

Boys crew shows its stuff

By Harry Gula
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With rain steadily coming down and the temperatures hovering just above 40 degrees, the Wayland-Weston boys varsity crew took on its toughest test of the fall season on Sunday in Boston.

The team sent two boats, an 8+ and a 4+, to compete in the world-renowned Head of the Charles Regatta. These two boats were comprised of the 12 top rowers (and two coxswains) on the team, with the top eight getting seats in the 8+ and the remaining four filling the 4+.

The Head of the Charles is the world's largest festival of rowing, with 8,500 competitors from high schools, colleges, clubs, and Olympic athletes from all over the world. Fifteen countries are represented over the Regatta's 108 events.

Boats must row three miles upriver, starting at the Boston University Boathouse and finishing just past the Eliot Bridge in Cambridge. The course includes two extremely difficult turns, and passes under seven bridges, making it challenging to navigate.

The infamous Weeks Footbridge turn is the most treacherous, as many boats have crashed there over the regatta's 45-year history.

The W-W eight, in its normal lineup with stroke Bobby Dresser, Michael Wu, Brendan Stack, Kep Edwards, Henry Gula, Brandon Blaesser, Nick Kossack, Alex Coburn, and coxswain Jordan Segall rowed down the course in 16:16, good for 15th place out of 79 total junior eights from around the world.

The masterful leadership of Dresser's strokes set the tone for the entire race as the boat moved with power and speed up the river.

Segall's brilliant motivation and steadfast steering ensured that the boat took the best course possible, including a well-executed turn at the Weeks Bridge. Every member of the boat executed his role and helped the eight capture its place of national respect.

The eight finished ahead of national powerhouses such as Chaminade High School (16th), Newport Aquatic Center of Southern California (20th) who was last spring's national champion, and Canisius High School of New York (22nd). W-W was ranked 35th going into the race, but their impressive performance vaulted them to 15th and guaranteed them an 8+ entry in next year's competition. The winner of the 8+ event was Eton College of England, which ran away from the field, finishing a full 33 seconds ahead of second-place New Trier of Illinois.

The 4+ W-W boat with stroke Luke Defren, Adam Pitel, Jake Waxman, Jonathan Heinlein, and coxswain Gabe Lozano finished the race in 19:44, good for 59th place in a field of 75. The 4+ event is especially challenging because many smaller rowing clubs and programs only have four rowers capable of competing at this level. Therefore, the 4+ event often sees some of the most difficult competition. The W-W boat was only two minutes off the top 10, which shows the competitiveness of their race.

The rest of the team spent the week practicing in Wayland. The entire team has one final week to train for the busiest weekend of the fall season, traveling to Saratoga, New York for the Head of the Fish on Saturday, and then returning for the Massachusetts Public State Championships in Worcester on Sunday.