

WRC Coxswain & Bow Person Handbook

This handbook is designed to introduce you to boat handling at WRC, and assist you in navigating your way around the boathouse and river.

August 2025





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Coxswain & Bow Person Handbook:

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1. The Role of the Coxswain & Bow Person

The coxswain or bow person leads their crew on and off the water as well as steers the boat. A crew's performance is as dependent on a well-prepared coxswain or bow person as it is on the technical and athletic abilities of the rowers. The coxswain or bow person also plays an essential role in the psychology of the team, maintenance of the equipment, and the effectiveness and efficiency of a practice session. The coxswain or bow person is critical to the safety of the rowers and the equipment.

Specific roles listed below

- Ensure the safety of the rowers and the boat both on and off the water.
- Know your water, rules of the river, and potential obstacles.
- Maintain a calm and purposeful manner when working with your crew. You set the tone for the practice or race.
- If you are focused and confident in your job, your crew will respond to your leadership.
- If you are concerned about the weather conditions, exercise your leadership, and do not go out!
- Maximize practice time by motivating your crew to be quick and efficient in the boat bays and the dock.
- Steering, Launching, and Landing
- Provide the leadership needed to maintain the attention and focus of the rowers.
- Care of the equipment you use. Report any damage on the white "repair board" and include time and date of incident, boat #, specifically what the issue is and your name. Also, when you check back in on computer, indicate the issue and also include your name.
- If there is major damage to boat or rowers, fill out Incident Report on the WRC Website: www.wilmingtonrowing.org = Operations and Safety = WRC Incident Report
- In a coached practice, communicate with the coach prior to the launch to ensure an understanding of the practice objective.
- Maximize the quality of the practice by filling "down" time with drills.
- Give specific direction to individual rowers for better oar handling, matching and blade work.
- On the water, the bow person has the additional role of rowing while steering, running drills and critiquing technique!

2. Steering, Stopping and Turning

- Steering Basics - Push the steering mechanism or steering cable in the direction you want to turn.
- Use the rudder when the oars are in the water.
- The boat will continue to turn after you have used the rudder – so under steer.
- Keep on course by picking and maintain a point high enough on the horizon, so that you can always see it over your rowers.
- Make small adjustments to keep the boat on course.
- Be aware that sharp steering will affect the set of the boat and may disrupt the rowers' focus.
- The coxswain may ask for more pressure on one side to assist in steering around a turn. However, this should not be a frequent request.
- Do not lean to either side. Keep your body weight centered and low in the boat.
- To steer the boat to one side when it has momentum and is coming to a stop, have one side hold down or drag their blades.

Advanced Steering



- The lag time between rudder application and hull response is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a stroke to $1\frac{1}{2}$ full strokes.
- Fours are more responsive, making them more difficult to keep straight.
- The rudder mechanism needs to be tight otherwise coxswains can unintentionally move the rudder in trying to stabilize their own bodies. Keep even pressure on the steering cables until you want to adjust your course. You can increase your stability by grasping both gunwales and the steering cable simultaneously. Hold the steering cable with 2 fingers only.

When to Steer

- Turning slows the boat because of rudder drag and because the rowers have a harder time setting the boat.
- Try to minimize your turning.
- Know the rules of the river and of rowing. Anticipate right-of-way conflicts. Do what the rules require, with the minimum amount of turning.
- Anticipate the need to steer, as the boat begins to move off course and make small corrections early.
- A shell is more stable when the blades are in the water. Try to steer while the blades are in the water.
- A shell is less stable when the blades are out of the water. Try not to steer when the blades are out of the water.
- The boat accelerates on the drive and decelerates on the recovery. Steering is less responsive the slower the boat is moving.

Coxing Style

- Always raise your hand when you have understood your coach's instruction. If you do not understand, signal your coach by putting your hand to your ear, or ask for clarification if your coach is close to you.
- Turn your Cox box OFF if you need to yell to your coach or others outside of your boat.
- When adjusting a point have your 7 or 8 seat back while your 1 or 2 seat rows. This will let you spin your boat without moving forward or backwards.
- When making a gradual turn, steer during the drive and straighten the rudder during the recovery.
- When making a sharp turn it is OK to keep the rudder to one side. However, tell your rowers when you are "on the tiller" and again when you're "off the tiller".

Steering Practice

- Refrain from steering for a given number of strokes. If your boat naturally steers straight you will see how little you need to steer. If your boat tends to pull to one side you may need to work with the coach to find which rower(s) is being out-pulled. Over steering may hide what is really happening in the boat.

Stopping

- When having a crew stop you can give the command, "In two..... weigh-enough" or "on this one, weigh-enough". Always say when you want your crew to stop before you say way-enough. Say "weigh-enough" as the blades go through the water.
- You can stop your boat by holding down all eight. You can keep your boat from moving by having all eight square their blades and hold water.



- Be very aware of the current when stopping. Anticipate the direction that the shell will move in when stopped.
- Always have your crew “glide” after they way-enough. Rowers should stop with their “hands away” and their blades off the water, and feathered.
- Maintain your point and keep boats parallel while stopped. You should always be adjusting your point even if the coach is talking (use your stern or bow pair, make brief comments, trying not to interrupt the coach), so that you are ready to go when the practice is ready to continue. Communicate to other coxswains what you are doing and if you need their help. Do not wait for the coach to tell you to “get your point”.

Turning Around

- Always turn your boat into the wind, unless that causes you to violate the traffic pattern.
- Always begin the turn by backing first.
- Maintain a set boat during the entire turn.
- Unless otherwise directed, turn your boat one side at a time (i.e., ports to back, starboards to row, ready back, row, back” etc....).
- If two or more boats are turning, stagger the boats so that all boats can turn without collision.
- Always turn your boat so that you end up facing in the right direction for the traffic pattern when you finish your turn.

Additional Steering Tips for Bow Persons

The main differences between steering as a coxswain and steering as a bow person are that the bow person is facing backwards, is rowing as well as steering, has no cox box, and uses no steering mechanism or a different steering mechanism than a coxswain.

Steering Aids

It is strongly recommended that you use a steering aid if you bow a boat on a regular basis. A steering aid will save your back and neck from undue strain, avoid disturbance to the set of the boat that occurs when you turn your head around, and allow you to concentrate better on your rowing technique and power application. It takes some practice to get used to a steering aid, but the payoff is worth the effort. Some steering aids that are helpful are:

- Reflective eyeglasses: These glasses have a reflective surface on the inside of the glass that allows you to see behind you.
- Mirror attached to a hat: Similar to mirrors used by cyclists, these small mirrors may be used singly or in pairs. They are attached to your hat with adhesive or grommets.
- Mirror attached to the boat: These larger mirrors are attached to the outrigger, singly or in pairs.

Steering Basics for Bow Persons

- Point your bow in the direction you want to row, and then pick a point on the horizon that lines up with your stern.
- If you do not use a steering aid, the general rule of thumb is to turn around about every 20 strokes to check your course and to look for debris and boat traffic. You may turn more or less depending on the amount of debris and traffic, the bends in the river, and as you approach bridges and docks.
- Turn your head around at the finish of your stroke, when the boat is most stable, going only so far as is needed to see your course clearly. Do not linger, as you are still expected to keep up with the rhythm of the boat.



- You may find that you favor turning to one side, but you should occasionally turn to the other side to check for obstacles that might be just out of your vision on your preferred side.

Sculling Boats with No Steering Mechanism

- Steer by calling out “Port” or “Starboard” to the other crew members to stay on course.
- Call “Straight away” or simply “Straight” as you approach the completion of your turn (to avoid over steering).
- For a long turn you should shout “Still on port/starboard” partway through the turn to keep the rowers focused on the need to continue turning.
- With no Cox box, it’s important for the bow person to provide loud, clearly enunciated directions.

Sculling Boats with a Toe Steering Mechanism

A toe steering mechanism greatly reduces or eliminates the need for the bow person to call out steering commands. The steering cable is attached to the bow person’s shoe tip at one end and the rudder at the other end.

- Check the steering mechanism before every row to ensure that the cable is neither too loose to be effective nor too tight to be easily moved with your toe. Also check that when the toe of your shoe is pointed straight up, the rudder is flush. Adjust if necessary with the help of a crew member. Be aware that if you move the stretchers the cable tension will be affected.
- To steer, point your toe in the direction you want to turn; e.g., point the toe to port to turn towards port.
- Engage the help of your crew if needed by calling out steering commands. This should be done only in special situations; e.g., to avoid obstacles that appear suddenly.
- Be careful that you don’t move your toe unintentionally; e.g., when turning around to check your course. If the cable is correctly tightened this should not be a problem, but a sudden turn with your body could affect the steering if you’re not aware of your foot position.

Other Sculling Boat Tips

- When calling drills in a quad, the 2 seat can run the drills, leaving the bow person to focus on steering. The Bow Person is still in charge of emergency stops and calling for pressure to steer.
- Emergency Stops – As a Bow Person it is critical to ensure the crew is prepared for emergency stops. During a row, the Bow Person should include emergency stop practices as part of normal training. This ensures rowers are prepared and react quickly when necessary.

3. Commands

Your voice, execution of drills and workouts set the tone for your boat. A coxswain or bow person with confident voice and precise calling of commands will ensure the focus of your rowers and the quality of your row.



The Basics

- Ensure all rowers can hear you and are listening.
- Commands need to be simple, short and to the point. Be definitive when calling out a command.
- Pause between the definitive commands.
- Be sure it's clear what the crew will be doing.
- "Who" "What" and "When" –
 - "All eight On the feather, paddle pressure Ready, Row"
 - "All Eight To shoulders ready – up"

Attitude

- Have confidence in your ability to make accurate decisions and in correcting mistakes. Do not apologize. Just make the change in your command and then continue.
- Demand attention and focus from your rowers on and off the water.
- Treat the rowers with respect.
- Don't be negative – always stay positive

Voice

- Use a deep voice versus a high/shrill squeal.
- Don't be afraid to be quiet as you assess a situation and then make a decision. Try not to think out loud.
- If you anticipate a tight situation, or there is a wake coming, give the rowers a calm warning. "Starboards, we're passing another crew on your side, heads up", or "Wake coming from the port side in 3 strokes."
- As the intensity of a practice or race increases, your voice needs to remain calm and relaxed. Do not increase the volume or speed of your voice unless it is for specific emphasis (i.e., power ten; pass a boat, etc...). Increase the intensity of your voice rather than the volume.
- Your voice affects your rowers. If you talk fast, the slide will tend to increase. If you panic, your rowers will panic. When you're nervous, your rowers will be nervous. It is very important that you remain calm under stress whether you are lining up for a race or trying to maneuver your boat in a tricky situation during practice.
- Use a strong and assertive speaking voice. Never yell or scream at your rowers. Remember that just because you speak loudly in the bays you do not have to take an angry tone.

Timing

- Always count your strokes at precisely the same moment as the stroke's catch. Calling the count before or after the catch will confuse your rowers and can lead to unmatched rowing. Never count at the release.
- Always tell your crew what they are supposed to do and then say "in two...", or "on this one ..." depending on the situation.



4. Before you Bring Boat out of Boathouse

- Check weather. We do not row in thunder, lightning or high winds. There is a weather station at the desk.
- Check Sunset Time and determine if lights will be needed. Row must be completed 30 minutes after sunset. Row can start 30 minutes before sunrise.
- Check the current, tides and angle of the ramp to the dock.
- Work with rowers to assign seats and agree on practice objectives, if you do not have a coach.
- Place boat slings out in yard.
- Reserve a boat if you haven't already. Go into RegattaCentral on computer and sign specific boat out, what time you will be out under your name.
- Check boat out of book and RegattaCentral on the computer.
- Check CoxBox to ensure it is working.
- Assign rowers to bring oars to dock.
- Assess the ability of rowing crew to bring boat to the dock. Do you need to recruit more hands?
- Check that rowers have their equipment (water bottles etc...) at the dock.
- You must have a key to the boat house with you.

5. Boat Handling

Inspecting Boat Prior to Row

- Always place the boat in the stretchers prior to bringing it down to the dock.
- Instruct rowers to adjust their equipment.
- Remind them to do the following:
 - Adjust foot stretchers
 - Check "Cookies" or "spacers" and adjust
 - Check seat
 - Look for loose bolts and rigging
 - Check oarlock
- Walk the boat yourself and look for anything that might be out of order. Do the last check and remind your rowers. Nothing is worse than having to come back to dock for a mechanical issue.

Carrying Boats

- There should be no talking other than from you in the boat bay or as you walk your boat.
- Demand that all rowers carry the boat at their shoulders, or just above if they are not as tall as others.
- Group rowers so tall are together and shorter rowers are together. Position the tall rowers down the ramp.
- Be aware of the ramp angle. Assess the ability of your rowers to carry the boat, if needed pull other rowers in to help carry boat.
- Prior going to shoulders, have rowers tip their heads in the direction they are going to go, while the boat is still overheads.



Launching

- Stand and face your rowers as you call your commands. They cannot hear you if you turn your face away from them.
- Ensure oars are on the dock prior to bringing the boat down.
- As the boat is rolled in to the water, move to the stern and make sure the skeg does not hit the dock.
- Hold the boat at the dock while the rowers get their oars.
- Have rowers place oars in boat. Instruct the rowers to double check equipment. Count down from bow when ready.
- Port oars across the water.
- Coxswain gets in boat last. For sculling, Bow person steps into the boat with the rest of the crew.
- When all rowers are ready. Instruct rowers to step into boat. "one foot in, ready in"
- Call for a count to verify that rowers are ready to launch. Starting with bow seat, each rower calls out their seat number when ready; for example "Bow ...2...3...4...5...6...7...stroke."
- Immediately push the boat off the dock when the count is complete with the command "Ready to shove ...shove".
- Move away from the dock as soon as possible by instructing bow four to row.

Docking

- Always approach the dock slowly by pairs
- Notice which way the wind will blow you and adjust for it.
- Notice which way the current is moving and adjust for it.
- Remember that if you have your rowers lean to one side, the boat will travel in that direction
- Zero wind landings:
 - In calm weather, approach the dock Boat at a 15-degree angle aiming for the beginning of the dock. Approach the dock slowly dropping from all eight six boat lengths away, to stern four, to stern pair for the last boat length or two. With stern pair rowing, approach until one of their blades is almost on top of the dock. Then glide it in as everyone leans away from the dock to lift the riggers over the dock edge & bumper.
- Cross wind landings:
 - In strong crosswinds that push you off the dock, you will often require help from someone on the dock. If someone is available to catch the oars, adjust / decrease your angle of docking to 5 to 10 degrees. Remember that the wind will either continually blow you closer to the dock as you approach it or it will blow you away. For this reason you may need to start your approach closer or further away than you would if there was no wind. In heavy winds you may need to use bow, 2 seat or the bow pair instead of, or in addition to, stern pair to help guide the bow to the dock.
- The coxswain is always the person to get out first. Hold the boat while your rowers get out and remove their oars. The bow person of a sculling boat gets out with the crew.
- Depending on skill of rowers, you may have your rowers exit the boat by pairs or fours after you get out.



After the Row

- As quick as possible – rowers remove oars and get ready to lift boat.
- Check to see if rowers are positioned for efficient lifting – do you need more hands? Get Them!
- Try and position rowers so all are carrying the boat equally.
- Boat always goes into slings. Rinsed, Washed, Rinsed and Dried.
- Check boat for any damage or equipment issues. If yes, note any need for repair on the white equipment status board.
- Sign boat back in on the computer and manual sheet.
- Place CoxBox into charger.
- Regroup rowers and discuss the row. What went well? What can be improved. Look for feedback.
- Lock Up!

6. Safety

Safe Rowing

- Please refer to the Recommendations in “Closing/Opening River for Safe Rowing” on the website under Operations and Safety. This spells out information when to go out in different situations – weather, current, debris, etc.

Boat Handling

- Always tell your rowers what it is you want them to do before you ask them to do it. Stand facing the rowers so that everyone can hear you.
- Make sure everyone on your boat is ready and quiet before you give instructions
- Pay attention to timing of the rowers – Example: When placing boat into and pulling boat out of the water, all rowers should synchronize their movements.
- Make sure rowers have a good hold on gunwales and lift boat with their legs.
- Makes sure everyone is carrying the boat at his or her shoulders or above.
- When pressing the boat “up and over heads” or setting the boat into the water, make sure everyone in your boat is working and contributing. Ask for other rowers to help if needed.
- There should be no talking during boat handling procedures.

Steering

- Study the map of the river. Read the Navigation Safety guide to make yourself aware of all on the river.
- You must stay within the correct traffic pattern at all times.
- When turning your boat around, turn only 90 degrees and then pull your boat across the water before finishing the remaining 90 degrees of your turn.
- Act quickly. Anticipate what will be asked of you next. Never let yourself drift into an undesired position. If your decision is wrong, at least you will know and can quickly change your command.
- Periodically check behind you to see what traffic is coming up. Large ships (Kalmar!) have the right away.



- Be aware of the signals from large boats. One blast means they want your boat on THEIR Port side. Two blasts means that you need pass on THEIR Starboard side. Five blasts means to get out of their way immediately.
- If you are stopping, pull the boat over to the right and out of the way of other boats that may be coming up behind you later.

Rowing

- Rowers should remain quiet while on the water
- Rowers should synchronize their motions so that the boat remains set at all times
- Never let the boat ride or sit in an unset position. If it is down to the same side 2 strokes in a row, call the rowers to set the boat immediately.
- Give clear commands so that the rowers know what is expected of them.
- Always raise your hand after a coach gives you an instruction to acknowledge.
- If you row in dusk or in other low light conditions, attach lights.
- In very hot weather, take extra breaks if needed to allow the rowers to hydrate, wipe sweat from hands, etc. In cold weather, give the rowers a chance to shed extra clothing after the warm-up.

Obstruction in the Water

- Be aware of the weather in the prior few days. Will you have large logs to steer around? Is the tide low bringing lots of items up to the surface? Be aware of areas in the river where sandbars may form at low tide and steer a wide path around them.
- When something wraps around the fin and/or rudder, you will feel a vibration in the stern. You may also not be able to steer effectively. You (or stroke in a bow loader) should be able to clear it quickly by reaching under the boat and pulling the debris off.
- If you have snagged a large object on your fin, stop immediately so that it does not rip off your fin. Then reach under (if possible) and clear it.
- Do not push down on an object under the hull since it may push back up through the hull.
- If you run over a solid object you will probably hear a loud thunk. If the fin is ripped off, your boat will veer from side to side. The fin could also be bent or it could be pushed up through the hull of the boat. You should row back to the boathouse immediately. Remember, if there is damage to, or loss of the fin your ability to steer will be greatly impaired so row back with caution. One way to do this is to row with stern 6, and have either bow or 2 seat row as needed for steering.

Miscellaneous

- Command: “Heads Up” pay attention, something to watch out for is near you. This command should always be used when someone may not see your shell coming at him or her such as when leaving the boathouse or launching / carrying boats.



7. Equipment

Oars

- Oars should be carried tips up and set on the dock tips down
- Make sure everyone has the correct oar and that it is placed in its oarlock correctly before launching.

Foot Stretchers

- Foot stretchers should be set at “the catch”, meaning: When the rowers sit in the catch position, the center of the rower’s seat and the pin (the part of the rigger that holds the oarlock in place) of the rigger should be in the same line.

Oar Height

- Make sure rowers have enough clearance as they row. Moving spacers above the oarlock will lower the height and moving spacers below the oarlock will increase the height. Set height at the release position.

Washing Boats Down

- Boats should be washed after every row. Steps involved: 1) Hose down first, 2) Wash with bucket water 3) Rinse with hose water and 4) Dry with towel.
- If needed, boats should be wiped down inside. Check the decking and tracks for grit and dirt.
- Roll up hose if no other boats will be using it.

Clothing (and other items)

- Always have rain gear accessible in case the weather is nasty.
- Dress warmly at all times if the weather is less than perfect. Cold coxswains are less effective.
- Be sure to carry sunglasses, sunscreen, extra “cookies”, athletic tape, tools, wrench, screwdriver, and water. Refer to list in appendix.

Cox Boxes

- Know where your CoxBox is at all times. Always replace your CoxBox immediately after you row and make sure it is plugged into its charger. Your CoxBox must be turned off before plugging it into the charger.
- Always carry your CoxBox by the handle and head-set (together).
- Never leave a CoxBox on the dock or sitting in the boat bay
- Some “Do’s and Don’ts”



- DO: Put the CoxBox on charger whenever it is not in use. The charging light to the right of the rubber plug will come on as soon as the charger is connected. If this light is not on the CoxBox is not being charged.
- DO: Inspect the toggle switch seal daily for signs of tearing.
- DO: Charge for at least 16 hours should the “BAT” warning come on.
- DO: Wash away grit before cleaning front panel
- DO: Use the mounting cup provided.
- DO: Be sure to turn the CoxBox OFF when not in use and store in a cool, dry place.
- -----
- DON'T: Ignore the “BAT” warning on the display. Repeated or extended use with a low battery will shorten life.
- DON'T: Pull on the microphone cable. The cable and connector will withstand a steady pull of 60lbs.- neither will withstand the impact created by yanking the cable or dropping the CoxBox and catching it with the cable.
- DON'T: Leave the CoxBox anywhere the temperature might exceed 120 degrees F for an extended time.
- DON'T: Keep the microphone connected to the CoxBox unless necessary - keeping microphone attached will increase wear & tear and cause damage if the CoxBox is dropped.
- DON'T: Leave the CoxBox on while charging.
- DON'T: Leave the CoxBox on charge for extended periods, more than a day or two) – this will shorten battery life.
- DON'T: Attempt to open the CoxBox – there are no user-serviceable parts inside and the device uses sophisticated sealing procedures.

8. Incident Report

- Incident report should be completed for any event that caused damage to the equipment, had potential to have caused damage to the equipment or there was a rower injury.
- Report should be completed as soon after the event occurred as possible. Report should be completed by the Coxswain or Bow Person.
- For incident Report, go to www.wilmingtonrowing.org => Operations & Safety => WRC Incident Report
- For additional information see the Operations Manual.



9. Racing

Racing is the test of all that has been learned in practice. Think through how you will prepare for the race, get to the race, and work as a team on race day. Have a schedule and a plan prepared before race day.

Before the race day

- Rowers and coxswain should be a part of loading and unloading the boats.
- Agree on transportation and ensure all rowers exchange contact information. Have a copy with you!
- Agree on time and location for meeting on race day.
- Ensure you know the race course

Races in General – The Coxswain’s and Bow Person’s job on the day of the race:

- Pick up your crew’s regatta packet or make arrangements for someone else to pick it up.
- Attend the Coxswain meeting (in person or Zoom) to know specifics to that race.
- Ensure you know the regatta rules; for example, rules for passing boats in a head race.
- Ensure you know the time your crew will launch.
- Ensure your crew takes the shell off the trailer and rigs it in plenty of time for the race.
- Attach the bow number provided in your regatta packet to the shell. If there is a number to be put on rower, make sure it goes on the Bow rower.
- If possible, observe the start of a race prior to your own race, to see how the officials line up the boats and call the start. This may make you more comfortable at the start of your race.
- Keep rowers together and before you launch, talk about your plan for running the race.
- Keep your CoxBox working – plug into your boat to make certain there are no problems.
- Think through problems that might occur and how you’d handle them.
- Consider how you will handle rough water or windy conditions if that is the situation.
- Keep your cool.
- Have a race plan. Map of the course, know the teams that you are racing against and have a variety of commands and motivational words!
- While waiting for the start: maintain a calm voice so the rowers maintain their confidence in you, have them take three deep breaths as they are waiting.
- Rowing to the starting line:
 - Warm-up with brief technical work and then end with short full pressure pieces.
 - Coxswain or bow person should maintain a positive and calm atmosphere in the boat.
 - Rowers may be nervous and it’s up to the coxswain or bow person to maintain calm with the crew while keeping the crew focused on the impending race.
 - Before the race is not the time to add anything new or to try and fix problems which were unable to be fixed in practice.
- After the race, debrief with your crew. What went well – what can be improved. Get input on your performance.



SPRINT RACES

Sprint races occur in the spring and summer months. The distances of these races are between 1000 to 1500 meters. Each race can have between two and six crews racing at the same time. The crews start even with each other. Each crew is assigned their own lane which they must stay in the entire race. Some sprints races may make use of starting platform where a person holds the stern of the boat in place and makes certain each crew is aligned.

The Start

- Coxswain or bow person must line the crew up on the line when their event is called for.
- If not pointed correctly down the course once on the line, the coxswain should raise hand until the boat is straightened out, and then lower it. In a sculling boat, the bow person should make the necessary corrections to align the boat, engaging other crew members minimally as needed.
- Do not take full strokes to straighten. Have either 2 row with 1's oar holding water, or 3 rows with 2's oar holding water to straighten the boat. This is called "Pinching it" or "Sculling the blade".
- If no stake dock, the official will give commands to the boats racing in order to get them aligned.
- When official asks the crew if they are ready, the coxswain should raise his hand briefly and have the crew sit ready to row. For sculling, the bow person should nod deeply to convey readiness to start when polled.
- Sprint races are started by an official who will give starting commands to the crews. Most sprint races begin with either a countdown start or a two command start. Once the official finishes polling the boats the starting commands will follow immediately, so be ready!
- Example: "5..4..3..2..1..ATTENTION! ROW!" or "ATTENTION! ROW!"

The Body

- Sprint races are a straight shot from the starting line to the finish line.
- Coxswains or bow persons should steer as straight as possible.
- Commands during the race: calling the start, calling power 10's, call the sprint and anything else in the Race plan.
- Coxswain or bow person should communication were they are in a race, "300 meters left".
- Coxswain or bow person should tell them were the competition is, "We're even with our opponent; let's take a 10 to walk through'em."
- Stay relaxed, yet confident and aggressive.
- Always stay positive. No cursing – you might be disqualified.

The Finish

- During the last 500 meters, the crew's power will be used up. Focus on the technique.
- Remind them to sit-up, breathe, relax, and to keep rowing full strokes.
- The sprint – Sprints are fast and the rowers must give everything that they have!
- Coxswain or bow person should make sure that the boat is together and at the same rate.
- Do not let them get sloppy.
- Inexperienced crews can fall apart.



- Over count your strokes. Ask for 25 strokes, when 20 are sufficient to finish.

After the race always congratulate the winner (if it's not you), and thank the losers for a good race!

HEAD RACES

Head races are usually 3 miles and contain turns. They are more of a challenge for a coxswain's or bow person's steering abilities. Coxswains and bow persons have to steer the shortest course possible. They should watch for obstacles and other boats, and they should pay attention to their course.

The Start

- As you approach the starting line but before you make your turn towards the starting chute, ensure your boat is in bow number order to the extent possible. Look at the bow numbers on the other boats in your race, or ask someone in the other boats what their number is if you can't make it out. The officials expect you to be in order once you have made your turn and are pointed in the direction of the race.
- Begin with a rowing start.
- Boats are lined up in order of their bow numbers.
- Normally a 10 second space between each boat's start.
- As the crew approaches the line they should be rowing with all oarsmen. Coxswain should have them build up to full pressure at race pace about 100 meters before start line.
- The referee will then tell the crew when they cross the line.

The Body

- Difficult to tell how well a boat is doing
- The objective of most crews during a head race is to pass other boats.
- If a boat is passing, the coxswain or bow person should steer out of their way.
- Steer according to what the instructions were at the Coxswain meeting.
- Technique is more of an issue in a head races.
- The coxswain or bow person will have about 15 minutes or more to talk during the race.
- Do not forget to motivate the crew during head races – Talk when needed – but not the entire race.

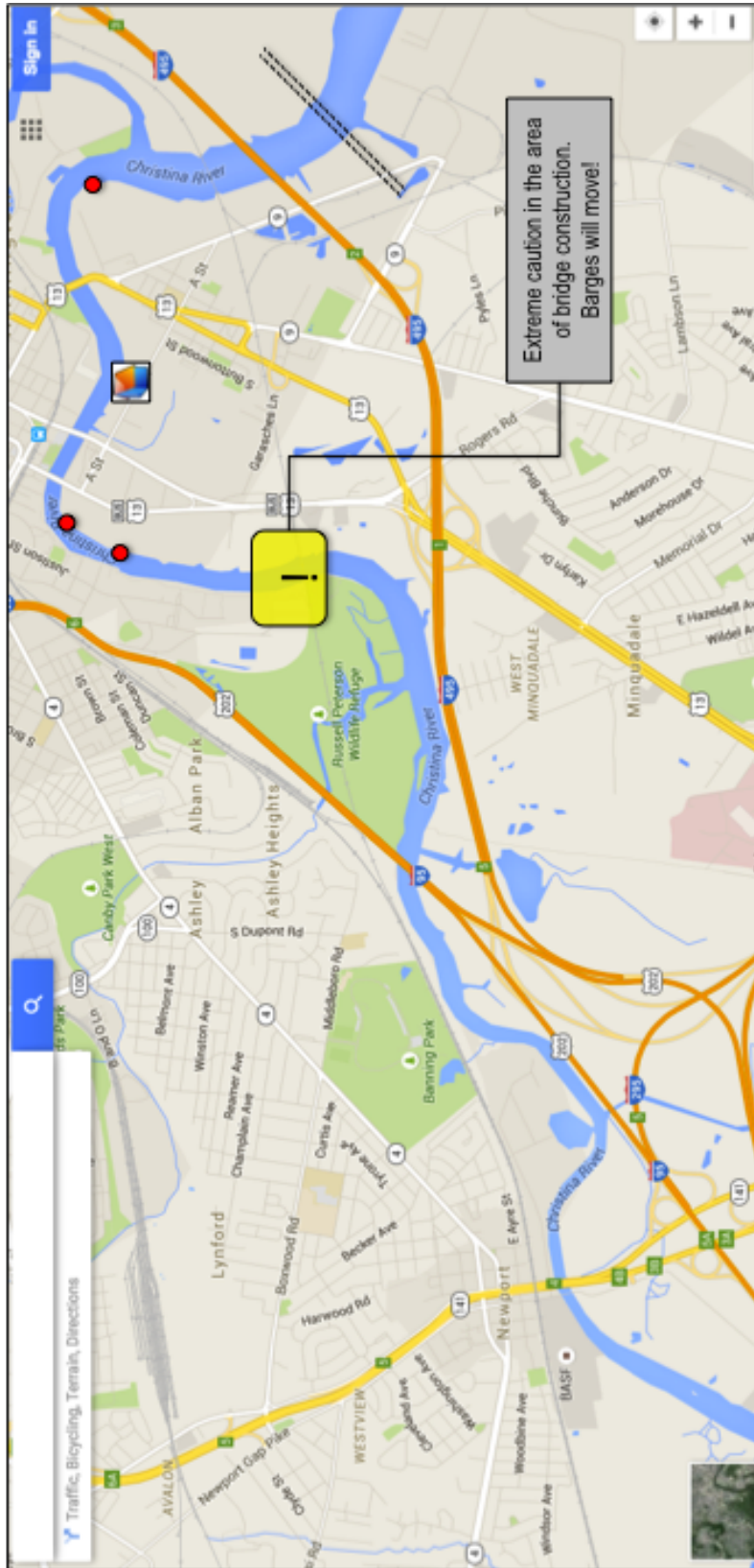
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- Do not let them get sloppy.
- Inexperienced crews can fall apart.
- Over count the strokes. Ask for 25 strokes, when 20 are sufficient to finish.



Map of Christina River – Wilmington, DE

-  = WRC Boat House
-  = Major objects in water to avoid
-  = Boundary – Do not go into port



Map of Christina River V1.0 March 2018



Appendix (a): What to carry with you

Below is a list of items that are helpful for a coxswain to have in the boat. It's easiest to have some type of bag for all of it. The right piece of equipment with you could avoid returning to the dock.

- 7/16" wrench
- Adjustable wrench which opens up to $\frac{3}{4}$
- Phillips screwdriver
- Roll of electrical tape
- Roll of athletic tape
- Band-aids
- Small bag of spare parts (7/16 nuts, washers, rigger spacers)
- A whistle (3 short burst is a universal call for help)
- A notepad with pen – write down line-up and workouts
- Extra sunglasses, suntan lotion
- Extra bottle of water just in case your rowers run out.
- Cell phone in a waterproof case with numbers

A bow person should carry the following essential equipment for the crew:

- Whistle
- Cell phone with numbers in a waterproof case
- Boathouse key

Appendix (b): Coxswain/Bow Person Calls

CALL	DEFINITION
"Back it down"	With the shell sitting dead in the water, the rowers bury squared blades in the water and push the handles towards the stern. Result is that the shell moves backwards.
"Check it down"	With the shell moving, the rowers partially bury squared blades at the finish to bring the shell to a stop as quickly as possible.
"Easy"	Called to end a piece or race so that the rowers know when they can ease up on the pressure.
"Easy on port/starboard"	Called to assist in steering the shell when the rudder is not enough. The side called drops down to paddle pressure.
"Hand is up"	The coxswain communicates with coaches and officials by raising their hand to acknowledge they heard the given instruction. Also, when aligning the shell prior to a race, the coxswain will raise their hand and ask the bow seat to raise their hand if their point is off. When all hands are down, the race will begin.
"Hands on"	Called when the shell is on the water and the coxswain or bow person wants the rowers to move the shell. Let's the rowers know to get ready to pick up the shell.
"Hard on port/starboard"	Called to assist in steering the shell when the rudder is not enough. The side called increases to max pressure.
"Heads up"	Called when the crew is carrying the shell across land to alert nearby pedestrians to be aware.
"Hold water"	Called when crews are attempting to align prior to a race or piece. Once the adjusting crew has nearly reached alignment, the rowers bury squared blades to stop the shell. Used to call for an emergency stop.



"In two"	Used to call changes during rowing, it's most common for the coxswain or bow person to give the rowers two strokes notice before changing drills, stroke ratings, pairs, etc.
"Let it run"	Called when the coxswain or bow person wants the rowers to stop rowing and let the shell's momentum continue to move the shell through the water.
"Oars across"	Called once all the oars are secured in their oarlocks prior to launching. The rowers then push the oars out to the button.
"On the feather"	Called to let the rower's know to feather their oars on the release of each stroke.
"On the square"	Called to let the rower's know to maintain squared oars on the release of each stroke. A variation of this is the 'quarter feather' where the rowers slightly feather their oars on the release.
"On this one"	Another way of calling shifts between pairs and drills.
"One foot up, and out"	Called when the shell has pulled up to the dock to let the rowers know that they can get out.
"Over heads, ready, up"	Used to alert then tell the rowers to lift the shell over heads.
"Paddle"	Notifies the rowers to row at light pressure, usually prior to the start of a piece or immediately following.
"Power 10 or 20"	A move or part of a race where the crew takes 10 or 20 strokes at maximum effort to increase hull speed.
"Ready all, row"	Called to alert and tell rowers to begin rowing.
"Set it up"	A technical call used when the shell is leaning to either port or starboard.
"Sit Ready"	Used prior to a racing start to inform the rowers to move to the starting position, usually three-quarters slide.
"Settle"	Called during the race following the start sequence to have the crew settle to their base cadence.
"Scull"	Used when sitting in the starting dock to move the point of the shell to port or starboard. To move the point to starboard, the bow starboard will take the port oar behind them and take short strokes to move the point to starboard. The call is either, "3 scull 2" or "2 scull bow".
"To shoulders, ready, up"	Used to alert then tell the rowers to lift the shell to their shoulders.
"To waist, ready, up"	Used to alert then tell the rowers to lift the shell to their waists.
"Ship oars in/out"	To slide the oars out to the oarlocks, or to pull them back across the shell; whether on the dock or to avoid clashing oars with another crew.
"Spin it"	Called to turn the shell around. When the shell has been stopped, one side will back it, while the other side takes arms only strokes.
'Way Enough' or 'Weigh Enough'	A very common call by a coxswain or bow person to tell the rowers to stop whatever they are doing.

Appendix (c): Words to use during Practice:



CATCHES	FINISHES
"Quick Catch"	"Clean Release!"
"Lots of backslash!"	"Clean finishes"
"Make that blade disappear!"	"Keep your blade buried!"
"Quick / aggressive at the catch"	"Finish high!"
"Back those blades in!"	"Length the puddles"
"Backslash"	RATIO
"Kick!"	"Long and Strong"
"Sit-Up"	"Rhythm"
"Legs!"	"Feel the boat run"
"Clean Catches!"	Count the catches and the finishes "Catch-2-3-4"
"Grip – it!"	

SET	SWING
"Set it up!"	"Move together!"
"It's on port (or starboard) set it up!"	"Find that swing!"
"Watch your hand levels, straight in, straight out!"	" ___ seat you're early / late"
"Keep it up off of port / starboard"	"Focus straight ahead"
"Port (or starboard) don't let your hands dive at the catch!"	"Follow the person in front of you!"
"Keep your hand level consistent"	"Synchronize with our stroke"
"Work together to set the boat!"	Think of the drive as acceleration!"
"Keep your hands consistent"	"No pauses at the catch, connected stroke!"
"Square up at the same time"	"In together, out together"
	"One catch, one release"

LOWER STROKE RATE	RAISE STROKE RATE
<i>Use a very calm, long cadence in your voice</i>	"Hands are flying, in and away!"
"Down from "28" to "26" in two, down one, down two!"	"Bring it up from "26" to 28 in two, up one, up two"
"Lengthen it out!"	"Quick hands out of the bow!"
"Your wheels are inching up the track"	"Hands away, shoulders follow!"
"Keep it long"	"Quick drive!"
"Lengthen it out together! Timing!"	"In and away!"
	"Quick hands!"

Motivate



"Stomp on those foot stretchers"	"Swing it and bring it"
"Bend the oar"	"Pick the boat out of the water and make it fly"
"Squeeze"	"You're invincible"
"Quick turnaround out of the bow!"	"Nothing to phase us"
"Make those hands fly"	"Hold 'em off"
"Keep the fire"	"Reel them in"
"Make it intense"	"We're walking like crazy"
"Put the power on it"	"Move right through them!"
"Empty the tanks"	"Power it up!"
"Send that boat"	"Strong in the legs"
"Quick through the water"	"Make yourself stronger HERE!"
"Power on the drive"	"Body angle!"
"Try to make every stroke better than the last one!"	"I've got (seat/location), give me (seat/location) in <i>number</i> of strokes!"
"Breathe"	"Make it hurt"
"Hang on it! Suspension!"	"Keep it up! Looking good! Nice!"
"Send it"	"Show me you want it"
"Own it!"	"Take it here and now, make a decision"
"Make every stroke COUNT!"	



Appendix (d): Drills to use during a practice:

Pick Drill

Purpose

Used as warm-up. Helps to establish the parts and orders of rowing stroke. Helps to establish a sense of timing.

Execution

Rowers start by doing a series of strokes, between 10 and 20 at a given position. Pattern is: Arms Only, Arms & Body away only, $\frac{1}{2}$ slide, full slide.

Pause Arms-Away

Purpose

To promote timing at the release, and an unrushed motion out of bow.

Execution

As the rower finishes the drive and the hands come into the body, the rower wants to push the hands away smoothly and gently, stopping once the elbows are straight. The body should remain with layback 10 degrees towards the bow and the legs should be flat. The rower waits in this paused position until the command is given to row.

Pause Arms & Body Away

Purpose

To promote a smooth movement out of bow after the release where a proper flow and order of motion is maintained. Remind the rowers - order of arms first and setting the body angle come next before the knees begin

Execution

As the rower finishes the drive and the hands come into the body, the rower wants to push the hands away smoothly and gently, leading the body over, and thus setting the forward body reach or body angle. The rower then stops and waits for the command to row. The hands should be at or past the knees at this point.

Pause @ $\frac{1}{2}$ Slide

Purpose

Acts as a “gathering point for the rowers. All rowers should move through the body positions and slide – arrive at the same points at the same time. Teaches control

Execution

After moving from the finish, hands should lead the arms out, body over and pull the rower up the slide gently after the hands pass over the knees. Once the command to row is given – pay special attention to the technique for all rowers to end at the same time in the water.



Easy-All

Purpose

The drill promotes consistent finish and release timing, power through the finish and overall balance

Execution

The rowers maintain a strong finish with level hands to the body. Next, the goal is to release the blade and move the hands cleanly away finishing with the arms straight out and the oar handle resting on the gunnels. The body should remain with layback, shoulders relaxed. If executed properly the oars should remain off the water with the boat on keel.

Alternate Feathered / Square Blades

Purpose

Alternating between feathered and squared blades forces a rower to be very aware of where they carry their hands on each stroke.

Execution

On the coxswain's or bow person's command the rowers alternate one stroke on the square with one stroke on the feather. Alternating pattern.

Square Blades

Purpose

Rower concentrates on blade placement at the catch. Focus on the body motion sequences.

Execution

Rower keeps blade square at all times. Crew focuses on moving together, timing, handle heights and smoothness on both the recovery and drive.

Half Slide Rowing

Purpose

Helps a rower learn proper slide position and control
Quickness of blade entry and drive engagement

Execution

The recovery should be controlled and smooth. This is critical as the shortness of the slide motion often prompts the rowers to speed up the stroke rating on the recovery versus the drive and hands away. The rowers need to visually check their position on the slide with help from the coach to make sure they are not going past half slide.



Cut the Cake

Purpose

Timing and rhythm drill. Emphasizes arms motion and synchronization. Focus on the hands away motion at the release.

Execution

Rowers take full, normal stroke. At the finish, release the blade from water, feather, move hands away while holding shoulders in the bow. Once the elbows are straight, the arms are then brought back to the body where they touch the body and move away again. The hands then lead out and the rowers take another full stroke before repeating the “cut.”

Feet Out

Purpose

Focuses attention on staying connected to the footboards as the rower finishes the stroke. Pressure from the legs should be maintained up until the rowers release from the water.

Execution

Rowers take feet out of shoes. Row normally. Legs should provide pressure through the entire stroke sequence; the back engages and maintains momentum.

Wide Grip

Purpose

Helps to emphasize the role of the outside arm and proper position of outside shoulder. Outside shoulder should be slightly higher than the inside shoulder.

Execution

Done on the square. Feathering hand shifted until closer to the oar lock. Grip with the outside hand, feathering hand is relaxed. Remind rowers to maintain proper body movement, chins level, and follow the guide that the oar creates.

Outside Hand Only

Purpose

Outside Hand Only puts the focus on proper motions by outside arm. Outside arm leads the motions out of the bow and is also very much part of the catch action at the top of the slide.

Execution

Done on the square. Feathering hand behind back. Rower rows normal stroke. Outside hand leads first all movements away from the bow.



“Add-In Drill” or “Gazelle” or “Buckets”

Purpose

Gives the rowers a sense of heaviness throughout the stroke. Rowers should feel like they are always connected to the footboards and are moving the boat with strong power concentrated in the legs.

Execution

Rowers with weak back or poor core strength should not do this drill.

Start with the stern pair and have them take 20 strokes at 90% pressure. Add in additional pair of rowers and another 20 strokes. Process continues until all 8 are rowing. Rotate through by starting over with next pair.

Slap Drill

Purpose

Used to improve catch timing and crew rhythm.

Execution

Rowers row a normal stroke, and then as they move through the recovery, the rowers physically slap the feathered blade against the water as they approach $\frac{3}{4}$ slide and then take the catch together. There should be no hesitation between the slap and taking the catch. No pause of any kind.

Top $\frac{1}{4}$ Drill

Purpose

Focuses on rhythm and power application. Objective is to make connection of the oar to the water fluid focus on leg connection.

Execution

Done by pairs or fours. Start at the catch, blades buried. Rowers press the foot stretchers and use just the very top $\frac{1}{4}$ of their slide. They release and repeat. Body reach is maintained and arms remain straight. Looking for the legs and only the legs to make the boat move. Coxswain or bow person then shifts drill to using just the top $\frac{1}{2}$ of slide. No back no arms are used. Rotate up to full slide, next add back, Next add fully normal strokes.

Release-to-Catch

Purpose

Works on timing and rhythm in the boat.

Execution

Rowers sit at the finish. On the command of “row” the rower should release cleanly and together, proceed with the rowing stroke to the catch. Drill is now complete. The command “back to the release” is given and the rowers return to the finish. Rowers should focus on exactly mirroring image of each other for the entire stroke.



Eyes Closed

Purpose

Allows each rower to feel the impact that their motions are having on the flow of the whole boat.

Execution

Rowers start at the catch. Blades buried. Coxswain or bow person calls “row”. 20 strokes with eyes closed, 20 strokes with eyes open. Rowers should focus on how the boat moves and the speed and smoothness of the recovery, catch timing and power.



Appendix (e): Who to Call for What?

The WRC Operations Manual is an excellent resource and provides detail instructions on many issues. Please refer to this manual for additional information including safety, emergency procedures and guidance on managing equipment issues.

Emergency on the Water: Ensure that you have a cell phone with you and the following numbers are in your cell phone:

- o Emergency: **911** (Police / Fire / Ambulance)
- o Police Nonemergency: **302-654-5757**
- o Delaware Fish and Wildlife (also boating safety): **1-800-523-3336** to report any dangerous motorboat traffic.
- o Boathouse Emergency (Red Phone): **302-652-4537**
- o Boathouse – None Emergency: **302-652-5339**

Emergency Situations:

- **Shell overturned/swamped:** All occupants should stay with the shell and float to the nearest shore. All other boats should stay nearby until all persons are out of danger before getting help. Members are encouraged to carry charged cell phones in waterproof cases, whistles, or air horns to summon help in an emergency. Waterproof cell phone cases are available at the boathouse.
- **Rower overboard:** If the water is cold, it is critical to get rowers out of the water and back to a warm area as soon as possible. Rowers should be aware that victims of hypothermia may lose reasoning abilities without being aware of it.
- **In the event rescue assistance is required:** Use your cell phone to call 911. Call the boathouse if you know someone is there depending on severity and urgency. Boathouse responders should deploy the rescue launch located on the dock and the motor and other equipment in the box on the dock. Directions for Launch are above the desk and also in the Gas Shed. The gas shed can be opened with the boathouse key.



Appendix (f): WRC Coxswain / Bow Person Policy

The following is WRC official policy specific to becoming a qualified Coxswain and /or Bow Person.

WRC Coxswain / Bow Person Policy

It is WRC policy that WRC equipment and crews will only be coxed/bowed by qualified individuals. The Rowing and Racing Chairpersons are responsible for determining the qualification of coxswains or bow persons. This responsibility can be delegated to a Coxswain Training Coordinator.

The list of currently qualified Coxswains/Bow Persons will be maintained by the Rowing/Racing Chairpersons or by the Coxswain Training Coordinator, and a copy posted in the boathouse.

The one exception to this policy is coxswain/bow seat training. The boat being coxed/bowed by a trainee must be either:

- A. Accompanied by a launch with a qualified coxswain or bow person
- B. Have a qualified coxswain/bow person on board in the seat closest to the trainee.