

Colorado Junior Crew 2016-17 Media Guide



QUICK FACTS

Number of Rowers	74
Age Range	13-18
School Districts Represented	4 (Boulder Valley, St. Vrain Valley, Adams 12 and Jeffco)
Schools Represented	16
Largest School Contingent	Fairview High School with 25 rowers
Rowing Home	Boulder Reservoir
Colors	Black and Athletic Gold
Gender Split	42 females, 32 males
Club-owned Boats	10
Organization Structure	501(c)3 nonprofit
Governing Body	USRowing (www.usrowing.org)

PROGRAM STAFF

Head Coach	Marika Page
Assistant Coach	Veronika Platzer
Assistant Coach	Lisa Dirth
Assistant Coach	Jen Gilbert
Board President	Debra Pentz

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A Brief History of Colorado Junior Crew

Colorado Junior Crew was started in 2007 at the Boulder Reservoir. With no equipment of its own, CJC partnered with Boulder Community Rowing (the adult program that also rows out of Boulder Reservoir) so that it could provide rowing programs for juniors in the Boulder area. In the early years, CJC offered fall, winter, and spring programs culminating in a trip to Oklahoma City, OK to compete in the USRowing Central Youth Championships. Winners of races at OKC earn bids to the USRowing Youth Nationals.

In 2011, CJC started a summer program with 18 kids participating and barely broke even on costs. The 2016 summer program had 75 participants spread throughout four 2-week sessions at the reservoir.

CJC's coaching staff includes Director of Rowing Marika Page and Assistant Director of Rowing Veronika Platzer, both bring many years of experience coaching junior, collegiate and masters rowers. Both are also former members of the US National Team.

The club travels to regional regattas in Park City, UT, Oklahoma City, OK, San Diego, CA and Wichita, KS as well as several local regattas throughout Colorado. In 2016, CJC boats earned bids to the USRowing Youth National Championships for the first time in club history and competed in the largest rowing event in the US, the Head of the Charles Regatta.



Schools Represented

Alexander Dawson School
Angevine Middle School
Boulder High School
Centaurus High School
Centennial Middle School
Fairview High School
Longmont High School
Monarch K-8

New Vista High School
Niwot High School
Platt Middle School
Ralston Valley High School
Silver Creek High School
Southern Hills Middle School
Stargate
Summit Charter Middle School

History of Rowing

Rowing has a long history, mainly because of its utility in warfare and transportation. Students of ancient Greek and Roman history will remember references to rowing in Homer's "Iliad" and "Odyssey" and learning about biremes and triremes, which were long vessels that incorporated two or three banks of oars. In the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., these boats took Greek colonists to various parts of the Mediterranean, and by 480 B.C. there were fleets of oared warships vying for supremacy.

Although there is a documented reference to a regatta in 1274 in Venice, Italy – not surprising, given its network of waterways – the sport didn't develop as a recreational or competitive pursuit until the early 18th century when races were held between professional watermen on the River Thames in London, United Kingdom. Amateur competition began toward the end of the 18th century with the arrival of "boat clubs" at the British public schools of Eton College and Westminster School. Similarly, clubs were formed at the University of Oxford and at the University of Cambridge with the first recorded races held in 1827. In the United States the first two clubs were the Narragansett Boat Club founded in 1838 and Detroit Boat Club which was founded in 1839. In 1843, the first American college rowing club was formed at Yale University.

Americans didn't compete in the prestigious Henley until 1878 even though the sport had been gaining momentum for 50 years. The first U.S. rowing association was organized as far back as 1834 (New York Amateur Boat Club Association) and collegiate rowing took off after Yale began an intramural college program in 1843. The first intercollegiate race was in 1852 – Harvard defeated Yale on New Hampshire's Lake Winnepesaukee – and by 1873, there were 289 rowing clubs in the United States. Although rowing events were supposed to be held at the first modern Olympics at Athens in 1896, bad weather forced their cancellation. So in 1900, the sport made its Olympic debut on the River Seine at the Paris Olympics and has been a part of every Games since. Women's rowing was added in 1976.

Rowing Quick Facts

- ✚ Rowing is one of the original sports in the modern Olympic Games.
- ✚ Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics, was a rower.
- ✚ Rowers are the third largest U.S. delegation (48 athletes) to the Olympic Games.
- ✚ Eight-oared shells (aka 'eights') are about 60-feet long - that's 20 yards on a football field.
- ✚ Rowing was the first intercollegiate sport contested in the United States. The first rowing race was between Harvard and Yale in 1852.
- ✚ Physiologically, rowers are superb examples of physical conditioning. Cross-country skiers and long distance speed skaters are comparable in terms of the physical demands the sport places on the athletes.

Rowing Quick Facts

(cont'd)

- ✚ An eight, which carries more than three-quarters of a ton (1,750 pounds), may weigh as little as 200 pounds. The boats are made of fiberglass composite material.
- ✚ Singles, used in sculling, may be as narrow as 10 inches across, weigh only 23 pounds, and stretch nearly 27-feet long.
- ✚ The first amateur sport organization was a rowing club - Philadelphia's Schuylkill Navy, founded in 1858.
- ✚ From 1920 until 1956, the USA won the gold medal in the men's eight at every Olympic Games.
- ✚ The first national governing body for a sport in the United States was for rowing. Founded as the National Association for Amateur Oarsmen in 1872, it was changed in 1982 to the United States Rowing Association and is now known as USRowing.
- ✚ Yale College founded the first collegiate boat club in the U.S. in 1843.
- ✚ FISA, the governing body of rowing and the first international sports federation, was founded in 1892.
- ✚ Dr. Benjamin Spock, the famous baby doctor, was an Olympic rower in 1924 and won a gold medal in the eight. Gregory Peck rowed at the University of California in 1937.
- ✚ Physiologists claim that rowing a 2,000-meter race - equivalent to 1.25 miles - is equal to playing back-to-back basketball games.
- ✚ In 1997, Jamie Koven became the first American to win the men's single sculls at the world championships since 1966.
- ✚ In 1999, the U.S. men's eight won its third consecutive gold medal at the world championships, a first in U.S. history.
- ✚ In 2004, the U.S. men's eight won gold at the Olympic Games.
- ✚ In 2008, the U.S. won gold in the women's eight at the Olympic Games.
- ✚ At the 2012 London Olympic Games, the U.S. women's eight won gold. At the Paralympics, the U.S. won bronze in the trunk and arms mixed double, a first in U.S. history.
- ✚ In 2013, at the World Rowing Championships the U.S. women's eight won gold and extended its streak of eight consecutive world or Olympic titles. The U.S. won eight total medals in the event, including gold in the women's four, bronze in the men's eight and four and silver in the lightweight women's double sculls.

The Eight

Arguably the premier event of rowing is the men's and women's eight. A full boat of eight oarsmen and one coxswain, the eight often reflects the overall strength of a country's rowing program.

Here is a brief crash course on the event's terminology: The coxswain typically sits in the stern (the "back" of the boat), facing the rowers and the finish line. He steers the boat by controlling the rudder, and also assumes a coach-like role in the boat. The "stroke" refers to the rower in eighth seat, at the stern of the boat and facing the coxswain. As his is the only oar that can be

The Eight (cont'd)

seen by all other rowers in the boat, he is responsible for setting the rhythm and stroke rate (number of strokes per minute). The 7-seat is the next rower and his oar is on the opposite side of the boat, so rowers on his side may also follow him for rhythm and stroke rate. The stroke and the 7-seat are together known as the “stern pair.” The 3-seat, 4-seat, 5-seat and 6-seat, sometimes known as the “engine room,” are typically the strongest rowers in the boat. The 2-seat and bow-seat are the best technicians and help manage the boat’s balance, which is most sensitive in the bow. When the boat is sitting at the starting line, either of them may be asked by the coxswain to take small strokes to make sure the boat is heading straight when the race begins. They are collectively known as the “bow pair.”

Watching a Race

Rowing looks graceful, elegant and sometimes effortless when it's done well. Don't be fooled. Rowers haven't been called the world's most physically-fit athletes for nothing. A 2,000-meter rowing race demands virtually everything a human being can physically bring to an athletic competition – aerobic ability, technical talent, exceptional mental discipline, ability to utilize oxygen efficiently and in huge amounts, balance, pain tolerance, and the ability to continue to work when the body is demanding that you stop.

The crew that's making it look easy is most likely the one doing the best job. While you're watching, look for:

- ✦ Continuous, fluid motion of the rowers. The rowing motion shouldn't have a discernible end or beginning.
- ✦ Synchronization. Rowers strive for perfect synchronization in the boat.
- ✦ Clean catches of the oar blade. If you see a lot of splash, the oar blades aren't entering the water correctly. The catch should happen at the end of the recovery, when the hands are as far ahead of the rower as possible. Rowers who uncoil before they drop the oar blades in the water are sacrificing speed and not getting a complete drive.
- ✦ Even oar blade feathering. When the blades are brought out of the water, they should all flip horizontally together and move close to the water and at the same height. It's not easy, especially if the water is rough.
- ✦ The most consistent speed - emphasis on the word "consistent". Shells don't move like a car – they're slowest at the catch (when the oar blades drop into the water), quickest at the release. The good crews time the catch at just the right moment to maintain the speed of the shell.
- ✦ Race times can vary considerably depending upon the course and weather conditions. Tailwinds will improve times, while headwinds and crosswinds will hamper them.
- ✦ If a crew "catches a crab" it means the oar blade has entered the water at an angle instead of perpendicularly. The oar blade gets caught under the surface and will slow or even stop a shell.

Watching a Race

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- ✦ A "Power 10" is a call by the coxswain for 10 of the crew's best, most powerful strokes. Good coxswains read the course to know how many strokes remain for their crew to count down to the finish.
- ✦ Oar blade design. When watching a race from a distance it can be difficult to figure out which boat is from which team. Try looking at the oar blade design for some help. Generally, each team has a unique design on all of their oar blades, like a jockey has unique colors on his or her silks. CJC oar blades are painted gold and black.
- ✦ It doesn't matter whether you win an Olympic medal or don't make the finals – each crew still carries their boat back to the rack.
- ✦ Traditionally, coxswains from first-place boats are thrown into the water by their crews.
- ✦ Coxswains don't now and probably never did yell "stroke! stroke!" Similar to a jockey, their job is to implement the coach's strategy during the race, in addition to steering and letting the rowers know where they stand in the race and what they need to do to win.



Sources:
USRowing website
NBC Olympics website



Glossary of Rowing Terms

Bow: The forward section of the boat. The first part of the boat to cross the finish line. The person in the seat closest to the bow, who crosses the finish line first.

Cox Box: A small electronic device that amplifies the coxswain's voice and gives a readout of important information such as stroke count.

Coxswain: Person who steers the shell and is the on-the-water coach for the crew.

Ergometer: Rowers call it an "erg." It's a rowing machine that closely approximates the actual rowing motion. The rowers' choice is the Concept II, which utilizes a flywheel and a digital readout so that the rower can measure his "strokes per minute" and the distance covered.



Lightweight: Refers to the rowers, not the boats; there is a maximum weight for each rower in a lightweight event as well as a boat average. If a rower exceeds the individual weight limit, they will compete in the Open category.

Oar: Used to drive the boat forward: rowers do not use paddles.

Port: Left side of the boat, while facing forward, in the direction of the movement.

Power 10: A call for rowers to do 10 of their best, most powerful strokes. It's a strategy used to pull ahead of a competitor.

Sculls: One of the two disciplines of rowing – the one where participants use two oars or sculls. Sculls row as a "Single", "Pairs" (2 rowers with 4 oars total), and a "Quad" (4 rowers, 8 oars total).

Glossary of Rowing Terms

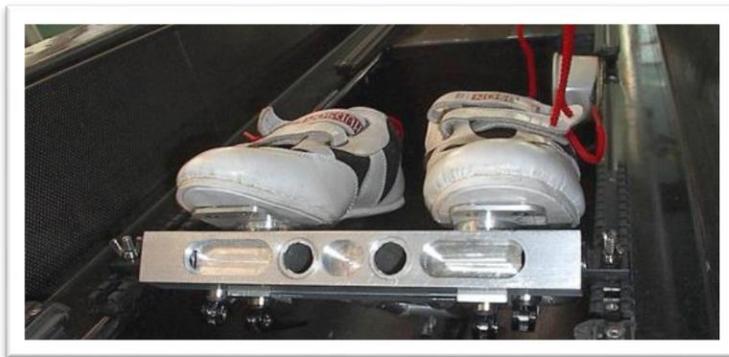
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Shell: Can be used interchangeably with “boat”. Shells come in configurations and sizes for single rowers, pairs, fours, and eights. They’re made of lightweight carbon fiber. The smallest boat on the water is the single scull, which is only 27-30 feet long, a foot wide and approximately 30 pounds. Eights are the largest boats at 60 feet and a little over 200 pounds.

Starboard: Right side of the boat, while facing forward, in the direction of movement.

Stern: The rear of the boat; the direction the rowers are facing.

Stretcher or Footstretcher: Where the rower’s feet go. The stretcher consists of two inclined footrests that hold the rower’s shoes which are bolted into the footrests.

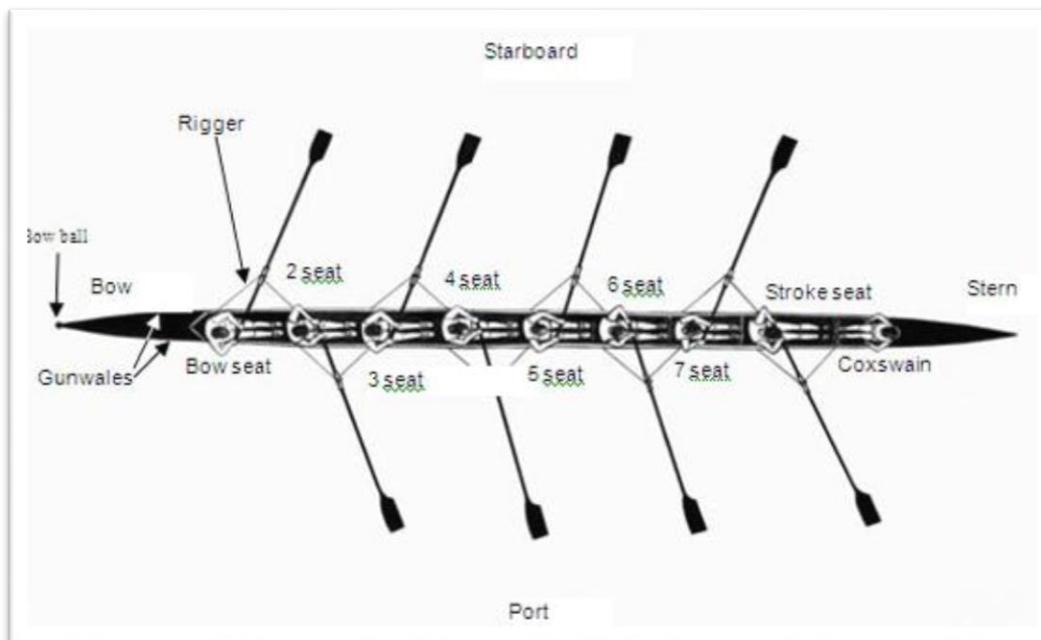


Stroke: The rower who sits closest to the stern. The stroke sets the rhythm for the boat; others behind him must follow his cadence/speed.

Sweep: One of the two disciplines of rowing – the one where rowers use only one oar. Pairs (for two people), fours (for four people) and the eight are sweep boats. Pairs and fours may or may not have a coxswain. Eights always have a coxswain.

Glossary of Rowing Terms

(cont'd)



Junior Rowing in Colorado

There are currently three junior rowing clubs in Colorado. Colorado Junior Crew is the largest and rows out of the Boulder Reservoir. Mile High Rowing calls Cherry Creek Reservoir home, and the NoCo Junior Rowing program is based at Horsetooth Reservoir in Fort Collins. Each is open to teens age 13-18.

Potential Story Ideas

Parents and Kids Rejoice – A Sport You Start as a Teen without Competing Against the Kid that Started When He or She was 4-years old

While any athletic activity, individual or team, is generally considered good for children – there are certain extra benefits that come from competing as a team. As a parent, finding the athletic activity or activities that your child enjoys can often be a challenge. Most find themselves in one of two places:

- You have the child that falls in love with soccer or baseball or football or basketball or hockey or swimming, sports that you can start as a very young child and continue for as long as they continue to be interested.
- You're the parent whose child just can't seem to find an athletic activity that he or she truly enjoys. It could be the sport, the program, the coaching, or just the child's ability to be successful – whatever the reason, you skip from one or two seasons of many sports looking for THE one. Before you know it, your child is an adolescent and the prospect of entering high school as a part of a group (be it athletic or otherwise) becomes a concern for you. Sure, there will be athletic options in high school – freshman no-cut teams that they can join, for example – but for virtually every obvious option, your kid will likely be competing against others who have participated in the sport since they were very young. Summary statement, kids who don't find "the" sport when they are young will likely struggle to make athletics an integral part of their lives as an adult.

Enter junior rowing (aka crew). The secret that no one knows about crew who hasn't been involved in the sport is that you can't start competing in events sanctioned by the governing body of the sport (USRowing) until you are 13 years old. Sure, you can go out on the water with a coach or with your family to get a feel for it – but to actually participate in the sport you have to be 13. What that means is that at this very critical juncture in a child's social, emotional and physical development, as they deal with the looming pressures of high school, here's a sport that you can start and be a complete novice at 13 (or even older) and not feel like you'll be stuck on the bench behind other kids who have been doing it since they were four.

Potential Story Ideas

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Crew Isn't Only for the Elite

A recent study by TurboTax found that parents spend an average of \$671 per year per child on the cost of kid-related athletic activities and at least 1 in 5 ends up spending over \$1,000 per child, every year. Surveys indicate that the most expensive youth sports are football, skiing, ice hockey and baseball, with club expenses routinely exceeding several thousand dollars a year – driven mostly by the cost of equipment, facilities, and coaching.

Despite its reputation as an Ivy League sport only for the elite, rowing crew with a junior club like CJC is far less expensive than many other popular youth sports. For example, the total fees for on-water seasons of crew at CJC are approximately \$1400 per year. This includes the opportunity to compete in several local regattas in places like Cherry Creek Reservoir, Boulder Reservoir and Horsetooth Reservoir. There are also opportunities to travel to several out of town events around the country – each is comparable in cost to other youth sport travel.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/visualnewscom/high-cost-of-youth-sports_b_3469012.html

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/17/your-money/rising-costs-of-youth-sports.html?_r=0

Hear from the Rowers Themselves

Two of our younger rowers created a short film about CJC as an assignment for their middle school film class. The final product was so good that it was accepted as an entry in the 2016 Boulder International Film Festival. Watch it here:

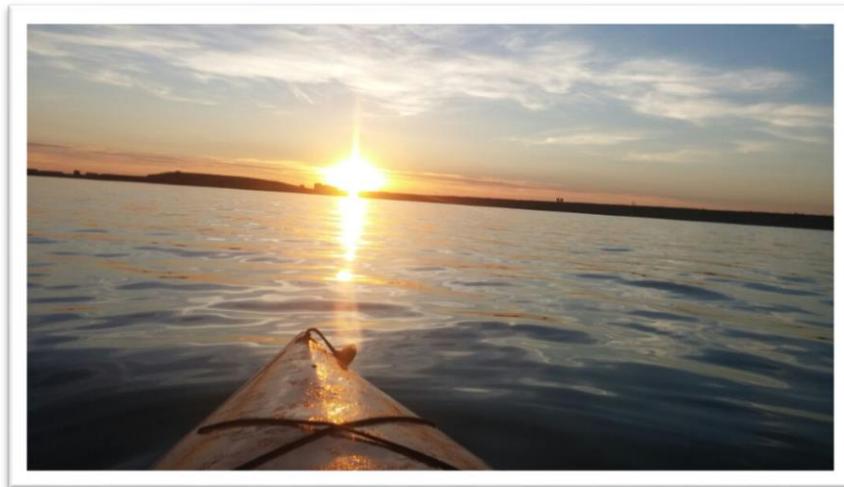
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yW0gf3Fa1_s

Potential Story Ideas

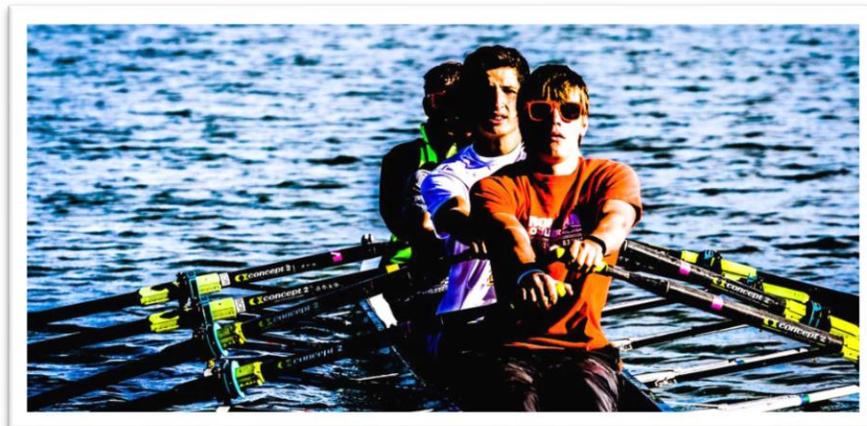
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The Visuals are . . . Amazing

Here are a few examples:



Dawn at Boulder Reservoir

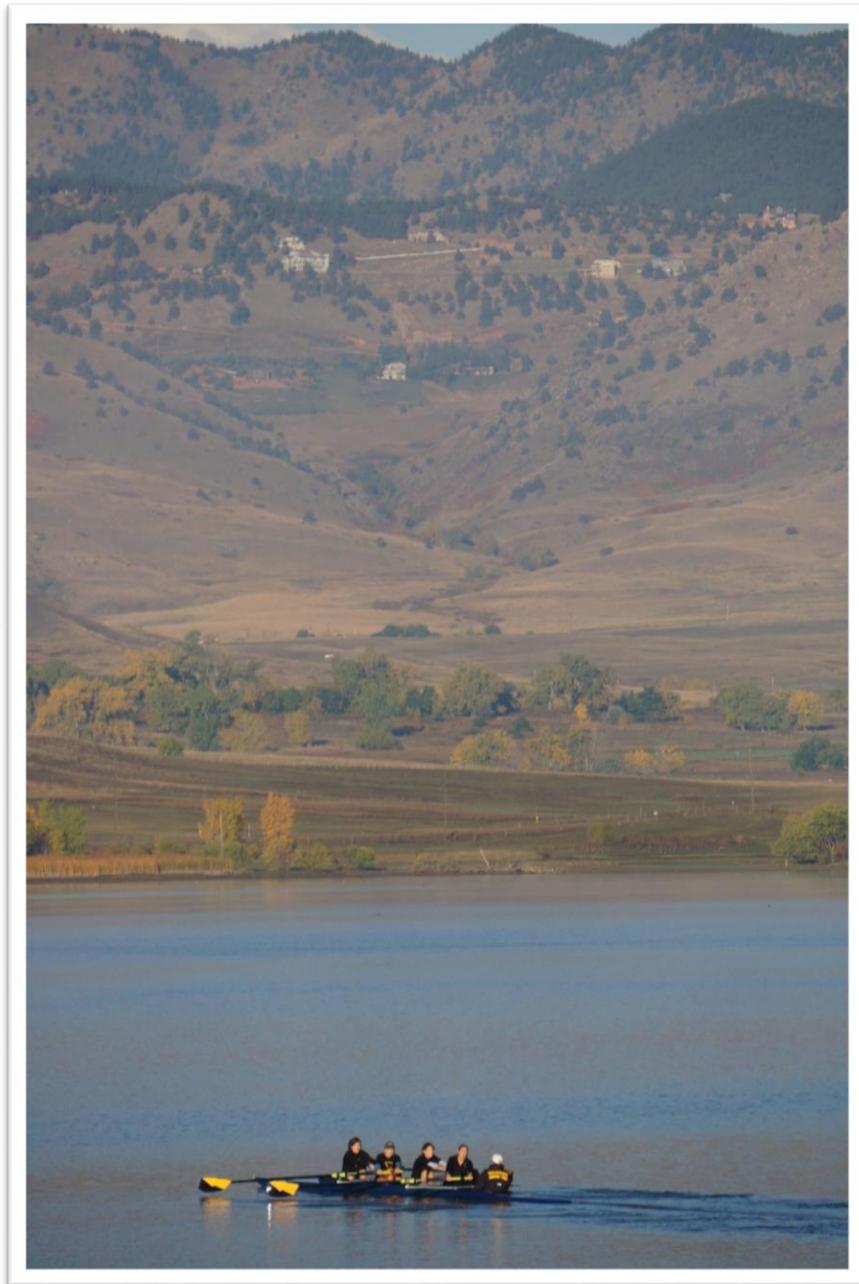


CJC rowers in a quad on the Boulder Reservoir

Potential Story Ideas

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The Visuals are . . . Amazing – (cont'd)

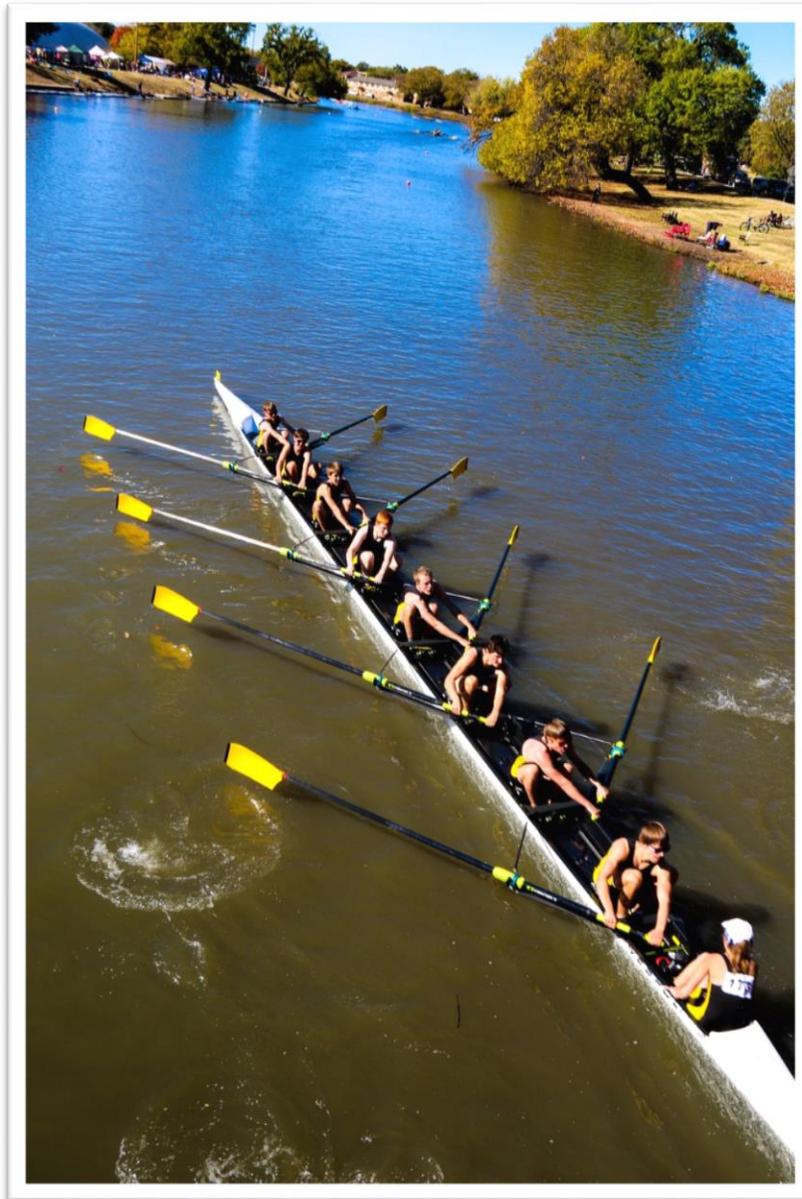


CJC rowers on the Boulder Reservoir

Potential Story Ideas

(cont'd)

The Visuals are . . . Amazing – (cont'd)



CJC rowers at the Frostbite Regatta in Wichita, KS

Potential Story Ideas

(cont'd)

The Visuals are . . . Amazing – (cont'd)



Win or lose, everyone is responsible for loading/unloading the boat



CJC rowers at the Boulder Sprints on the Boulder Reservoir

Potential Story Ideas

(cont'd)

CJC Summer Sessions – Try It, You'll Like It

Sometimes it's difficult to convince a teen to try something new – particularly a new sport. As a parent, you hate to commit the time and money to a season of a sport sight unseen. CJC has discovered the perfect solution: Summer Sessions. Our very popular summer programs for new and experienced rowers ages 12 – 18 give kids the chance to try crew in a casual, low-pressure environment. Summer mornings at Boulder Reservoir are the perfect time to try rowing in our beautiful land-locked state. The water is calm, temperatures are warm and school is not in session! Kids who have never rowed before can find out what makes the sport so addicting during a series of daily two-hour lessons organized into short two-week sessions.

Current schedule for Summer 2017 TBD

Novice rowers participate in a full Learn-to-Row and Rowing Safety program. Experienced rowers work on perfecting their technique or trying out something completely new, such as sculling.

It's rare that a novice ends up participating in only one session. They may originally sign up for only one – but then they get hooked and want to continue. So we save spots in our enrollment to allow rowers who try one session earlier in the summer to sign up for one or more later sessions to satisfy what often becomes an obsession. And if they are *really* hooked, they can join us for our fall rowing season with experience under their belts.

An Invitation to Join Us on the Water

Join us to try rowing first hand! We would be happy to fill a boat with CJC team members and leave a spot or two open for you to experience rowing first hand. It's harder than it looks but incredibly addicting. The images are beautiful on Boulder Reservoir – during the summer we row in the mornings when the waters are calm. We have several launches that always accompany our rowers on the water and could easily carry a photographer along to document your adventure.

Contact Rebecca Pennington if you are interested!

Potential Story Ideas

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Girls Who Row and College Scholarships

Thanks to Title IX rowing can be a great way for girls to pay for college at many D1 schools across the country. Traditional D1 football powerhouses such as Oklahoma and Alabama have strong women's rowing programs with rosters exceeding 50 and actively recruit female rowers from junior programs across the U.S. Here's one recent article that explains the benefits of rowing for high school girls.

[Youth rowing: 6 reasons to get your girl in a boat](#)

Merlisa Lawrence Corbett

<https://www.youthletic.com/articles/youth-rowing-6-reasons-to-get-your-girl-in-a-boat>

If your daughter loves sports and is open to something new, get that girl in a boat.

Ever since the NCAA added women's rowing in 1997, girls have been flocking to the sport. Rowing is a relatively easy sport to learn. However, it requires hard work. Rowing offers little chance for individual glory or instant gratification. Instead, the payoffs come later.

Once reserved for men at elite colleges such as Harvard, Yale and Oxford, rowing has become more accessible through area rowing clubs and high school programs.

To find a club near you, visit the [U.S. Rowing website](#). In the meantime, consider these six reasons to get that girl in a boat.

1. Rowing is the ultimate team sport

A true team sport, rowing is where strength and determination meet synchronization. Gymnastics, tennis and figure skating, sports popular among girls, promote individuality. When girls grow up and enter the workforce, they find corporate culture revolves around team concepts. Rowing is the ultimate team sport. It's two to eight girls rowing together for a common goal. Free-styling is not an option. One person tries to go it alone, and the entire boat suffers. Learning team discipline will serve your daughter the rest of her life.

2. Scholarships!

The NCAA recognizes women's rowing only. Colleges have men's rowing teams, however they operate under a different system. Because of Title IX, many schools with large football programs have top women's rowing teams. There are no female sports equivalent to football in terms of roster size. So some schools add another boat to satisfy Title IX requirements. Traditional football powerhouses such as Oklahoma and Alabama have strong women's rowing programs with rosters exceeding 50.

Potential Story Ideas

(cont'd)

Girls Who Row and College Scholarships – (cont'd)

3. Competitive edge in education

Rowing enjoys a long tradition at elite private schools on the high school and college level. If your daughter has solid academics, her rowing background could make the difference in getting into an elite school. As Will King wrote for U.S. Rowing, “In Divisions II and III, all things being equal, many admissions committees try to ensure that they remain competitive in Olympic sports like rowing by having a number of experienced rowers to balance the walk-ons.”

4. Pleasant venues

Rowing events, often called regattas, take place on rivers and lakes in picturesque settings. Of course, they require early morning start times. However, if weather is too rough, events are cancelled. As a parent, you'll get to enjoy your daughter's sport with a waterfront view.

5. Full-body workout

Contrary to what many believe, rowing works more than the upper body. In fact, the legs get more of a work out than the arms. Rowing impacts nine major muscles groups, [according to Josh Crosby](#), a former member of the U.S. National rowing team. Those include quads, hamstrings, glutes, lats, core, shoulder, triceps, back and biceps. Your daughter will burn calories galore.

6. Low impact

As rigorous as rowing is, it's easy on the joints. Crosby considers it ideal for athletes recovering from injuries. Girls can avoid the pounding associated with playing high-impact sports such as basketball, lacrosse, or field hockey. They reduce the risk of sprained ankles and possible broken bones common with gymnastics. The worst thing that happens to rowers is they form calluses on their hands. So unless hand-modeling is in your daughter's future, get that girl in a boat.

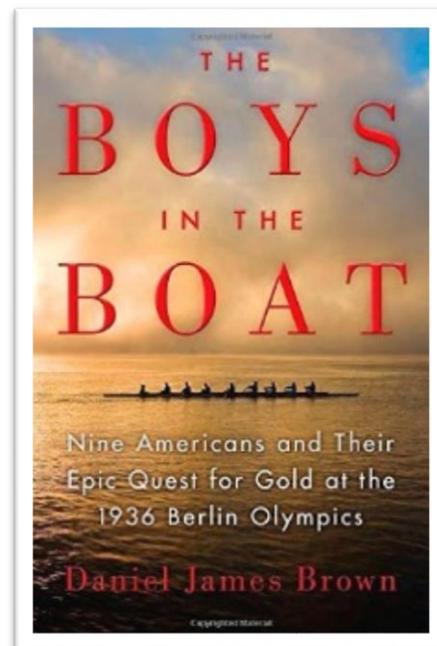
Potential Story Ideas

(cont'd)

The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics

Daniel James Brown's 2013 bestselling story *The Boys in the Boat* is the kind of nonfiction book that reads like a novel. Centered around the life of Joe Rantz—a farm boy from the Pacific Northwest who was literally abandoned as a child—and set during the Great Depression, *The Boys in the Boat* is a character-driven story with a natural crescendo that will have you racing to the finish.

In 1936, the University of Washington's eight-oar crew team raced its way to the Berlin Olympics for an opportunity to challenge the greatest in the world. How this team, largely composed of rowers from "foggy coastal villages, damp dairy farms, and smoky lumber towns all over the state," managed to work together and sacrifice toward their goal of defeating Hitler's feared racers is half the story. The other half is equally fascinating, as Brown seamlessly weaves in the story of crew itself. This is fast-paced and emotional nonfiction about determination, bonds built by teamwork, and what it takes to achieve glory.



It's about much more than rowing, says Brown. It's about a generation of Americans who fought hard, endured much, survived and prevailed. "I make the case at the end of every book talk that these nine Americans, who climbed in the boat and learned to pull together, (are) almost the perfect metaphor for what that generation did," Brown says. "They endured the Depression and the war. Pull together, build great teams, get things done."

Its appeal transcends that generation, and the next. Young rowers clutching their manhandled copies tell Brown the book is the closest thing they have ever read that captures the spirit of crew. Much as we all knew how the Apollo 13 mission ended, but can't look away from Ron Howard's 2008 film by the same name, the story of the journey of these rowers is impossible to put down.

Potential Story Ideas

(cont'd)

The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics – (cont'd)

The following is an excerpt from *New York Times* editorial writer Timothy Egan's OpEd from April 17, 2015

[The Boat to Lift All Tides](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/17/opinion/the-boat-to-lift-all-tides.html)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/17/opinion/the-boat-to-lift-all-tides.html>

... against all odds, Brown's book has become a global phenomenon. It's up there in the high reaches of *Fifty Shades of What Women Really Want* and the latest "killing TK" tome to roll out of the joyless factory of Bill O'Reilly. Hope, this spring, is the enormous audience that has responded to an obscure story about a bunch of scrawny college kids who took on the world in 1936.

"The Boys in the Boat" is about who we used to be. And who we still could be. Like the best history, it's then and now wow factor is both embarrassing (to the present) and inspiring (to the future).

In a nutshell: The book tells the story of the 1936 University of Washington men's crew team (full disclosure: I'm a Husky grad), who beat their rival California, then defeated the Ivy League's top oarsmen, and ultimately prevailed over the best rowers in the world, upsetting Hitler's choreographed display of German superiority at the 1936 Olympics. They were nobodies and castoffs, the eight-man crew and a coxswain, sons of loggers and mill workers, farmers and factory hands. The central character, Joe Rantz, had been abandoned by his family and rowed to win back his dignity.

The class element — blue-collar kids, from a public college, beating the sons of inherited wealth from the finest universities in America and the aristocratic spawn of Europe — is a big part of the story. And so is the dedication of coaches and technicians to their craft. Their boat maker, George Pocock, could see in a cedar tree what Michelangelo saw in a block of marble.

"They reaffirmed the American notion that merit, in the end, outweighs birthright," says Brown.

Potential Story Ideas

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The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics – (cont'd)

Well, yes. But I think it's more than that. Sure, the underdog won at the Olympics, even after being given the disadvantageous outside lane in a choppy waterway. And the scrappy kids from humble homes showed the scions of wealth — at least during the American phase of the competition — a thing or two about racing. Think of the “Winklevi” brothers, a rowing pair of identical twins, oozing Harvard entitlement and privilege, as portrayed in the film “The Social Network.”

Long before “Boys” made so many people want to row a boat, kids from all backgrounds were finding a lane of opportunity in the youth-crew programs in Seattle. In my neighborhood, I know a girl who got into Princeton, and a boy who got into Cornell, in part because of their ability to move an oar through the water. Instead of playing Little League, they got up every morning in the dark to row on Lake Washington, dreaming of races on the Charles or the Thames.

Crew may not be a metaphor of life, or a microcosm of it, as some of its enthusiasts claim. They point to the solitude, the work ethic, the sublimation of ego — all elements of success. But there is joy, and something lasting and true, in the distilled essence of what those kids were doing in 1936 — that is, a base competition, a race, to be won by whichever side could endure the most pain in a coordinated burst. “A symphony of motion,” Pocock called it. On water, at least, there was no more beautiful music.