



WATCH OUT, BOSTON AND PHILLY; NEW YORK ROWING IS GETTING SERIOUS



A Recreational Rowing Group Turns Competitive

This Saturday, February 11, look for a couple dozen crazy high school students rowing their hearts out at Union Square. Yes, you read that right: they'll be rowing. On ergometers. In the snow.

Welcome to the [New York Rowing Association's](#) Erg-A-Thon. Each young person has committed to raise a certain amount of pledged dollars per 100 meters rowed -- and each will row a minimum of 10,000 meters. The money they (and their New Jersey counterparts at the Paramus Park Mall) raise will help upgrade their boats and oars, allow them to travel to more regattas this spring, and allow NYRA to offer more rowing scholarships to deserving teenagers.

What's going on at NYRA? Once a sleepy recreational rowing group with three outposts -- the Sharp boathouse on the Harlem River (left), the Passaic River in New Jersey, and in New Rochelle -- NYRA is being reborn as a serious contender. The New Rochelle program has been eliminated. The New Jersey team is moving to Overpeck Lake in Ridgefield, where there are big plans to develop a [training and regatta center](#). Perhaps best of all, experienced and ambitious coaches have come aboard both the NY and NJ programs.

"In the last year, there's been a huge effort to turn things around," said Kate Mullan, New York head coach. It's paying off. "When you're making the switch from a recreational team to a competitive team, it's a hard mindset to turn around, to convince people that it's worth it to work out all these grinding hours. But the thing about rowing that's so addicting is when you work really hard, you see yourself getting faster. There are no shortcuts. It's great to see the kids realize this."

The majority of NYRA rowers are high school students, though New Jersey, under the leadership of Coach Matt Pearce, also has a middle school program, and New York just hired a coach for a small masters team. Teens are joining at an increasing rate. "It's word of mouth -- and a sign we're doing something right," said Coach Mullan. Below, a regatta on the Harlem River



A healthy commitment for teens, rowing can be a major financial commitment for their parents. Knowing this, NYRA makes scholarships available.

Last spring, NYRA boats competed in two regattas. This spring, boats from New York and New Jersey, travelling as one team, will be competing at four or five regattas. "I have high expectations," said Coach Mullan, who rowed as a teenager in Buffalo and then at Yale. "The rowing bug hasn't hit New York City and that's surprising because there are so many untapped athletes here. Rowing is a huge part of other big cities. Our goal is to build something like that, to have a rowing community in New York and New Jersey that adds a lot to the waterfront."