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# STROKEWATCH



NEWSLETTER FOR THE BAY AREA ROWING CLUB OF HOUSTON

February 2002

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## The 2002 BARC Annual Meeting

The 2002 BARC Annual Meeting will be held on Monday, February 25, 2002 at Mario's Flying Pizza, 618 W NASA Rd 1. Dinner at 6:30PM, meeting starts at 7:15PM.

We will be holding elections for the following positions: President, Secretary, and 3 Board of Directors (BOD). All elected positions are nominally for a 2-year term length except as noted.

### Current Elected BARC Officers

President: Karl Zimmer  
Vice President: Hannes Hofer  
Treasurer: Tom Heig  
Secretary: Pam Falk  
BOD: Nadia Hijazi  
BOD: Heather Mathis  
BOD: Dmitry Rachuk  
BOD: Jeff Tave

### Current Appointed BARC Positions

Membership Director: Theresa Tompkins  
Rowing Development: Claire Sweatt  
BARChouse Manager: open  
Strokewatch: Hannes Hofer  
BARCware: Theresa Tompkins  
Webmeister: Hannes Hofer  
Equipment Manager: open

### BARC Offices/Positions Open for 2002

President: Currently, Karl Zimmer is serving his 1st term. He has stated that he declines to run for a 2nd term. New nominations are being accepted for this

position. (Alex Parkman has accepted a nomination)

Secretary: Pam Falk is serving her 2nd full term and thus is unable to run for this position again due to consecutive term limits as specified in BARC's by-laws. Nominations are being accepted for this position. (Martha Hood has accepted a nomination)

New directors of the board are strongly encouraged to take the chairmanships of the three standing committees that are constituted in the Bylaws: Boathouse, Equipment, and Rowing Development.

BOD position: Nadia Hijazi is completing her 1st term; she also declines to run for a 2nd term. New nominations are being accepted for this position. (Theresa Tompkins, Claire Sweatt, and Henry Epstein have accepted a nomination)

BOD position: Heather Mathis is stepping down in mid-term as she will be moving to the Woodlands next Summer. Nominations are being accepted for the 1-year remaining in her BOD term. (Marilyn Bullard has accepted a nomination)

BOD position: Jeff Tave is completing his 1st term; he also declines to run for a 2nd term. New nominations

*Continued on page 3*

### Also in this issue:

- Boat Storage Revisions
- Kare Ronkainen: From Houston to Lucerne
- Boathouse Addition Progress
- Water Level Monitoring
- And More....



**Bay Area Rowing Club of Houston**  
**P.O. Box 580374**  
**Houston, TX 77258-0374**  
**Telephone: 281-326-5995.**  
**<http://www.barchouston.org>**

For membership information call **281-326-5995** or email [membership@barchouston.org](mailto: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 eight coming to BARC.

A brand-spanking new Vespoli Challenger 8 has been ordered for BARC. The boat should be arriving around the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend in May if we can arrange transportation from the Dad Vail regatta in Philadelphia.

### Volunteers needed for Rice Invitational

Rice will host its annual regatta with Tulane, University of Texas, and Texas A&M on Sunday, February 24, and we are looking for volunteers to help with the officiating.

Specifically, we are looking for referees, launch drivers, dock masters, finish line judges, and runners. No previous experience is needed. We will train.

The regatta starts at 9:30 AM and is expected to conclude by 1 PM. Volunteers are asked to arrive at 8:30. Sandwiches and drinks will be provided for workers.

### Newsletter Editor Wanted

This will likely be the last Strokewatch you'll receive from this Editor. After nearly four years of doing the newsletter I am ready to give someone else a chance.

If you are interested in honing your skills as a writer, and write for a major publication, here is your chance. "Strokewatch" is published 4-5 times per year.

### Space City Sprints

Claire Sweatt and Heather Mathis will co-direct this year's Space City Sprints. The regatta will be held on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2002

## The BARCalendar

Date	What?	Contact
Feb. 16-17	Level One Coaching Clinic, Clear Lake Hilton	Claire, <a href="mailto:classes@barchouston.org">classes@barchouston.org</a>
Feb. 24	Rice Invitational, Mud Lake	Hannes Hofer, <a href="mailto:hofer@mac.com">hofer@mac.com</a>
March 9-10	Heart of Texas, Austin	<a href="http://www.austinrowing.org/">www.austinrowing.org/</a>
March 23	Dragon's Breath Regatta, The Woodlands	(Check at boathouse)
May 4th	Space City Sprints, BARC	Heather Mathis
Saturday, April 6, 9:00am	Try it you'll like it	Pam Falk, <a href="mailto:pfalk@utmb.edu">pfalk@utmb.edu</a>
April 27, 28, 30, May 1	Sculling Classes	Claire, <a href="mailto:classes@barchouston.org">classes@barchouston.org</a>
Saturday, May 11, 9:00am	Try it you'll like it	Pam Falk, <a href="mailto:pfalk@utmb.edu">pfalk@utmb.edu</a>
May 25, 26, 28, 29	Sculling Classes	Claire, <a href="mailto:classes@barchouston.org">classes@barchouston.org</a>

## Attention Private Boat Owners!

Since our current boathouse was constructed, our club has enjoyed the availability of ample shell storage. With ample space, enforcement of club policy, regarding minimum frequency of shell use, has not been a priority. As a consequence, several shells, which have seen little or no recurring use, have been allowed to remain stored within the boathouse.

However, due to the increasing popularity of rowing and growing demand for shell berths, the club can no longer afford this luxury. Consequently, the board of directors has conducted a review of current club policy and enforcement practice regarding shell storage. Guided by our fundamental mission, to promote the sport of rowing in the greater Houston area, the board has implemented several policy revisions and has taken initiatives to enforce compliance.

Those shell owners who are currently not in compliance have been notified that if the current situation persists, action will be taken to remedy the situation in accordance with club policy.

It is our hope that this course of action will insure active rowing members have the best possible opportunity to practice the sport of rowing and that those shell owners who are unable to maintain a frequent rowing schedule receive fair and equitable treatment. We hope you are able to continue an active rowing schedule.

The revisions include a clarification of the frequency-of-use rule (private boats must be used at least once a month), and there is now a designation of some hard-to-reach spaces as Storage. Boats stored in these spaces are not subject to the frequency-of-use rule, but the fees are the same.

The updated membership handbook is available online in the members only section of the BARC home page at <http://www.barchouston.org>. Copies of the updated handbook are also available in the boathouse. Specific policies regarding shell storage are included below.

See you on the water!

## Boathouse Expansion Progress

By Hannes Hofer

As you may remember, we last year decided to start initial investigations into an expansion of the BARC House.

In the time that has passed since, we have talked to the Harris County Park Department who told us

that, since the existing boathouse is in close proximity to a registered archeological site, we must obtain a permit from the State Historical Commission before the Park will consider our request.

This has turned out to be quite an obstacle, because to get the permit, we will have to hire a state approved archeologist to conduct a survey of the site. The Board has decided to hire Robert D'aigle of Cultural Resource Consultants to do the work.

While looking into all this, I have learned quite a bit about just what makes the area so interesting to the archeologists. It turns out that the area north of the boathouse contains a shell midden (refuse pile) created by prehistoric people, dating back about 3000 years, and also a 1400 year old cemetery which contained the skeletal remains of 32 men, women and children before they were dug up and moved to Austin in 1969-72. If you want to learn more about the site you can read about it on the web at <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/HH/bbh6.html>.

From talking to the archeologists it seems likely that there is enough room to expand without interfering with the site. If not, we will need to consider alternative means for growth. Ideas are welcome.

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### *Annual meeting. Continued from page 1*

are being accepted for this position. (Theresa Tompkins, Claire Sweatt, and Henry Epstein have accepted a nomination)

If you should have a question with regards to the responsibilities of a particular position, please feel free to contact me (phone calls get quicker responses) or any other BARC officer.

Valid nominations will be accepted from BARC members (nominator) in good standing (all dues & storage fees are paid up). Nominees must also be BARC members in good standing. Valid nominations shall include nominator, nominee, and the open BARC office/position.

Please send all nominations via email ([jefftave@ghg.net](mailto:jefftave@ghg.net)), phone (281-326-5098), or via pony mail (2002 Nominations Committee c/o BARC, PO Box 580374, Houston TX 77258-0374).

Thanks in advance for your support!

## Kate Ronkainen: Houston to Lucerne.

This is the second and last installment of Kate Ronkainen's story of how she, a Houstonian, ended end up on the US National Rowing Team

### Part 3: Lucerne, Switzerland

Heading to Europe on August 12 I still felt like I was in some strange surreal dream, and that none of this was really happening. I guess when something amazing happens; there is a sort of magic to it. This was so special, so different from the every day, and so fulfilling seeing as I was training by myself for almost an entire year in Austin – it just reminds you that dreams can come true and the world is a good and beautiful place.

We started mingling with the rest of the team; everyone was so young and “green.” The excitement was contagious and the stress was low b/c there wasn't any set expectation. The coaches' attitudes had been to just have fun and go as hard as you can every day. We had been making steady improvements in Princeton since the line-up was set, and Tom was encouraged that our improvements were consistent and we didn't seem to be having any lapses. He told us that hdn't really know how fast we were yet, and that we didn't either, so we should just “go.” Tom is very simple no-nonsense, and it

was very refreshing and non-stressful. He almost seems to have an innate sense for coaching women as well, as we tend to get a little more stressed and emotional. His calm reassurance was a strength to our team.

Meanwhile, Lucerne was beautiful – Mt. Pylatus in the background, Lake Lucerne flowed through the city. The air was clear, the sun was bright, the architecture had clean lines and the chocolate and yogurt were to die for. We didn't have much time to tour as we were still practicing twice a day, and the coaches wanted us off our feet as much as possible, but just breathing in the mountain air refreshed the soul. Rowing is a lot bigger in Europe than in the states. I had always heard that, but the situation in Lucerne was incredible. There were billboards everywhere advertising the regatta. Store windows had incorporated regatta posters into their displays, and the busses had signs in them as well. There was an opening ceremony in the town square, and we were seen as athlete-heroes. It was very inspirational.

The women's eight line-up had two veterans, 5 seat and bow, otherwise an entirely new crew – most of us had not even raced internationally, and I had never even made an NCAA championship.

We raced in our heat on Monday, August 20 against Romania, Belarus, and Australia and came in third ahead of Belarus by half a seat, which we took in the last 250 meters of the race after Australia (1<sup>st</sup>) and Romania (2<sup>nd</sup>). Our race plan was: three quarters,



The Shea Rowing Center at Princeton where US rowers train for the Olympics

half, half, lengthen lengthen full, high twenty, focus 10 at the five hundred, high 15 at the thousand, then sprint at the final 250, taking it up 2 beats every ten strokes. Later we heard that the camera that was following the race and showing it on the jumbo-tron had cut us off due to our lane and angle. We were down by a whole boat length for most of the race, our first 500 being slow, and we had had a difficult time off the line. The crowd was a little worried (Tom very) but we snuck up and beat Belarus in the nick of time – sneaking onto the jumbo-tron just as all hope seemed lost. Our time was 6:17. The winner of that heat advanced to the grand final, so we were looking towards the reps. This had been only our second 2000m piece to do in that line-up, our first being Nationals against Canada, so we welcomed another chance for learning and improvement. As we pulled to the shore in the cool down area where Tom stood, he tossed out bananas to us to help us recover. He did this for us after every race – it was quite considerate.

Wednesday's rep had 6 boats and 4 would advance to the final on Sunday. Australia and Great Britain had advanced directly to the final, and this was our last chance. We were calm; we had made adjustments in our race plan, practiced a higher start and changed our moves. We were ready. Lane 1 – Netherlands, lane 2 – Canada, lane 3 – Romania, lane 4 – Germany, lane 5 – USA, lane 6 – Belarus, attention row! I got goose bumps the first time they announced USA's lane, especially when I realized that I was representing the whole country. For the first time I grasped a true national pride which has only deepened since the recent tragedies in NYC and Washington, DC. I hope that this note finds your friends and families well. I still get goose bumps thinking that I am on team USA.

For the rep, we knew that Belarus and Romania would be off the line fast and we also knew that Belarus usually flied and died, so our plan was to try to hang with them off the line. We did, jumping off the line at a 45! Holy moly! Into the second 500 we were in second behind Belarus, but as we settled other teams began to sneak up and take away our precious seats. Romania was fast and consistent and inched ahead steadily, Germany moved into us in the second 500, but Canada and the Netherlands dropped back. Just tenths of a second separated 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> over the thousand – the race was tight and we were all just listening to Mary's voice and pulling as hard as we had ever pulled. We knew top four would go to the final and we held fourth, but [%#@!\\* that!](#) Who wants to *just* make a final? We snuck up on Belarus

again in the last 10 stroked to finish third. Our time in the rep was 6:11, we held a 37 base rate, but our second 500 was the slowest of all the boats, our last 500 the fastest – we had more in us yet!

For the final we changed our plan. So far we had set goal changes and had met them. It was tantamount that we do the same for the final. We knew that we could be fast off the line, and we knew that Romania was consistent and fast, possibly the fastest. Our plan, as they were in the lane next to us, was to stay on them no matter what it took. Seemed simple. We also added 2 new moves: 15 strokes at the 750 and 1250. During our boat meeting the night before the race Tom reminded us that we were there because we loved racing and most importantly we were there to have fun. He told us that anything was possible and that we were still improving consistently, so we should shoot for the metals. He outlined situations and how we, or the coxswain, Mary should react. He told us to take up the rate if we fell behind. "Take it up and go!"

I sat in one of the lounges at the hotel in disbelief and awe of the incredible experience I was having. All I could think was, tomorrow I am rowing in the finals of the World championships. Tomorrow **I** am rowing in the finals of the World championships.

Day of the final: it was go-time and we were pumped and a bit nervous as well. The warm up was good, but a little bit of tension trickled through the boat. Mary called us on it and said, "Okay, so the warm-up was a little tense, but we know what we can do and we are going to do it!" Mary Whipple, from Washington was a fabulous coxswain. She was always calm and realistic. We trusted her totally. It is hard sometimes to totally trust a coxswain, but it is clear that she commands respect because she is damn good at what she does. Being able to give in to her and trust her completely helped the boat unity and took a lot of stress off the rowers.

We were silent on the line, but we were ready. Wendy Wilbur, veteran, sitting behind me in bow seat said, "this is the only boat that matters USA – let's make it go fast." She made another joke, and the ice was broken, at least for me.

The announcer called the lanes, the light went from red to green, and we had the start of our lives. Our first ten strokes were at a 48! We came down to a 40 as we lengthened and right before the first 500 we settled at a 38, which we maintained as our base rate for the race. The settle seemed like it would be like the other races, but we all knew that we couldn't afford a week second 500, so we pushed harder and

remained in the pack. We were in third over the 500 behind Australia and Belarus, and Romania was creeping up. Mary called for us to go with Romania and we latched on to them, but we were still a few seats down. We took our move at the 750. We bumped the rate up and moved a seat on Romania. Belarus was starting to slow, but Australia was still going strong. The Germans had also moved up and we were about 2 seats down on them. 2 seats! The spread was so close. The race was so intense. All we could do was look ahead and pull. I honestly can hardly remember the details of the race, the drool just oozing out of my mouth. I was breathing so hard and just pushing my legs so hard... At the 1250 we made our second move and took back a seat setting us up for the sprint. The race was still too close to call. At the 500 to go our rate reached a 39 – we were moving! Mary was calling the race, “a seat on Germany two on Romania, up in two...we are in fourth... 300 meters to go, up in two...we are moving... half a seat on Germany up in two...we’re over....

We finished at a 44. Um, I was dead. I couldn’t even really think about how well we had done, wait just let me catch my breath for a tenth of a second... how the hell did we finish? It was so close and Mary couldn’t say for sure. The times were Australia, 6:03.66, Romania 6:04.96, Germany 6:05.32, USA 6:05.88 – so close to a metal, so close.... Belarus 6:08.12 and Great Britain 6:09.64.

Drat!

We knew that we had had a great race, but we were all disappointed. Behind our sporty shades tears fell. Tom approached us by the shore and didn’t say anything. He was a comforting presence though, and we just sat, and then cooled down in silence. Back on land we silently walked our boat to the rack, and Lori told us that we had had a great race. It made me want to start crying all over again. The effort, the work, and then being so close...

Tom called us to a corner behind the boat-house and we all sat down. He was sort of choked up himself, but said that he had brought us over here because he wanted to talk to us for a moment. “You are all feeling pretty bad right now because even though you had a great race, you didn’t come away with something to show for it. Well, you are allowed to be upset, but only for a few minutes. Before you leave this spot make sure that your eyes are dried and you can hold your head up high because you went a 6:05 today. The sting of losing won’t go away for a while, but in the long term, thinking about winning in 2004, we have an awesome start. Nobody expected you to do this well. Good job.”

When we thought about it, we realized that

we had truly accomplished something great. So many young and inexperienced rowers making improvements to be only about 2 seconds off gold... With a few more years we are going to be kicking ass! (Excuse my excited bad language). All I could think about was that I wanted to race again, but gosh, World’s next year isn’t until the end of September. Hopefully I will be faster and stronger and maybe we can get a medal!

We have taken the last two months a little easy, and are just now starting to gear up seriously with weight training and rowing. Tom has decided that we are all going to become expert pair rowers, so all of our time has been in the pairs. He is trying to make pairs that work together and also execute his technical style. The rows are slow and easy, but soon speed orders and more racing to follow. Selection in the future, he tells us, will be based a lot on our performance in small boats. This November, my boat was invited to the 2004 Olympic Summit to be held in Santa Barbara. Any national team member of any summer sport that placed in the top 4 in their event is invited. It is sort of an inspirational – get psyched meeting. Olympic medallists will speak of their experiences and share advice. We will also get to try out other sports and commune with other great athletes. It should be very cool. I am honored to have been invited. So that is the update for now.

I want to keep in touch with interested rowers in Texas – the Austin Rowing Club as well as the Bay Area rowing Club in Houston. Anyone who is interested, I would love to send out a group e-mail to keep you posted of my workouts, Tom’s coaching, racing and any other information about the team that you might be interested in. I would also love to answer any questions that you might have for me, and if I cannot answer them, I will find someone who can.

I just think that this experience is very amazing, and I would like to share it with people who share my passion for rowing. Please e-mail me if you are interested in being on a mailing list. My e-mail is ronkainen underscore kate at hotmail.com.

I also want to take a moment to ask for your advice and help. I know that because of recent events the economy is bad – this is probably affecting you, and it is also affecting me. I have been searching for a job since I returned from Lucerne, but so far nothing has seemed to work out. I am working with a few “connections” through the National Team to try to find a full time job that pays well and has the flexibility I need for travel and training trips. It is a difficult search, but my resume is out there. Currently, I am working full time at an outdoor outfitter similar to REI. The cost of living here is so high, and

my salary is not paying the bills. I accrued debt this summer as well, so I am a bit stressed out about money. All I really want to do is train and kick some butt!

I have opened an account with the National Rowing Foundation, which enables people to make donations of any amount to an account under my name. All donations made by non-family members are tax deductible, and the NRF will acknowledge for tax purposes. The way the account works is: people make donations, and then I submit receipts for my rowing related expenses, and am reimbursed. Rowing related expenses include equipment i.e. oars, boats, ergs (for example), workout clothing, regatta travel and entry fees (US Rowing does not always cover these costs, in fact there will be two training trips to San Diego – one in January and one in February, and we have to buy our own plane tickets), and other obvious US Rowing related misc. expenses. The funds are set aside only for my use with proper receipts. If you are interested in making donations, you can make them in any amount, even \$10 bucks – that's 6 power bars, and it all counts when you are counting pennies like I am. I hate to ask for help, but I know that in order to train as hard as I want to, to become as strong and fast as I want to and to live in Princeton, I might need it from time to time. I mean, we are talking the Olympics here – one can only train as an elite athlete for so long, so I better take advantage of every angle! Also, if your businesses or anyone else you may know might be interested in helping me, please pass their names along to me so that I can contact them. Or, if you might have a job lead for me in the Princeton area that would be priceless!

To make a donation, mail a check payable to The National Rowing Foundation. Enclose a note stating clearly my name: Kate Ronkainen, and send it to: National Rowing Foundation c/o Hart Perry, Jr., 67 Mystic Road, North Stonington, CT 06359. Also, on the memo section of the check write Ronkainen-186. The Foundation maintains the ultimate discretion over how all donations may be applied and considers the desires of the donor, provided they are consistent with the purposed with the NRF. If you have any questions and would like to contact them the phone is (860) 585-0634.

Thank you for your support and your consideration of me as a worthy cause. I would love to share my dream with you.

Sincerely,  
Kate Ronkainen

## Rowing Development

We have had several rowing development activities occurring at BARC over the past few months. Here are some updates:

\* A Novice Rowers Clinic was held on Saturday, November 3, 2001. Ten individuals who had each taken one of our summer Sculling Classes attended. Thanks to Hannes Hofer, Breff Cooling, and Claire Sweatt for leading this clinic.

\* During the month of January, several BARC members participated in a Coxswain's Clinic. The clinic ran for 3 sessions and covered safety rules, commands, boat handling, drills, rowing technique and racing rules. Marilyn Bullard, Theresa Tompkins, Tina Bryan, Candy Ludwick, Martha Hood, Maxine Epstein, and Niels Hoven (RRC) participated. Thanks to Hannes Hofer, Tom Lotz and Claire Sweatt who each led a session.

\* On February 16th and 17th, BARC will be hosting a USRA Level I Coaching Clinic. This clinic helps teach individuals how to teach others to row. We have ~25 participants scheduled to attend from BARC, RCTW, Dallas....and a few out-of state attendees. The USRA Instructor is Charles Huthmaker from Florida.

\* We are gearing up for our Sculling Classes for this summer. Calls and e-mails are already coming in from individuals interested in learning to row. We will also have our Try It You'll Like It classes this summer for those just interested in sampling the sport. It's looking like we'll be able to offer a Sweep Class this summer, too! Dates for the classes will be coming out very soon and will be posted at the Boathouse and on the website. Please say "Yes!" when you get the call to help teach :)

\* Spring Regattas are right around the corner! Here is the schedule for the races in our area:  
Heart of Texas, Austin, March 9th and 10th  
Dragon's Breath Regatta, The Woodlands, March 23rd  
Space City Sprints, BARC, May 4th

Claire Sweatt  
Rowing Development Coordinator

## Monitoring the Mud Lake Water Level From Your Computer

During the winter months, cold-fronts sometimes causes water levels to fall so low that rowing on Mudd lake is not possible (who would ever forget the “Who pulled the stopper” Space City Sprints Regatta in 1993). For us “City dwellers”, that sometimes mean fruitless drives to Clear Lake at times where we instead could have caught up on our sleep.

With the advance of internet technologies, this may no longer be necessary: Water level monitors are installed throughout the clear lake area and many of them sends data to websites where rowers and others with interest can view it.

One such site is The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) site, which shows various data from stations around the country. The one closest to Mudd lake is the one at Morgan’s Point, [http://www.co-ops.nos.noaa.gov/hgports/Composite\\_mp.html](http://www.co-ops.nos.noaa.gov/hgports/Composite_mp.html) . It is

my experience that the water is too low when level goes below  $-1.25$  ft. as reported as this station.

Tom Heig has made me aware that there is actually a water level gauge inside Clear Lake Park. That one is run by The Harris County Office of Emergency Management. The URL is [http://www.hcoem.org/hcrainfall\\_hist.php](http://www.hcoem.org/hcrainfall_hist.php) . Click on “Draw Map” and a map with stations throughout the county will be shown. Click on the rectangle where the park is (near the bottom right hand corner) and if you picked the right one, a window will come up for “B100 Armand @ NASA Road 1”. Look where it says “Last Report” and make sure it is a recent reading. Tom says he thinks the lower limit for rowing according this site is about 6 inches, but further monitoring may be needed. Unfortunately this station is not updated as frequently as the NOAA site.

On a related note, a good rule of thumb for wind speed is that if the wind blows at more than 13 miles per hour from the north or from the south, it is usually too windy to row. It can blow out of the east and west at more than 15 mph and still be row-