



Parent Handbook

Revised 2/20/25

Welcome to Northampton Community Rowing!

The sport of rowing is demanding and richly rewarding, but can also be confusing to those new to the sport. Rowers speak with their own language developed over hundreds of years of competitive rowing (**Appendix A**), don't be surprised if your rower tells you to "weigh enough" (Way' Nuff) and then stares at you when you don't respond! This handbook will help you and your rower through the first year and beyond.

Rowing at NCR

Junior Rowers at NCR compete at different levels depending on experience and ability. Events at regattas are broken down along these lines. There are three levels of rowers at NCR:

- Novice – first year rowers are considered novices for one calendar year.
- 2nd Varsity – the rowers who are one step from the varsity boat.
- 1st Varsity – the fastest and most capable rowers.
- Our program is further divided into girls' and boys' crews.

Practice will be held Monday through Friday 4:15-6:30.

Absences & Tardiness

Unlike many other sports, one person missing practice has an affect on everyone and how we run the practice. If one person is missing from the boat then that means the other four members of the crew cannot go on the water. Coaches expect all participants to attend scheduled practices and races. If an absence is unavoidable or you will be late, it must be communicated to the coach with as much prior notice as possible. Coaches will advise their teams how to communicate absences. Tardiness must also be avoided as it affects the entire team's practice because we cannot launch until the entire crew has arrived.

Communication

Team communication and management is currently run through the app Heja, available from the app store, or google play. Both rowers and parents/guardians are asked to set up an account. We use this app to send team messages, mark attendance and promote important team dates. Parents/Guardians also use this app to communicate with each other (e.g., planning food for regattas) and the coaching staff.

You will be provided with a team code to link yourself to the NCR Juniors. If you do not already have it, please ask the coaching staff. You will be asked to categorize yourself as an athlete or parent, and adults will be linked with their rower.

Racing Seasons

Fall: (September/October) Fall season is the long distance training season for crews. Most fall races consist of long distance head races (between 2500 and 5000 meters) and results are calculated by time, not head-to-head competition. Starts are staggered allowing many crews to compete simultaneously. We compete across New England and Upstate New York. These are typically all day events and have a “festival” feel to them.

Spring/Summer: (March-September) is the most competitive season for rowing. Races are straight and short, 1500 - 2000 meters, and boats race in lanes. In order to accommodate all the competitors, heats are often necessary, so your rower may compete several times in one day.

Clothing

The best attire for rowing is clothing that fits close to the body (think yoga attire), is flexible, and can be layered for warmth. Look for Polypro, CoolMax, and Drywick fabrics as they keep the rower relatively warm when wet, and dry quickly. Oversized, baggy clothing can get caught in the wheels of the seat, so avoid basketball style shorts or warm-ups. Shoes are not needed in the boat, but may get wet on the dock, so an older or less expensive pair is recommended. However, sturdy running shoes are required for land workouts. Lastly, it is wise to bring a change of warm, dry clothes to put on after practice in case it rains or there is splash in the boat.

While most of what you need to get started, your rower may already have in their drawer, as your rower gets into the sport, they may benefit from: sunglasses and/or visor, sunscreen, and shoes that are easy to slip on and off (for the dock.)

We will open a team store for uniform essentials, and optional team gear at the start of the season. Rowers will be expected to race in the official team gear - Unisuit or Tank/Trou.

Please see Appendix B for a list of rowing apparel companies.

Nutrition

Rowing is a very demanding sport and the athletes will burn a lot of calories over the course of a work-out. You should encourage your athlete to carry a water bottle and drink lots of water during the day as well as eat well at every meal. The energy systems that the athletes use require that they have water and carbs to generate the energy they need during a workout. We also will encourage our rowers to replenish with a good dinner and carry a piece of fruit to eat after school.

Please make sure that your rower has a FULL water bottle for practice. We ask that rowers have reusable bottles when possible because try as we might single use bottles do sometimes make it into the river.

See Appendix C for a sample nutritional plan for rowers.

Injuries

It is 100% guaranteed that your child will be VERY sore for the first few weeks of practice. Rowing uses muscles that typically don't get worked during other sports. We will be focusing our conditioning to build up core muscles to prevent future back injuries. Additionally, ALL rowers develop calloused hands, but this will start off as blisters. Blisters can be painful, if not taken care of properly. We have some tricks up our sleeves to speed up healing and decrease pain. Please know the coaching staff have all been there, but this is a necessary rite of passage/ evil! Generally, rowing is a low impact sport so injuries are less likely but CAN happen. We advise all rowers to be upfront with their physical condition, as we can often adjust workouts to ensure that injuries do not get worse. Please make sure to encourage your rower to speak up about any concern they have about injuries.

Regattas (Race Day)

Generally speaking, regattas are all day events and rowers are expected to arrive to unload the trailer in the morning and stay to reload it once the team's last event has finished. Parents often help make these long days more pleasant by visiting and cheering us on. If you are a new parent, you can inquire with the coaching staff about how you can volunteer during regattas! Some things to pack to make your stay more comfortable:

- Portable chair
- Binoculars
- Warm clothes (including gloves/caps)
- Rain gear
- Light-weight clothing
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen

A schedule of the day's races is usually posted online a day or so before the regatta and at a central tent or site at each regatta. At this same location, the results are usually posted. We may be competing in several different events so we will plan on the event being a full day.

Dealing with Disappointment

The nature of competition necessitates disappointment. It is inevitable that your child will experience this during their participation in rowing. They may not make a certain boat, they may not achieve their desired erg (rowing machine) time, or they may lose a race. It is important to be empathetic with your rower and allow them to come to you, but also remind them to be resilient.

Athlete/Rower Characteristics

Over the course of a rowing season, a coach has to take many factors into consideration when deciding where to place athletes for competition. There are several measurable factors that coaches can use, such as erg test times and attendance. There are also several less clear-cut characteristics that a coach may use when deciding how effective a particular athlete is as a member of a racing boat. The following is a list of athlete/rower characteristics that a coach may take into consideration, along with erg scores and attendance, when deciding on which seat and which boat to place an athlete for a race:

Relevance of height and speed: is a rower above or below ideal at their position in the boat?

Quickness, agility and balance: these factors involve things such as body control and movement skills. Any slight variation in the position of one's hands, head or torso can throw the boat off balance and adjustments are needed by the rest of the rowers.

Instinct: Can they adjust and change quickly? Can they react to what is happening at the moment and on command? Are they disciplined or do they freelance and tend to do his/her own thing?

Strength and connection: What type and level of strength do they have? Is it brute strength and does they have recoil ability of upper and lower body? Strength and connection equals POWER.

Character: Are they a good partner, hard worker, team player? Can you depend upon them when things get tough or only if you are winning?

Communicator: Do they speak with integrity to all team members? Do they advocate for themselves? Do they go directly to the source? Do they always speak with the best interest of the organization, team, boat or individual in mind?

'Meshing' with the rest of the boat: It is important that the entire boat works well *together* and each rower can anticipate and correct setting issues. A boat full of the strongest, fastest rowers doesn't always go the fastest. Not being set (balanced) leads to *very* inefficient rowing!

Parent and Coach Relations

NCR believes the sport of rowing and the unique team environment provided by the crew will develop the character of the student-athlete and provide them with tools to succeed in life beyond the boathouse. We hope this procedure is helpful to parents and coaches trying to develop that character and create those skills in a less stressful manner. Thank you for your support and cooperation!

Both parenting and coaching are extremely difficult vocations. By establishing an understanding of each position, we are better able to accept the actions of the other and provide greater

benefit to the rowers. As parents, when your student-athlete joins NCR, you have a right to understand the expectations placed on your student-athlete. This begins with clear communication from the coach to your rower.

Communication Expected From the Coach

- Philosophy of the coach.
- Expectations the coach has for your rower and others on the team.
- Practice times and schedules, also regatta dates and schedule.
- Team requirements.
- Procedure regarding injury to the student-athlete should they be injured during participation. Disciplinary action that results in the denial of your student-athlete's participation.

Communication Coaches Expect From Parents

- Concerns expressed directly to the coach.
- Notification of any schedule conflicts well in advance.
- Specific concern in regard to a coach's expectations.

As your rower becomes involved with the team at the NCR, they will experience some of the most rewarding moments of their lives. It is important to understand that there will also be times when the experiences are difficult and challenging. At these times, discussion with the coach may be appropriate. **The first step in resolving an issue is for the rower to speak directly with their coach.** We want our athletes to develop the skills to advocate for themselves in rowing, at school, jobs and other aspects of life.

Appropriate Concerns to Discuss With Coaches

- The treatment of your rower, both mentally and physically.
- Ways to help your rower improve both athletically and academically.
- Concerns about your rower's behavior.
- Concerns about Safe Sport

Inappropriate Concerns to Discuss With Coaches

- Seat/Boat assignments
- Other rowers
- Race strategy

NCR coaches are experienced rowers and high school rowing coaches, and make decisions based on what they believe to be the best interests of the team. From the list above you can see which situations are appropriate to discuss with a coach and which are inappropriate. Coaches do exercise their judgment throughout the course of a rowing season and their discretion, expertise, and professionalism must be respected regarding rowing matters. Issues surrounding the well-being of your student-athlete are always appropriate to raise with a coach.

Procedures To Follow If You Have Concerns To Discuss With A Coach

Please email or phone the coach. Contact information for the coaches and the board of directors can be found at the end of this handbook.

Race Day Conversation

A regatta is a long and complex day where coaches have to jump from team strategist, to enthusiastic supporter, to mechanic, to therapist. Please know that when we are at the team tent we are open to any communication or questions (please also remind us to drink water, we are good at reminding the kids but often forget to take care of ourselves during these days!) Our time at the boat trailer however is usually very busy and often very rushed. Please excuse us if we rush past you to fix something on a boat before it launches or to make sure a crew is ready to launch. Often, the best place to catch us when we have a moment to chat is when we stop to check in at the tent.

If you have a specific concern, it may be best to schedule a time to speak with the coach in the following week.

Athlete Safety

The safety of your rower is of utmost importance to NCR. As such our coaching staff are trained in CPR, First Aid and the usage of the AED. Coaches ride near their crew in a “coaches launch” which doubles as a safety launch in case of emergency. While rowers rarely find themselves in the water, we are an on water sport, so it can happen. The launch is stocked with a full complement of lifejackets for every athlete in the coaches care, space blankets in case of cold water immersion, and basic first aid.

During the first week of practice every season, rowers will be instructed on boathouse, dock and on water safety including what to do in the case of an emergency. Our launches are large enough to fit an entire crew of rowers to get them to shore.

In addition to this training we ask that every new member of NCR take a swim test to ensure that they are capable of staying above water. Rowers only need to take this test once, and will remain on file with the club for the entirety of their time with the club.

Fundraising

NCR is a non-profit organization which relies heavily on fundraising to keep our costs affordable and to keep our equipment up to date. Because of this NCR strives to have a series of events each year to meet our fundraising goals. Team participation in these events is required but this participation is designed to not be overwhelming. Our events are often fun (seriously!) opportunities for our entire community of rowers to come together to support the sport and team that we love.

We are so happy that you and your rower have decided to join the NCR Community. You will find that the rowing world can be an extremely tight knit community, and this goes beyond just the rowers themselves. You are always welcome to join us at events at the boathouse and regattas. As much as they might say otherwise, juniors love to see their families at the team tent after a race.

If you are interested in becoming more involved with the team, please check in with us about membership on any number of committees or the NCR Board of Directors. We are always looking to add new voices! And don't forget, NCR also hosts an adult team! What better way to understand what your children are up to than by experiencing it yourself!

Thank you, and welcome to NCR!

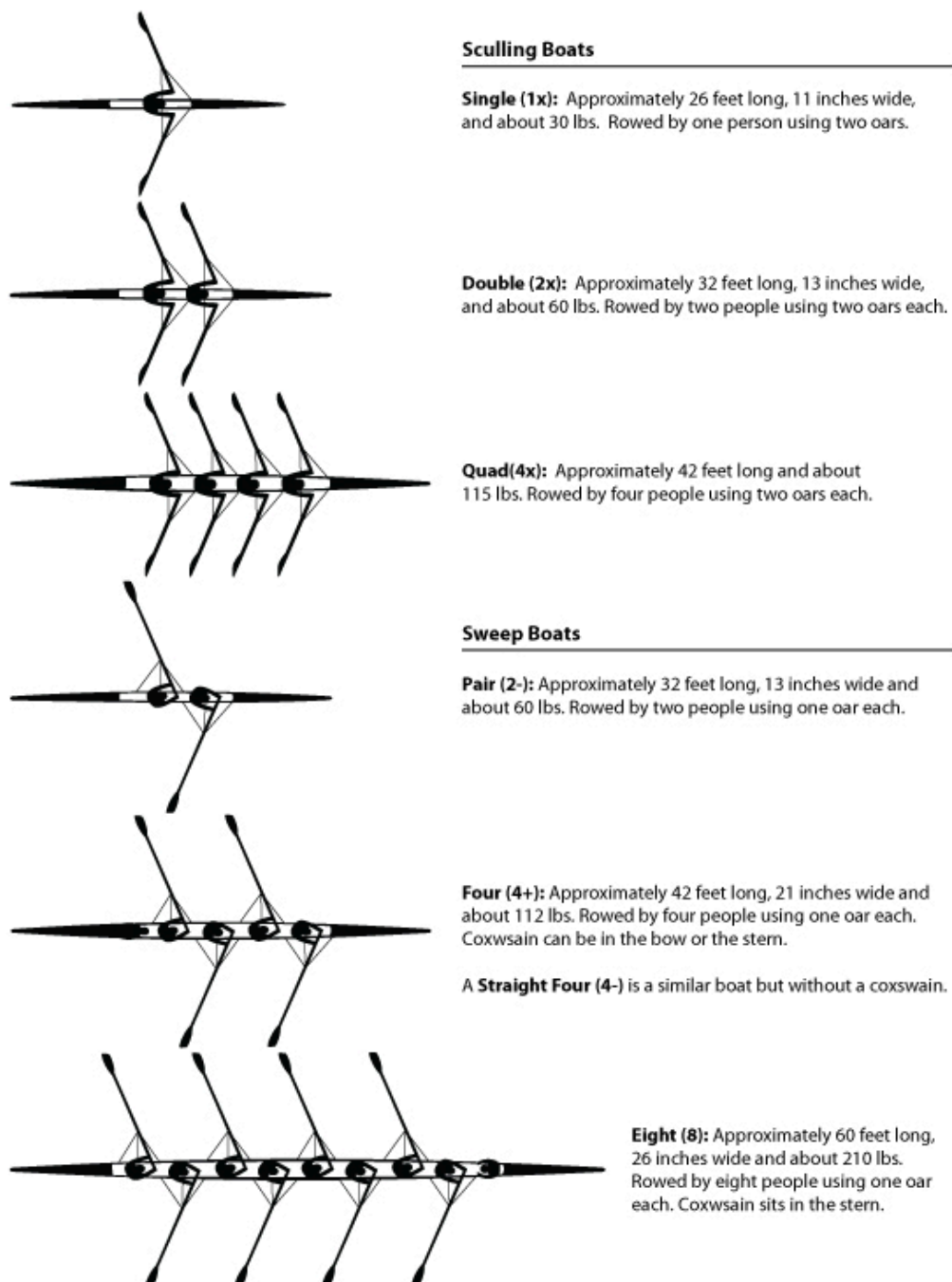
**Mike Foley
Director of Programs
Boys Varsity Coach**

**Gabby Fagnoli
Girls Varsity Coach**

**Stephen Rondthaler
Novice Coach**

Appendix A: The Language of Rowing

The sport of rowing has been around for a long time and has developed its own, sometimes peculiar terminology. Here is a glossary to help you understand what your rower is saying. Most of the lingo will be around the boats which vary in number of rowers (1, 2, 4, or 8), type of rowing (sweep v. sculling), and whether a coxswain is present. This chart ([source](#)) provides a good summary for parents:



Glossary of terminology

- 2-** Symbol for a pair (2 rowers, sweep, no cox).
- 2+** Symbol for a coxed pair (2 rowers, sweep, cox).
- 2x** Symbol for a double (2 rowers, sculling).
- 4-** Symbol for a straight four (4 rowers, sweep, no cox).
- 4+** Symbol for a four (4 rowers, sweep, cox).
- 4x** Symbol for a quad (4 rowers, sculling, no cox).
- 4x+** Symbol for a coxed quad (4 rowers, sculling, cox).
- 8+** Symbol for an eight (8 rowers, sweep, cox).
- 8x** Symbol for a coxed Octuple (8 rowers, sculling, cox)

Body angle the forward lean of the body from the hips that is achieved during the first part of the recovery. Also called —body prep.¶

Bow The front of the boat. Also the term used for the person rowing in —1 seat.¶

Bow ball a rubber ball used to protect the boat and rowers during a collision.

Bow coxed boat A shell in which the cox lays feet first in the bow of the boat. This position helps to reduce wind resistance.

Button/Collar A wide ring on the oar that keeps it from slipping through the oarlock.

Catch The entry of the blade into the water at the beginning of the stroke; the point at which the oar is placed in the water.

Cox box an amplification system with a headset, microphone, and speakers that allows the coxswain to convey instructions to the entire crew.

Coxswain/Cox'n/Cox [kok-suhn] the coxswain commands the crew, steers the boat, and is responsible for the safety of the crew and the boat. During a regatta, the coxswain is responsible for implementing the race plan established by the Coach. Experienced coxswains are valued as Assistant Coaches, and the coxswain is the only one other than the Coach to tell the oarsmen what to do.

Crab Being unable to take your blade out of the water at the release. This action destroys the rhythm, set, run, and momentum of the boat and is often referred to as —"catching a crab".¶ This can stop a boat dead in the water and can also throw a rower out of the boat.

Drive Power portion of the stroke. When the blades are in the water, the boat is in the drive phase of the stroke cycle.

Ergometer/Erg The Concept II rowing ergometer. This machine is used to build and measure the endurance and level of fitness of the athlete. Erg scores may also be used to determine placement in a particular boat line-up. Ergs use wind resistance to replicate the sensation of water resistance felt while rowing.

Feather The action of rotating the blade so that it parallels the water on the recovery. This minimizes resistance to air and water.

Finish/Release End of the drive during which the blade comes out of the water in preparation for the recovery.

Gunwale [guh-n-l] The sides of the boat, the edge of the shell's cockpit. When rowers carry a shell to the dock, the gunwales rest on the rower's shoulders.

Hold Water/Hold The action of square the blade in the water to stop the forward motion of the shell.

Inside Hand The hand that is closest to the oarlock (right for ports, left for starboards).

Launch Boat The coaches launch, used to provide easy communication with the athletes and doubles as a safety boat in case of emergency.

Novices First year rowers. Novice designation lasts for the calendar year.

Oar (sweep) Used in pairs, fours, and eights. Each rower uses one oar. Just over 12 feet in length, oars may be made of wood or carbon fiber. They are generally painted with the team's colors.

Oarlock Device that holds the oar and is the fulcrum for the oar. The lock consists of the pin and the gate. The gate is held closed by a threaded nut that is loosened to allow the rower to open the gate and insert an oar into the oarlock. The gate is then closed, and the nut is hand tightened.

Port Left side of the boat, facing the direction of travel (the bow). Red is the color that corresponds with port side.

Power 10 (20) A call for rowers to do 10 (or 20) of their best, most powerful strokes. A strategy used to pull ahead of a competitor or to focus the rowers' attention.

Puddle The disturbance left in the water by the blade as it is removed from the water. Puddles are visible during the recovery and help to gauge the run of a boat.

Recovery This is the time from the release of one stroke to the catch of the next stroke; the time the blade is out of the water. During the recovery, the rower moves his or her body and seat into position to prepare for the next catch.

Rigger The triangular shaped metal device that is bolted onto the side of the boat and holds the oars.

Rudder About the size of a credit card, the rudder is part of the skeg that swivels to steer the boat. Sometimes, the rudder is separate from the skeg.

Run The glide that occurs during the recovery, or the distance the shell moves during one stroke. You can figure it by looking for the distance between the puddles made by the same oar.

Scull Oar used in singles, doubles, and quads. Sculls are 9½ feet long and may be made of wood or carbon fiber. Sculls have a smaller handle than a sweep oar, but the parts are the same as a sweep oar.

Sculling One of the two disciplines of rowing. Each person has two oars.

Set the stability of the boat side to side, and its ability to ride level without leaning to the star-board or port. A boat is "set" by the rowers.

Shell Term used interchangeably with boat

Single A shell with one rower (a sculler) who uses 2 oars to propel the boat.

Skeg A fin attached to the bottom of the boat near the stern that helps keep the boat on course and balanced.

Slide Ratio The ratio of time spent during the drive versus the recovery. The goal is to spend longer on the recovery than the drive. This maximizes the run of the boat as well as the amount of rest the rower gets during the recovery phase of the stroke.

Starboard The right side of the boat, facing the direction of travel (the bow). Green is the color associated with Starboard.

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

Stretcher/Foot Stretcher Where the rowers' feet go. Shoes are permanently attached to the boat. Foot stretchers adjust to accommodate rowers' height/leg length.

Stroke The cycle of the oar during rowing. One stroke consists of the catch, drive, finish, and recovery.

Stroke Seat/Stroke The rower who sits closest to the stern. The stroke sets the stroke rate and rhythm for the boat.

Stroke Rate The cadence of strokes per minute.

Sweep Rowing/Sweep One of the two disciplines of rowing where rowers use only one oar.

Swing The elusive feeling when near-perfect synchronization of motion occurs in the shell, enhancing the performance and speed.

USRowing United States Rowing is the governing body for rowing in the United States.

Weigh Enough (Way'nuff) A command given by coaches and coxswains to stop an action immediately.

Appendix B: Rowing Apparel Retailers

JL Racing – www.jlracing.com (This is the supplier of our team uniform)

Boathouse - www.boathouse.com

Regatta Sport – www.regattasport.com

Race Photography

Sport Graphics – www.sportgraphics.com

Race Results (race dependent)

Crewtimer.com

Herenow.com

Appendix C: Fuel for Rowers

Rowing, a high-energy sport, requires athletes to train for power, endurance and technique. It relies heavily on carbohydrates to fuel the energy system to train and compete. When the athlete is still growing, adding muscle, training and playing hard, the requirement for carbohydrate is very high.

A low carbohydrate / low energy diet will result in depletion of the essential energy stores which leads to increased fatigue, low performance and poor recovery—particularly important on multiple-event days. Choosing low-fat, and nutritious carbohydrate foods in the correct amounts for your body and your sport, will provide the energy you need, and keep your body weight where it should be. Carbohydrate choices need to be balanced with low fat, high protein choices: (lean meat turkey, chicken, pork, ham; fish; eggs; milk, etc.)

High Carbohydrate Food Choices

- Breakfast: Cereal, pancakes, waffles, toast, bagel, oatmeal, grits, orange juice, fruit
- Lunch: Low fat sandwiches made with bread or rolls. Choose turkey, ham or roast beef. Pasta with low-fat topping/sauce.
- Salads, fruit.
- Dinner: Potatoes, pasta, rice. Vegetables, salad, fruit. Low fat frozen yogurt.
- Snacks: Pretzels, fruit, yogurt, energy bars, cereal, Gatorade

Hydration

Sweat losses can be great in rowing. Failure to replace these losses, or to maintain hydration will affect performance, and may negatively impact health. Thirst is not a good indicator of fluid needs, therefore rowers must drink on a schedule.

- Carry a water bottle
- Drink habitually
- 2 cups, 2 hours before practice
- 1-2 cups 15 minutes before
- 1/2-1 cup every 15 minutes.
- During practice alternate between water and sports drink.
- 3 cups after practice
- Drink water with meals

Pre-Event Eating

The goals of the pre-event meal are to top up your energy stores to ensure plenty for competition. Leave you feeling neither too hungry nor too full. Ensure full hydration. The pre-event evening meal is critical since many races take place early in the morning and don't allow time for a large meal prior. Choose high carbohydrate, low fat meals to ensure adequate digestion, and sufficient energy.

Examples: Cereals with low-fat milk, fruit, toast and juice; pancakes, syrup and fruit; baked potatoes with low fat fillings; pasta with low fat sauces; sandwiches. If you have an early morning race, have a high carbohydrate meal the night before and a snack 1-2 hours before the race (instant breakfast, cereal and milk, toast).

Recovery

Recovery strategies are important to help repair your body after training / competition, and to prepare your body for the next event or practice. Intentional recovery is essential between heats(e.g. regattas) to prevent fatigue and burnout. The 20 minutes after completion of training /competing is a critical period for recovery to consume a high carbohydrate snack or drink and include small amounts of protein.

- Use recovery drinks or shakes, energy bars, dried and fresh fruit, yogurt and peanut butter.
- Be sure to consume a high carbohydrate post game meal with lean protein and limit the fried foods.
- Continue to drink water and other fluids (not sodas) to replace that lost during your activity.
- Your urine should be colorless if you are adequately hydrated.
- Obtain 7-8 hours' sleep each night.