
STROKEWATCH



NEWSLETTER FOR THE BAY AREA ROWING CLUB OF HOUSTON

November 2001



BARC Needs YOU!!!!

By Heather Mathis

It's a simple observation – “Hey, the cubbies were cleaned out” or “Gee, it's nice to have clean wipe-down towels – I wonder who washes them.” The answer is just as simple – BARC members are dedicated to keeping our club and its boathouse an enjoyable place to come and enjoy the physical exercise and friendly camaraderie of rowing.

Please join us in keeping our club such a great organization – there are many opportunities to help. The Board of Directors has established several committees that are in need of chairpersons and members in order to ensure that things like clean towels are always there for your use. “Everything you see and use is organized and maintained by volunteers from the general membership,” says BARC board president Karl Zimmer.

Take a quick look at the committees below, and if you'd like to know more about them, expanded de-

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BARC Holiday Party



The BARC Holiday Party will be held Sunday, December 2nd at 5:00pm at the home of Pam Falk. Turkey will be provided. Please bring a salad, vegetable or dessert and your own alcohol (if desired). We will have a soft drinks.

You may sign up in the BARC house or call/email Pam Falk (281 538-1742 or pfalk@utmb.edu).

Please bring a gift for the BARC house. In the past people have given tools, garden hoses, parts for the boats and gift certificates to Home Depot. Do you see a need? Be creative!

In This Issue:

- Kate Ronkainen, Houstonian and National Team Rower.
- The Fall Rowing Season
- Be a Referee
- Olympic Torch Run
- Rowing Development
- --And Much more....



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<http://www.barchouston.org>

For membership information call **281-326-5995** or email membership@barchouston.org

Club Officers:

President	Karl Zimmer
Vice President	Hannes Hofer
Treasurer	Tom Heig
Secretary	Pam Falk
Board members:	Dmitry Rachuk
	Nadia Hijazi
	Heather Mathis
	Jeff Tave
Membership Director.	Theresa Tompkins
Rowing Development	Claire Sweatt
Boathouse Manager	TBN
Newsletter	Hannes Hofer
BARCware	Theresa Tompkins
Webmaster	Hannes Hofer

Newsbits

New Phone Number.

BARC finally has its own phone number. Up until recently, the number everyone called for BARC information was actually Jeff Tave's private phone. Thanks to Jeff for taking all those calls over the years.

The new number does not actually connect to a physical phone, but accesses a voice mail box which Theresa and Claire will check frequently. The number is **281-326-5995**.

Boat Purchase Update

The board decided in June to purchase two boats for the club, a new four and a used eight. A brand new Vespoli Challenger 4 arrived in late September, and it is already seeing heavy use by club members. Finding a used eight that meets our requirements has proved much tougher than we had expected. We have had several leads, but none have worked out. We will keep looking, and hopefully we will find one by the spring racing season.

Goodbye to Brenda

Brenda Jamison-Claire, a member of BARC since 1990 is moving to Tyler. Brenda has been a great contributor to the club, especially in the early days of the club where she was active teaching classes and contributing to the building of the boathouse. She also met her husband, Brad, at the club and the two got married at the Museum next to the boathouse and walked into their married life through a portal of oars. In recent years Brenda has been a sturdy member of the Sunday Morning Quad. Good luck Brenda and Brad!

The BARCalendar

Date	What?	Contact
Dec. 1, 8 AM	Head of the Taylor , scratch regatta	Hannes Hofer, hofer@mac.com
Dec. 2, 5 PM	Holiday Party at Pam Falk's House	Pam Falk, 281-538-1742
Feb. 24 (pending)	Rice Invitational, Mud Lake	Hannes Hofer, hofer@mac.com
March 9-10 (pending)	Heart of Texas, Austin	www.austinrowing.org/

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scriptions of them will be posted shortly on the "Members Only" section of our internet site, www.barchouston.org (yet another great service provided by a BARC volunteer!). Shortly, Heather Mathis, Dimitry Rachuk and Nadia Hijazi will be calling you to see what talents you'd like to contribute. But if you're not shy, call or e-mail them or any other board member first!

Thanks for making BARC such a great club!

Boathouse Operations Committee:

Chair: Vacant

Coordinates maintenance and use of the boathouse and other club facilities, such as the docks.

Equipment Committee:

Chair: Vacant

Coordinates acquisition and maintenance of all club equipment, such as boats and oars, and their use by club members.

Membership Committee:

Chair: Theresa Tompkins

Coordinates initiation of new members into the club and maintains records of each club member.

Regatta Committee:

Chair: Vacant

Coordinates planning of and conducts the annual Space City Sprints Regatta.

Communications Committee:

Chair: Hannes Hofer

Coordinates quarterly newsletter, club website, and other communications with club members.

Rowing Development Committee:

Chair: Claire Sweatt

Supervises rowing classes and clinics for new and existing club members.

Facility Expansion Committee:

Chair: Hannes Hofer

A temporary committee responsible for developing land use plans, lease proposal, architectural plan and implementation of an expanded boathouse and boat storage facilities.

Salt Lake Olympic Games Torch Run:

Tom Lotz sent the following:



The Olympic torch will be in Houston on Monday, December 10. It will arrive early afternoon and be carried through the streets of Houston by some 160 torchbearers. The day will culminate with a huge celebration at the George R Brown [GRB] Convention Center. The GRB will open at 5 PM with games and entertainment. The program will start at 7 PM, and is scheduled to end at 8:30. Those attending should park in a downtown lot and take the Metro trolley to the GRB. Wear your BARC shirt!

The torch relay route, parking information, and trolley routes will be posted on the Houston 2012 website, www.houston2012.org. You may also consult the Metro web, <http://www.houmetro.harris.tx.us/>.



Beauty Queens and winners of the WJ2X at the Pumpkin Head: Helen Tompkins and Aimee Beyers

Kate Ronkainen: Houston to Lucerne

Kate Rokainen is a Houston native who last summer competed at the World Championships in rowing. Tom Lotz has had contact with her, and he talked her into writing this article for the StrokeWatch. Because of the length of the article, half will be in this issue, the other half will be published in the next issue

Part 1: University of Texas Crew

Hello fellow Houstonites! I am so excited to be sharing this with you as the popularity of rowing in Texas grows. When I attended high school in Klein, north of the city, I didn't know there was a rowing club in Houston. I didn't even know what rowing was. I played basketball and was named MVP my senior year. Playing ball in college was a real possibility for me, but I figured that I had been so involved in athletics in high school that it had prevented me from exploring other aspects of life, so I decided not to apply for basketball scholarships. I chose the University of Texas because it was cheap and located in one of the coolest cities in the country.

So there I was – Fall of 1995 – just being a college freshman, when a male friend of mine called me up one day and told me that he was going to try out for the rowing team. The rowing team? He took me over to the booth in the South Mall on campus and showed me an eight. Wow, I thought. Maybe I will try out for the team too. Well, there went the whole giving up athletics plan. My friend could probably be considered a lightweight, and on the 1000-meter erg test that was a part of the initial try-out I kicked his butt. My score was around 4 minutes, and man it hurt. The University of Texas Crew team was only club status at this time – not funded by the University, so once on the team, much time was dedicated to fundraising for trips. Our big race was the Head of the Chattahoochee, and I sat 7 seat.

Returning from Christmas break that year, I found that with all of the trips in the spring I didn't think I could afford to be on the team, so I convinced myself that it wasn't worth it, and quit. During my hiatus, I became a studio art and art history double major – feeling satisfied that I was learning more about myself, but something was missing. A chapter had been left unfinished, and my competitive edge was craving a tune-up.

The women's rowing team became varsity in 1997 after Title 9 caused Texas to equate its men's

and women's sports programs. Again in South mall, the team was recruiting walk-ons, and someone approached me. "You would be a great rower. You have the perfect build. Why don't you come down and give it a try?" I talked to the coach and told him of my one semester of rowing and he said that he wanted me for the Varsity team. Pretty cool, I thought, and the trips were all paid for! It was a rocky road being on the UT team during the transition from Club to Varsity status. The athlete pool in 1997 was poor, but there were big hearts. My career on the Texas team mainly had to do with trying not to loose by so much the next time, but for some reason I kept rowing, erging and racing. I loved it. I wanted to push myself – to where I didn't know, but I wasn't there yet. 1998 brought Carie Graves – the infamous x-Olympic rower. She was huge and menacing, and not ready for the group of vagabonds that she would be coaching. The first year rowing for Carie was one of big adjustment. She pushed us and demanded of us what was expected in a Varsity program. She taught us how to work hard, and wanted so badly for us to win, but we just didn't have the depth. I was the fastest erger on the team by a long shot until 1999, when the recruiting program finally kicked in, but even then, the speed and competitiveness that I wanted at Texas was not achieved.



Kate Ronkainen

During the spring of 2000 of my last year of NCAA eligibility, I realized that my erg was good on a national level. The thought had never occurred to me before, but het, I was pretty good. I was invited to an ID camp in San Diego June 2000. The camp was only two weeks, and not very serious as it was the Olympic year,, I wanted to go! I wondered what it would be like to row in a boat with girls who were as strong as me. I found out that it was fast, and it was competitive, and I really wanted to know how good I could get. I wanted to be good enough to row

that fast all the time. The National Team? Well maybe, but mostly I wanted to get fast just to train with those girls. Hartmut Bushbaker, the coach of the women's team at the time, told me that I had potential and gave me some erg workouts to do on my own, as I still had one semester of school left. I trained by myself and learned to row a single, and just waited to find out what was going to happen with the women's national team after their poor performance at the Olympics and the firing of Bushbaker. I figured that if I could train alone and get faster all by myself, then I must really love rowing, and it would be worth it for me to take it to the next level. So train I did – improve I did, and I realized how much I love to row, love to race – love to go fast and win! It is about seeing how strong and how fast this machine that is my body can get. I am continuously amazed, and that drives me to higher levels. It is so exciting to improve and kick butt!

Part 2: Princeton Training Center, Princeton, New Jersey

This summer had a lot of unknowns for me. For one, after the old national team coach, Hartmut Bushbaker, had been fired, my connection to the women's national team had disintegrated. All I knew going into January, was that US Rowing was in the process of hiring a new coach, and that they should have one by the beginning of March. Well, March came, and they named Kris Korzenowski the interim coach. He and Mike Teti and all that remained of the 2000 national team, along with a few hopefuls for the next quadrenium, made their way to Austin, TX for two weeks of training in March.

Luckily, I was able to communicate with Kris about my training efforts and my hopes training with the future women's team, wherever that might be. Of course he did not know, and advised that it would probably be at the Princeton Training center. I knew at that point that my erg was pretty good, and that my fitness was good, but I did not anticipate the harsh criticism that I received from Kris the first time he saw me row in Austin. "You row like shit. Your body and fitness is National Team rower, but you should be in Novice boat." Typical of "Korzo." But for me, this was a blast back to reality that reminded me of the risk, commitment and just plain hard work that I was facing. Was I up to it? Yes. Kris assured me that I could correct my technique, and after he left, I persisted to hound him on whether or not I should just go ahead and move to Princeton to begin my training and receive coaching on my apparently horrible technique.

"Two more weeks, and they should know the new coach..." I heard that about 8 times before Tom Terhaar was named at the beginning of May. Mid-May I finally communicated with Tom, and he encouraged me to join an eight of young rowing enthusiasts like myself, who had already graduated college, to train in Princeton until he made cuts from his undergraduate group and joined us in late June.

I left Austin on May 28th to drive cross-country. After selling everything that I couldn't fit into my Ford Ranger, I packed up what I had and drove a rainy three days to follow my "destiny." At one point in Tennessee, I was driving 45 mph on the interstate because the deluge was so heavy, but I had to keep going. A rainbow appeared in the sky and the clouds cleared. It must be a good omen, I thought, and I knew that if I was going to make it – make the team, or even survive this new lifestyle – I had to stay positive.

Honestly, I didn't even think that I would make the team this year. Realistically, I just wanted to get my foot in the door as a future hopeful. I wanted to be taken seriously, and I wanted to be coached and start training and take my own goals more seriously.

When I arrived in Princeton, I found out that – no the dorms wouldn't be ready for another 2 weeks, so the eight of us headed to Amherst, Mass., where we trained without a coach until we could head back to Princeton. Meanwhile, NCAA's were finishing up and Tom was making some selections for his college camp. He sent us workouts, but we felt totally in the dark. We did have a 30min timed erg test with a rating cap of 24. I was going up against other strong girls, some veterans, but my hours spent in the ARC erg room clearly paid off that day, when I got the most meters/30 min. I think some of those girls took a little too much time off. It seemed that maybe I did have something going for me, even if it was purely my fitness.

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Kate is not the only National Team Rower with Houston connections. Torrey Folk, who rowed on the US Women's Eight at last years Olympics in Sydney, started her rowing career at Rice University and was there coached by yours truly. Torrey took a year's sabbatical following the Olympics, but she tells me that she plans to join the training camp in Princeton in May where she, together with Kate, hope to get another shot at an Olympic medal.

Hannes

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When we finally arrived in Princeton, we realized that Tom would still not be joining us for another week, as he was in Ithaca, NY with the college camp. The group grew a little restless. Lori Dauphiny, the Princeton women's head coach, was coaching us, but we wanted to know how those college "kids" were doing. What were *their* erg times? How was *their* technique? Would Tom already have favorites from that group? Were we at a disadvantage because he was not coaching us? You can imagine the suspense, the stress. A 2k came and went and I was in the pack – beating a few veterans who were obviously out of shape, but again I had fitness on my side.

Tom arrived on June 23, and all of these huge girls came with him. His first speech to us basically said that we would be working on technique for a while, and that the fastest ergs don't always make the team, and even seat racing at this level doesn't always tell the whole story. So we began training with Tom, the first cuts aimed towards the 23 and under Nations Cup competition.

Tom is a wonderful coach. He is great at explaining his techniques, and especially good at illustrating them physically in the tanks. Yes, this summer I had my first experience in the tanks, and I must say looking back, that I think all novices should have access to tanks, and I believe that I would not have half the problems I do if I had been shown a few things in a tank back in the day. Sure, Texas doesn't need tanks, but being able to have someone physically move your body as you take strokes does a lot for muscle memory.

The Nations Cup boat (a strait four) was selected by June 30; other young rowers were sent home, leaving 16 of us for a shot at 12 spots on the World's team. These 12 spots would cover the eight and the strait four. What about the pair, you might ask? We all asked the same question, and Tom said that US Rowing would be using the funding from the pair to cover some of the cost of the four (not a sponsored event/not an Olympic event), and we wouldn't be sending a pair, as he didn't think that we had enough experience in small boats, which was true. But ha! You might have noticed that at the last minute at World's trials there was a pair entry that Tom left uncontested, therefore two lightweight women stole our spots to do poorly at the open pair event in Lucerne. Of the 16 of us, we were all thinking that if we got cut from the eight and the four, we sure would have liked to try the pair against those puny girls (no offence to you light-weights out

there). There was emotion and stress, but overall the group was still positive and excited. At this point I was thinking to myself that I could make the team this year, and I was getting pumped.

The final line-ups for Lucerne were due on July 31, and even after that 50% of the line-up could be changed (Tom continually reminded us), so none of us were getting too secure, but I think that the coaches wanted to keep us on our toes. We were practicing twice a day with Monday morning off and Sunday afternoon off, but that was all. A fun aside: I was making great friends and having lots of fun even if I didn't have a real social life. The girls started calling me Ronkainen because there were 3 Kates, and then just shortened it to RoKo – it is fun to have a nickname!

By mid-July there was still no decision. An "A" eight was being pieced together subtly, and things were looking good for me, and then the next day not so good, and then good again. It was a roller coaster. Tom still didn't tell us, or give us a clue as to when we would know, and all we could think was that if he didn't name the line-ups soon we would burst! Seriously though, we were also thinking, how well would a line-up do at World's that didn't even get to practice together for more than a week or so? Then Tom divided the group into *the* eight and two fours, which would seat race for positions in the strait four. I was in the eight sitting bow or two-seat depending on the side of the stroke. I had not been directly seat raced in fours, but had been switched in and out of line-ups in eights for different pieces and I guess that was enough to convince Tom that I would do. There were a lot of hammers in the four group that could move a boat and also stop a boat, and Tom was going to seat-race them into the ground.

Going into Nationals, our big pre-World's-race against Canada, we in the eight thought our spots were pretty secure (not really, we were all shitting in our pants still) and Tom announced that after Nationals he would select the 12 athletes that would go to Worlds, but the line-ups might still change. This would be our first 2000 meter piece as a boat. We had no idea of our speed and thought that it would be a tight race against Canada, but we reamed them, which started to psych us up for more international competition. Tom placed the final seat race between two straight fours at Nationals, stating that the boat that won would go to Lucerne.

After Nationals, the original eight from Amherst had only lost one member to the cuts, and I

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The Fall Racing Season

BARC rowers had busy fall racing season this year. The first regatta of the season was the Head of the Red in Shreveport where Z4 with Hannes Hofer, Breff Cooling, David Zajac, Karl Zimmer, and Cox Zoe Smith took first place in a huge field of one boat!

Next up was the Head of the Charles in Boston, where Z4 faced tougher competition. In a field of 35 boats, the team placed 22nd. The race was not without drama. The BARC boat was trying to move up in the field when, at the famous Week's Bridge Turn, a team from Mendota Rowing Club refused to move out of the surging Z4's way. The result was what seemed like an eternity's worth of severe tangling of oars. How much time was really lost nobody knows, but even with the loss of time, it was still the best ever BARC performance at the Head of the Charles.

The following weekend several members went to the "Slay the Dragon" Regatta at the Woodlands. Medals were won in the WJ2X, MixJ2X, Mix4X, W4X, M2X, M1X, and W2X.

BARC was also very well represented at the Pumpkin Head in Austin on October 27. Best performance was turned in by Aimee Beyers and Helen Thompkins who won the WJ2X, beating the State Champions from Austin. Other great races were rowed by the M8+ (2nd), the W4X (2nd), and the 1X with Cory Logan (2nd). Links to the full set of results can be found on our website at www.barchouston.org

Last regatta of the Fall season was the Marathon Championships in Natchitoches, LA. Z4 once again prevailed in a field of one, as did the men's 4X with Bruce Meltzer, Ben Newcomb, Jack Quickley and Alex Parkman. We also saw a gutsy performance by Tom Topalu who rowed the 26 miles in his single.

Rowing Development

As BARC continues to grow and as members request more services geared towards improving their rowing skills, we have begun to organize and schedule more club activities related to "rowing development". In the past, typical activities have included the Try It You'll Like It classes and the Sculling classes. In the future, we hope to schedule more Rowing Clinics for all levels of rowers, Coxswain Clinics for those interested in coxing, and Coaching Clinics to build our

skills in coaching and teaching the sport. The Rowing Development Committee will help facilitate and coordinate these events. This committee will also work towards helping individuals form new crews and encouraging BARC members to participate in local and away regattas. Please look for more information regarding rowing development activities on the Boat-house Bulletin Board, the BARC E-mail network, and in StrokeWatch.

2001 Sculling Classes

Another fun and successful season of Sculling Classes has come to an end. Once again, BARC offered Sculling Classes each month from April through September. A total of 36 individuals took (and passed!) the 8 hour class (4 two-hour sessions). Several of the class participants have joined BARC and continue to row.

We also offered 4 Try It You'll Like It classes this summer with ~10 participants in each class. This two hour class is designed for individuals you want to experience rowing but not necessarily take a full 8 hour class. Thanks to Pam Falk for leading these classes!

And a heartfelt thanks to all of the BARCers who assisted with teaching the classes this past summer: Jeff Tave, Theresa Tompkins, Pam Falk, Hannes Hofer, Martha Hood, Nadia Hijazi, Richard Hagen, Helen Stewart, Rachel Israel, Phillip Tompkins, Henry Epstein, Karl Zimmer, and the Wed Night Quad of Tom Heig, Pam Falk, Birgit Bennett, Dmitry Rachuk

Claire Sweatt
Rowing Development Coordinator

Kate Ronkainen, Continued from page 6

was ecstatic that I had been chosen. Oh my god, I made the team! It was all very unreal to me, and I still wouldn't believe that I was in the eight line-up until I was on the starting line in Lucerne. Luckily, Tom eased our mind and told us the first week of August that the line-ups were set. Wow! 2-seat. I can handle that. The next step was learning how to row together, and oh yeah; maybe we should start higher ratings now. Up to about the first week in August the highest rating work in the eight had been around a 24, and then a little higher in preparation for Nationals, but when we started doing 500's at a 37, we saw that we needed more work. And time was running out. *Continues in next issue*

BECOME A USRA JUDGE-REFEREE

By Tom Lotz

There is nothing like standing on a small float in the middle of the river with a light rain falling while crews are late to the starting line, cannot maintain point, and have to ask which is their assigned lane. With rainwater trickling down your neck, you raise your wet red flag and send yet another race down the course. The sun breaks through and it becomes a beautiful day, more rowers come to the start line, away they go, and all is right with the world.

Such is the life of a US Rowing Association licensed Judge-Referee. You know – the seasoned citizens in the blue blazers that contribute their time and untold resources to work with the local organizing committee toward a successful regatta. Although a cliché, officiating is truly a way to give back to the sport.

There are more and more regattas with the marvelous growth of rowing across the country. Thus there is an accompanying need for licensed Judge-Referees to

insure that the races are managed within the tenets of the Rules of Rowing. So, how does one start down the path to become a blue blazer model?

One way, and probably the best way is to informally visit with any official at a regatta or at your club. Most will be happy to share their knowledge and to guide you on the path. Ask if you can ride in their launch – observe the litany used by the Aligner and the Starter. Look for those times of potential peril when the rowers are on the course. Sit at the finish line for a while and judge the order of finish.

Further research can be made on the USRA website [www.usrowing.org] – click on Judge-Referee Info, then go to JR License requirements and look through the Rules of Rowing. The requirements to become an assistant Judge Referee, then to become a fully licensed JR, and requirements to retain licensure are all contained therein.

Try it, you'll like it!