

SCRC 2023 Annual General Meeting

VP Rowing Report – Matt Wilson

The SCRC migrated back to normalcy with the disruption of the last few years shaken off.

The new year saw a transition in the Club Captain position with Jim Marino moving on to another job offering; we thank him for the last few years of service during the disruption of Covid.

Aaron Thompson has stepped into the role, and he met every challenge that the job threw at him. It has been a pleasure watching him grow into the Club Captain's title, and I have no doubt that in his sophomore year he will bring even more to the role in helping to move the club forward.

The Henley Royal Regatta Crews

This excursion had been a few years in the making and the club's commitment to sending competitive athletes was unwavering. Although the club originally planned on sending one boat, the athletes of two crews met the rigorous time standards set out by the committee. The SCRC Board also demonstrated an unwavering commitment to this endeavor and found a way to support both a female and male eight, spares and coaches, in making this experience happen. The crews performed well but were met with very competitive crews from overseas. The crews also faced the challenge of Covid which disrupted the training while in England. Both crews continued the proud legacy of the St. Catharines Rowing Club in International competition and we look forward to the next venture in this area.

The Spring Season

For the first time since 2019 our secondary school athletes hit the water, and while our secondary school registration numbers were down, the crews competing raced well. This decline in numbers was not only in the SCRC member high school group, but entries for the regattas were certainly dramatically less than in previous years. The board restructured its registration fees to make it easier to draw athletes into the sport, but as with many clubs, work will be needed to recruit and rebuild the competitive population.

The number of spring secondary school sports has dramatically increased, which has also increased pressure on athlete recruitment into the sport. The board has intentionally looked at feeder programs and has started to address this issue. The issue of coaching development in this area will also need to be addressed as a few of our past coaches got used to the land during the Covid pandemic.

The Jr. Development and Summer Rowing School

The rowing school has served us well for over 50 years, and this year a refresh was introduced with the help of Erin Sharpe and her team. The group looked at various other clubs' models across Canada and introduced a revamped summer rowing school, along with the introduction of a Jr. Development Program for athletes on the cusp of entering the competitive summer programming. It was an unqualified success and, with the help of Louise Hastings writing a successful Trillium grant proposal for a fleet of equipment to serve this population and to pay for the coaching and administration for the next two years, this should introduce a new generation to the sport at an early age. They also partnered with the St. Catharines Rowing Alumni to run activities out of their building and as a meeting place. I am sure that the group will continue to support this endeavor.

The Summer Season

It was a busy time for many SCRC members as the club had a number of its athletes selected for the Canada Summer Games which were hosted at the Henley course, and they represented us well. Kai Bartel, Owen Bartel, Michael Ciepiela, Teagan Orth, Niko Schramm, Cait Whittard and Riley Pisek were members of Team Ontario.

Representing Canada at the U23 world Championships were Michael Ciepiela, Mitchell Rodgers, Nicholas Murrey Coplen and Coach Scott Anderson.

The U19 team members were Owen Bartel, Cait Whittard and Coach Mike Petrychanko.

Makeda Harrison was a CanAmMex crew member.

I apologize if I have omitted anyone.

The club had a relatively successful summer crew season, culminating with a very large percentage of its crews reaching the finals at the Royal Canadian Henley, and seven crews reaching the podium.

The summer racing season was supported by the numerous coaches who gave their time and energy to help these athletes aspire to the excellence that has been part of the SCRC legacy. Enough cannot be said about their efforts. These volunteer coaches are the backbone of the club, and without their commitment to serving the club we would not be in such strong position to move forward.

The club will need to examine ways in which we can further support these efforts of the coaching staff through compensation or promoting coaching education opportunities to continue moving the club forward.

I would also like to recognize, and to thank, Ronna Lockyer and Chris Blackwood for their work in coordinating the master's program, through not only the summer season but all year. Your efforts in promoting rowing to all members, and managing concerns brought from this segment of the club, has been invaluable.

The Fall Season

The fall season, while not hosting as many crews on the water, was still an extremely busy one for the club with numerous crews headed to premier regattas such as the Head of the Charles, and the Schuylkill Regatta where 5 medals were acquired. The SCRC fall classic, the Raging Basshole Regatta, was also back on the agenda and was a raging success.

Congratulations to Owen Bartel on being awarded the Jack Guest Male Junior Athlete of the Year Award by Rowing Canada.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Aaron Thompson for his hard work and leadership in his new role as Club Captain. To Lousie Hastings enough cannot be said about your efforts and keeping this club in a strong financial position though the many grants you have obtained for the club. To the Directors who continually find ways to pay for the bills and keep the club running in a safe and affordable manner your dedication to all stakeholders is noted.

Finally to Rick Crocker whose steady leadership over the last number of years, through very turbulent waters, has helped the club come out unscathed over the impact of Covid. It has been a pleasure. You have always had the club's interest at the core of every decision and the club will be in your debt.

I wish the 2023 Board of Directors all the best in the next rowing season and hope you continue to Forge Ahead.

V. P. Rowing
Matt Wilson