

Wayland-Weston Crew Athlete and Parent Handbook

*Brian DeDominici, Barbara Sheffels,
with assistance from previous coaches and board members*

Welcome to Wayland-Weston Crew! We are a high school program run by the Wayland-Weston Rowing Association, whose mission is to offer a competitive interscholastic rowing program of excellence, which fosters individual growth for high school students of all abilities.

The Wayland-Weston Rowing Association was formed in the summer of 2000. Wayland resident Chris Maietta gathered together a group of former and current rowers of all skill levels from beginner to Olympian. All had found that crew had added significantly to their lives and they wished to make the opportunity for that kind of experience available to the local high school communities. None of the founders had high school age children.

Our first season was the fall of 2000. We had ninety rowers with one full-time volunteer coach and several part-time volunteer helpers. We borrowed boats, or bought old hand-me-downs, and stored them outside. We gradually built up our coaching staff, and traded up in quality and number of boats. We began to enter more and tougher regattas. By our seventh year, we had achieved a tremendous amount: we gained varsity recognition of crew jointly by Wayland High School and Weston High School, we built a boathouse, and we purchased several brand-new boats. We consistently attract approximately 100 student rowers per season, creating a team with depth. We have been Massachusetts state champions repeatedly, and have qualified for USRowing Junior National Championships for the last three years.

We seek to balance competition with inclusiveness, providing a place for both beginning and accomplished athletes. Therefore, we measure success in various ways: from winning races to individual, personal achievements. The main goal of Wayland-Weston Crew is individual growth. As your children learn to row and to race, they will learn a lot about themselves. They will be pushed to do their best, and there will be struggles and disappointments as well as successes. From these, they will learn that rowing requires concentration, teamwork, perseverance and dedication, and they will gain these skills. As the rowers advance in general fitness and in rowing skill, they will learn to set and achieve goals and their achievements will give them confidence. They will find that these skills carry over into academics and all parts of their lives.

If crew is right for your child, the team will give him or her a place to belong, an identity, and close friends—all things that make adolescence easier. We also hope that they have fun and enjoy being outdoors. Finally, we hope to foster cooperation and connections between the towns. The following handbook provides information about our program: practical information, guidelines and expectations. We welcome your feedback. Please direct comments to anyone on the board .

Some definitions

A **novice** is someone who is new to rowing, and that status lasts for one calendar year, regardless of whether you row one or two seasons. After one calendar year, you move up to **varsity**. Some rowers may move up to varsity after one spring season, but the typical progression is that you become varsity after one calendar year.

Once you are on the varsity team, there is no division into varsity and junior varsity. When it is time to set boats for races, the coaches will make assessments that allow them to determine which rowers make a boat go the fastest. These assessments involve a combination of objective and subjective factors, including performance on the water, performance on the erg and runs, attitude, and attendance. The fastest boat is called the **1V**, the second fastest boat, the **2V**, and so on, until all rowers are placed in a boat. In the event that there is an uneven number of rowers, rowers will be rotated so that everyone races at least once per season.

Assessments can be difficult. Please remember that it is always possible to move into or out of a boat. Boat placement provides a snapshot of where a rower is that week; it is not a judgment of where you will always be. It is always possible to improve. Good questions for your coach are “What can I do to get better? What do I need to work on? How can I make the change you are recommending?” And please do ask your coach for information, especially if you are worried or confused.

Please also note that everyone on the team is important. While it is disappointing to not make your goal of being in a certain boat, you are still a valuable member of the team. The competition to get in, or to stay in, a certain boat pushes everyone to be better. Therefore, any boat’s success is the product of all squad members’ efforts, not just the people in that boat on a given day. You should also remember to judge your success by your own progress: how far have you come from where you started? Celebrate your individual improvements in strength, erg time, and endurance. If you work hard, your effort will be rewarded.

Athlete Expectations:

• General

As an athlete, you are a representative of your team, teammates, coaches, *and school* at all times. Being an athlete carries with it more responsibility and higher expectations than that of the general student body. An athlete must always be thinking ahead in order to face the challenges of balancing family, school, team and friends. We are looking for dedicated, hard-working athletes who support and challenge their teammates in a positive way, show good sportsmanship by respecting their opponents, coaches, and race officials, and who work to better themselves and those around them in whatever they do.

• Practice

When an athlete arrives at practice, he or she should immediately begin whatever routine his/her coach has put in place, usually warming up or helping to prepare the equipment and launches for practice. Run only your squad’s oars and launch to the water, unless instructed otherwise. Make sure the launch has gas, safety bags and a paddle before you run it down. Check to make sure that the plug is in the boat before you put it in the water.

Whatever job you are doing, make sure it gets done right so it does not have to be done twice.

Be prepared for practice. Have sneakers in case of a land work out. Dress for the weather. Wear layers, avoid cotton and bring extra socks on cold days. Any clothes that are made of cotton will hold onto water and sweat and make you colder. Wear materials like fleece, wool, and polypropylene. Have water in a reusable water bottle with your name on it and a snack if you haven't eaten in a while. Begin stretching/warm up as a group without having to be asked to do so by a coach.

Once off the water, quickly get the equipment stored and meet with your coach to be dismissed.

- **Equipment**

Rowing equipment is fragile and expensive. Take good care of it. The boats are thin and easily damaged. Learn how to carry the boat and always do your part. Handle the boats with extreme care at the dock, when they are being carried, and when getting in and out of them. As you carry a boat, be aware of where the riggers, the bow, and the stern are to avoid any collisions. At the dock, know where the skeg is so that it doesn't break off on the dock.

Go out of your way to learn the proper ways to rig and load the trailer. Do not just do the same job each time the equipment is handled. Ask questions and learn how to do everything that we do with the equipment when traveling and rigging. Be there to help others if you see something being done incorrectly.

- **Teammates and Boats**

Rowers are expected to give their best effort toward every challenge. There are only so many seats in each boat and there will be competition for seats. Strong, healthy competition between teammates makes the team stronger as a whole. A well-rounded athlete can compete with his or her friends and still remain friends. No one is entitled to any seat, and a rower's happiness should not be dictated by which seat he or she sits in. Rowers should set goals based on their own abilities and not set their standards based on the abilities of other rowers. Success should not be based solely on boat placement or who you can "beat". If you have questions about placement on the team or problems with this aspect of competition, please talk about it with your coach.

- **Travel**

All athletes must travel to races with the team. Athletes should arrive on time to the boathouse, find their coxswain and check in with a coach or chaperone before getting on the bus. On the bus be respectful of your teammates who want to sleep or need to study. Keep the noise to a minimum so that coaches, chaperones and bus drivers can

communicate. Keep track of your belongings and **keep the bus clean**. Before leaving the bus please check your area and throw away all trash.

Remember - you represent your team at all times. Please be respectful and courteous to those around you and create a positive image for our team wherever we travel. People know who you are. As coaches we hear both positive and negative feedback from all sorts of people like other coaches, hotel staff and total strangers. It is a small world and you never know who may be taking notice.

- **Race Day**

Race days are very busy and the more organized we are as a crew the more prepared we will be for each race during the day. Always be aware of your schedule and be looking for things that you can do to make the day go smoother. Take the time to rig your equipment properly and keep the tools and trailer area organized. Check in at the trailer often. Do not disappear; let your coxswain know where you are going.

Be respectful of other teams' trailers and equipment. Do not step over or hang out near other teams' boats and be aware when people are trying to move boats and oars around you.

The food tent is in place to provide the necessary food for racing and shelter from the elements. Please do not let trips to the food tent interfere with your responsibilities. Think ahead. Eat with plenty of time before your race. Eat the right foods before the race. After the race, *load equipment before eating*.

Boats will be de-rigged as the day goes on to save time. Please know when your boat is being worked on and be there to help. When it is time to load the trailer, stay focused and keep looking for things to do. Pay attention to what you are doing and do it right the first time. If you are not sure about something or something seems to be done wrong, ask someone. If you have nothing to do, ask a coach or coxswain what else needs to be done. With everyone's help loading the trailer can be a relatively quick and easy process.

All athletes are expected to stay at a race site until the trailer has been loaded and is ready to leave. Rowers need permission from a coach before leaving a race with a family member.

- **Boathouse**

Take pride in our boathouse. We are lucky to have a space that is our own. Many teams are not so fortunate. Keep the boathouse clean and organized. Put things back where they belong. Put trash where it belongs. **Do not bring disposable plastic water bottles to the boathouse**; they create a huge amount of waste and end up all over the property. All squads will be asked to share boathouse clean up responsibilities throughout the year.

- **School**

Athletes must maintain the necessary grades and follow all rules of conduct set by their high school regarding participation in athletics.

- **Coxswains**

As a coxswain you are a leader on the team. You are at the ground level managing the performance of your crew. You are responsible for the safety of your crew, implementing a coach's practice and race strategy, organization of your rowers and equipment, and much more. A coxswain must be able to lead and motivate with enthusiasm while still being in complete control of the technical aspects of the job. A good coxswain can separate friendship and duty when necessary. A good coxswain is always aware of his or her surroundings and keeps his or her rowers in the best position for success whether in or out of the boat. A good coxswain makes a coach's job easier and aids in communication between a boat and the coach. An excellent coxswain leads and serves all at once.

Parents

- **Athlete Pick Up**

Squads are not always released from practice at exactly the same time. When picking your athlete up from practice, please park in a parking spot to wait or, if your child is already waiting for you, pick them up along the hill away from the boathouse corner of the parking lot. Loading and unloading in front of the boathouse causes a bad traffic jam and an unsafe environment.

Please drive SLOWLY in the parking lot and neighborhood: be a good neighbor.

All athletes must travel to races with the team. In the event that you would like to bring your child home from a race please know that, with the exception of extreme circumstances, all athletes must stay with the team until the equipment is loaded back on the trailer at the end of the day. This is a large job which requires a lot of organization and man power. All athletes are expected to do their part when loading and unloading equipment.

- **Race Day**

The food (and shelter) tent It is traditional to have a central gathering place for each crew at a regatta, run by parents, to provide food and shelter for the crew. You will see that some schools have very elaborate setups! Our goals are to keep our athletes and coaches well-fed, to provide shelter from rain or sun, and to have a place for supporters of the team to get together. Parent volunteers are in charge of food each season. We require that you help with the food tent one weekend per season. Watch your emails for information on signing up.

When do I get to see my child? Races usually take the better part of a day. There will be lots of time to interact with your athlete and talk about the race. The athletes also have a lot of responsibilities while at a race. There will be times when they need to be with their coach, team, or working on equipment. Approximately one hour before a race, squads meet with their coaches and get on the water to warm up for the race. After the race, again they will meet with their coach and take care of their equipment. There may be additional times when your athlete's help is needed with the equipment or team. Please allow your athlete the time to attend to his/her duties.

You can cheer your athlete on at launching, on return to the dock, and along the race course. Often, viewing a crew race is difficult. Binoculars are a good idea. Be prepared for all kinds of weather. Remember, it is often colder and windier near the water.

• **Volunteers**

Parent volunteers are essential to this team. The remarkable growth and success of Wayland-Weston Crew is a function of our parents and volunteers who run the show behind the scenes. Thank you if you've already contributed! And if you haven't, you, too, can help—your talents can make a difference. It's fun, and it's a great way to meet other parents and the coaches, as well as to learn about the sport.

Parents are required to help with the food tent one weekend per season.

In addition, there are many other ways to help out; you do not need to know anything about rowing. Here are some ideas—contact the team's Athletic Director or any Board member with your interests:

--**Administration and financial management:** assist with the business end of the team—maintain bank accounts, employee payroll, budgeting, tax and financial reports, etc.

--**Alumni:** maintain communication with, and sense of community among, team alumni

--**Awards:** create certificates and other recognition items for our student-athletes and others who provide outstanding service to the team

--**Chaperones:** Chaperones are needed on buses traveling to and from regattas, and in hotels for overnight races. A chaperone's primary concern is the safety of the athletes. In addition a chaperone should be monitoring conduct of athletes, especially while on the bus or in a hotel. Athletes should be well behaved and noise should be at a minimum. Introduce yourself to, and keep in communication with, the bus driver. If there are any problems with an athlete's behavior or respect for a chaperone please report it to a coach as soon as possible.

--**College recruiting:** help team members and parents take advantage of college recruiting opportunities

--**Equipment:** help to buy and maintain racing shells, oars, cox boxes, batteries, video recorder/player, ergometers, launches, motors, safety equipment, trailer, etc.

--**Facilities:** maintain boathouse, docks, etc.

--**Food and Beverage:** regatta day food as described above, also annual spring awards night, other events

--**Fundraising:** organize events to raise money in order to purchase boats, oars, and other capital equipment

--**Membership**: recruit and register rowers

--**Photography**: we can always use photos of regattas, practices, and other team events for the yearbooks, publicity and the website, etc.

--**Publicity**: publicize race results and other team activities in local newspapers, high school newsletters, and other media

--**Race day**: race course setup, dockmasters, coordinate results, direct parking, and other home regatta needs

--**Scholarships**: help arrange confidential assistance to defray cost of team membership so that the fee is not a barrier to participation

--**School and Town Relations**: maintain good communication with the high schools and other local organizations

--**Transportation**: arrange for transportation to practice for Weston students

--**Uniforms and Merchandise**: design, buy and distribute quality apparel and other items (hats, fleece jackets and blankets, whatever you can think of!) for the team and fans; sell merchandise items at regattas and other events

--**Website**: maintain and update our website, www.wwcrew.org.

--**Other ideas**: Please let us know your ideas! Email the team's Athletic Director or any Board member.

Please do not hesitate to volunteer when a call goes out. It is a great way to learn about the sport and coaches are always willing to answer questions and help you where you may need it.