm	BARC Annual Meeting	281-326-5098
March 18-19	Heart of Texas Regatta, Austin	www.austinrowing.org
Saturday, April 28	Space City Sprints	Jeff Tave, 281-326-5098

Tour Rowing -Think Different!



Most Americans rowers row for competition or for fitness, but from Europe comes a new trend: Tour Rowing.

Tour rowing has become quite popular throughout the European continent. Rowers spend several days rowing in coastal waters or lakes and camping along the way. The touring is done in wide boats known as inriggers (believe it or not, inrigger rowing was once an Olympic discipline). There are many of these tours available, check with the individual country's rowing federation. FISA, the international rowing federation is also sponsoring an annual tour, which this year takes place in Denmark. The following blurb was taken off FISA's website:

As the best rowers in the world fight it out for the top titles at the height of the European summer another group will be taking part in a more leisurely form of the sport designed to provide maximum enjoyment.

Tour rowing (also known as pleasure rowing) is growing in popularity and one of its highlights is the annual FISA tour set this year in Denmark.

For seven days rowers of all different sporting backgrounds and from all over the world will pick their way around the islands in the middle of Denmark.

They will pack their possessions into specially adapted boats and make their way along 150kms of Denmark's coastline, stopping along the way for meals and staying each night in youth hostels.

This year's tour organizer Stig Fischer Bjerregaard says that, though the rowers need to be fit and trained, the FISA tours are all about enjoyment.

"You come to a country as a rower and you get to see that country from a rower's perspective," he said.

"You see places you would never normally go as a tourist."

The boats, known as sea gigs or inriggers, are specially adapted for touring rowing.

They are wider and more stable than a competitive rowing skiff which makes them easier to balance and safer in bad weather plus they have plenty of storage room for food and possessions. Most are coxed pairs which means that rowers can swap from rowing to coxing to allow for a little rest during the 25-35 kilometres daily row.

Tour rowing is very popular in Germany and the Netherlands as well as Denmark which has some 19,000 participants. But the sport is growing worldwide and this year's tour includes people from Israel, Switzerland, the United States and Canada.

The tour runs from July 28-August 5, starting in the southern part of the island of Fyn.

For information on participating visit the Danish Rowing Federation website www.roning.dk by clicking on this URL link.



A Danish inrigger at the International Bridge to Sweden

Don't forget that the complete membership phone and e-mail list, as well as the boat schedule, is available in the "members only" section of the BARC Website. The URL for the website is www.barchouston.org. If you forgot the password to the "members only" section, please call Hannes at 713-664-7784.

Rowing Better: What's With This Square Blade Paddling?

By Simon Foster

Lots of people shy away from it, but it's one of the very best exercises to improve your rowing, whether sweep or sculling – including singles, believe it or not! The primary benefit is a **clean, effective finish**, which ensures good run on the boat and balance as you begin the recovery. It is a wonderful sensation when the whole boat gets it right. In sculling, it **stops you feathering under water**, and gets your **blades off the surface**. This has a huge effect on boat speed and is the sign of graduation from being a beginner. Other benefits come from: **loosening your hands** as much as possible (since you don't have to turn the blade), **sensing how light the oar is**, so that you can feel how little effort you need to extract it at the finish and drop it in at the catch, plus of course, getting the **correct hand heights** as you come forward. And when you go back to feathered paddling, it enables you to focus on **squaring and feathering correctly**.

How can you make square blade paddling rewarding for you? First, **loosen your hands** as much as you can. It is inevitable, especially when you start the exercise, that blades will sometimes catch the water on the way forward. With loose hands you can simply allow the water to knock the blade flat, with no interruption to your rhythm, square up again for the next catch and carry on. Note: If you're trying square blade in a single, it will take several sessions to get the idea, but it will transform your sculling so it's well worth persevering. Try at backstops and at half slide to start with. (Go back to a more stable training boat if you like.) Remember that as long as you don't let the handles go behind you, you can't fall in – hold them as loosely as you can without letting go!

Second, **focus on the finish**. When you pull on the oar, even at light pressure, you build up a little mound of water against the front (concave) surface and a corresponding cavity opens in the water behind the blade. If acceleration of the blade falters towards the finish of the stroke, this cavity collapses. This makes it harder to get the blade out, so you end up with balance problems as well as a weak

finish. Focus on maintaining a **smooth, accelerative draw** with the arms, **up towards the bottom rib** (not down into your lap), to keep the concave surface **just fully covered** and to **maintain the cavity** right to the finish. Then, without the handle quite contacting the body, "tap down" lightly with a semicircular action (in sweep rowing use the outside hand), to as to extract the blade quickly and **"let the puddle go" cleanly**. This should be a smooth, silent and drama-free action. It should lead smoothly into the hands going away from the body at the same speed that they came in, but at a lower height to keep the blade just clear of the water.

Once you are doing this right you will start to hear and feel the subdued but powerful rhythm of an effective finish, as the puddles are released cleanly together. Have patience if you get a few shipwrecks, stay loose, smooth and focused on the finish and it will start to come right.

What about when you go back to paddling feathered? First, ensure the same **draw** is maintained, to keep the cavity behind the blade. Second, check that you tap down **before** you start to turn the blade onto the feather. Third, one hidden advantage of square blade is that it is easy to keep the **wrists flat**. This helps keep the oar handles at the correct height during the recovery, plus avoiding wrist and forearm strain. To keep your wrists flat when you go back to feathering, focus on feathering by rolling the handle out of the palm of your hand onto the base of the fingers. (You may need a tiny bit of wrist movement to start it turning but flatten this out again before feathering is complete) At the catch, roll the handle by gathering it back into the palm, again keeping the wrists flat. This of course requires, you guessed it, **loose hands**.

With practice you will be able to paddle square blade at a variety of pressures and ratings, all of which will reinforce a really good finish and recovery. It can also be an excellent rallying point when things are not going right and you need to refocus the boat. And lastly, what a way to psych out the opposition, as you cruise effortlessly to the start!



BARC Looking to buy boats

A committee has been formed to help determine what kind of boats the club should buy next. The board has determined that the club needs a new eight or possibly a four. The committee which, among others, count Simon Foster and Andy Johnstone will give the board advise as to what brand is best suited to the club, and whether to buy new or used.

If you have any ideas, call Andy or Simon.

The Great Crew Survey

By Hannes Hofer

The responses to crew survey that recently was sent out by e-mail are currently being tabulated. I hope to have a matrix of it posted in the boathouse soon.

The purpose of the survey is to compile a list of people who are interested in being on crews. The idea is to publicize the list so members can match their interests and objectives with others so they can form harmonious and sustainable crews.

So far, 23 people has responded. The number sounds impressive, but I am certain that there are many more, who are either procrastinating or are uncertain as to whether this approach is going to work. Well, the more people respond, the better it will work, so don't hesitate – send e-mail me your survey today. If you have deleted your survey, send me an e-mail at hofer@barchouston.org, and I will send you another copy.

Mud Lake Water Levels

When a Norther blows through Houston in the winter time, the water often blows out of Mud Lake, and unless you like rowing in mud (not recommended), you might as well relegate the your time to other activities.

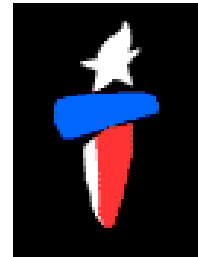
If you are a city dweller like myself (That is, you live in Houston rather than in the Clear Lake Area) you sometimes wonder if it is worth making the trip to the boathouse if you can't row anyway.

Continued next column

Well, wonder no more. Fred Schultz has found a website that shows the real time water level at nearby Morgan Point. While it is not 100% accurate for Mud Lake, it is a real good indicator. My experience is that if the Morgan Point level is -2 feet or lower, you can forget about rowing. The URL for the site is

www.coops.nos.noaa.gov/hgports/Composite_mp.html.

Houston's Olympic Bid



On December 15, The Houston 2012 Foundation Submitted its bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games in Houston to the US Olympic Committee.

Houston is one of 8 US Cities submitting bids. The winner among the 8 will then compete with Cities around the world for being the host for the 2012 Games.

BARC's own Tom Lotz is the Sports Director for The Houston 2012 Foundation, and as such he has been in charge of selecting the sites for the various sports venues. The site selected for rowing is the Texas City Reservoir, located about 35 miles southeast of Houston off Hwy 146. Tom, who, by the way, also is sports chair for rowing and boxing, put a map and description of the area up at the boathouse.

The U.S. Olympic Committee is scheduled to select 3 - 4 finalists in the spring of 2002 if necessary, and the U.S. Candidate City will be named in the fall of 2002.

BARCwear

Last newsletter apparently sparked some interest in purchasing jackets, but it never quite happened, so I'm going to try again. If you've noticed members wearing BARC jackets that you are interested in, I have a "Sew Sporty" catalogue that we can order them from. Jackets range from about \$65 - \$120 depending on fabric and design choices, they will be even less expensive if we order several at the same time. I will be placing an order by the end of March or earlier if I get enough orders in. If you would like me to order one for you, please contact me as soon as possible (tftompkins@juno.com).

Thanks, Theresa



Bay Area Rowing Club of Houston
P.O. Box 580374
Houston, TX 77258-0374