



MERCER MASTERS ROWING

MEMBER HANDBOOK



**Princeton National Rowing Association
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Princeton Junction, NJ 08550**

www.rowpnra.org

Mercer Masters Rowing Program
Sponsored by the Princeton National Rowing Association

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Section 1. General Information

1.1 Princeton National Rowing Association

The Princeton National Rowing Association, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, serves as a community resource for the support and advancement of the sport of rowing. Its goal is to increase the visibility of rowing, promote international and national competition, and support superior competitive rowing from the United States. The organization, originally founded as the Princeton International Regatta Association, was established in 2000 as the local organizing committee for the first FISA World Cup held outside of Europe. It has since grown into an umbrella organization which is responsible for: The Mercer Junior Rowing Club, the Mercer Masters, PNRA-Resolute Racing Camps, running the Finn M. W. Caspersen Rowing Center, and hosting national and international regattas. Its facility, the Finn M. W. Caspersen Rowing Center on Mercer Lake in West Windsor, is home to over 500 rowers ranging from high school aged to Olympians, six rowing teams, the United States National Team, and community outreach programs. The center is officially designated as a U.S. Olympic Training Site by the United States Olympic Committee.

1.2 Mercer Masters

In the winter of 2001, the Princeton International Regatta Association (PIRA), renamed the Princeton National Rowing Association (PNRA) in 2005, created the Mercer Junior Rowing Club (MJRC) in order to increase the accessibility of rowing for high school students in the Mercer County Area. In 2003, a group of MJRC parents got together and formed the Mercer Masters. In just a few years, the program has grown beyond the parents of MJRC rowers and has over 50 registered members with varying degrees of experience ranging from novice to former collegiate rowers.

The sport of rowing is one of the premier forms of exercise and the goal of the Mercer Masters is to enable all adults in the Mercer County area to take advantage of the benefits that rowing provides, regardless of previous rowing experience. Workouts are designed to aid in weight loss, increase strength and flexibility, and develop lean muscle mass. Participants will undergo cardiovascular and resistance training as they gain technical proficiency in rowing.

1.3 Boathouse Location

Directions to the Caspersen Rowing Center West Windsor, NJ

From Route 1 North or South

- Take the Alexander Road Exit off of Route 1 towards the Princeton Junction Train Station
- Alexander Road comes to a circle at North Post Road
- Make first right hand turn on to North Post Road
- Proceed through two stoplights
- Stay on Post Road past the Conover Fields and the Mercer Oaks Golf Club. This road will take you right to the boathouse
- After these fields, there will be a 'road closed' sign at the entrance to the park, on the boathouse side of the lake.
- Ignore this sign and head straight down the access road; the boathouse will be on your left as you reach lake.

From North on Route 206

- Route 206 into Princeton
- Left at traffic light by Borough Municipal Building onto Nassau Street
- Go 3 traffic lights to Washington Road
- Washington Road to U.S. Route 1 South
- Use directions for "From North and South via U.S. 1"

From Hightstown (Route 33)

- Take Route 33 south and turn right at the Hankins Road traffic light
- Stay on Hankins Road and Cross Old Trenton Road
- Hankins Road will become Village Road. Stay on Village Road
- Take a left at the light at the intersection of Village and Post Roads.
- Follow the directions for "From Route 1 North or South" to the boathouse

From Allentown (Route 130)

- Take Route 130 north and turn left at the Church Road traffic lights
- Stay on Church Road and cross Old Trenton Road.
- The next light will be Village Road. Make a left onto Village Road
- The next light will be Post Road. Make a left onto Post Road
- Follow the directions for "From Route 1 North or South" to the boathouse

1.4 Membership

The Mercer Masters Rowing Program offers the following types of memberships:

▪ Provisional Membership

Learn to Row participants are considered "provisional members" of the Mercer Masters. After a participant has successfully completed the Learn to Row program, he or she may become a Full Member by registering for a full season in either the Fitness & Recreational Rowing Program or the Mercer Masters Racers.

Individuals with previous rowing experience but are participating in their first season with the Mercer Masters in the Fitness & Recreational Rowing program are also Provisional Members of the club. Those who fall into this category must complete one full season with the club and register for a second season

before attaining full membership. Individuals with previous rowing experience but are participating in their first season with the Mercer Masters and who are participating in the Mercer Masters Racers are eligible for Full Membership.

- **Full Membership**

A “full member” of the Mercer Masters is defined as any person who has participated in the Mercer Masters Rowing Program for at least one full season and is registered for the current season in either the Fitness & Recreational Rowing program or the Mercer Masters Racers.

Individuals who have participated with the Mercer Masters in the past but have taken a sabbatical from the club will be considered Full Members upon registering for a new season.

Full Members are encouraged to come to committee and membership meetings, where they will have the opportunity to voice their opinions on team issues and policy. It should be noted, however, that the Steering Committee and the PNRA staff have final say on all matters regarding program and policies.

- **Full Membership for Coxswains**

The Mercer Masters offers a Full Membership and waives program fees for individuals acting as dedicated coxswains for the club. Dedicated coxswains do not row and they will regularly attend practices and participate in regattas.

Previous coxing experience is preferred but not necessary - the coaching staff is willing to teach an inexperienced person, provided that he or she has the desire to learn the necessary skills.

Section 2. Program Details

2.1 Program Descriptions

The Mercer Masters Rowing Program offers the following programs:

Learn To Row

Pre-requisites: None - NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY

The Learn to Row Program is designed for individuals with little or no rowing experience. Participants will attain a thorough introduction to rowing, focusing on the physical and technical foundation required to confidently and successfully become proficient in the sport. As the group progresses, workouts will take on a progressively more intensive physical component with the goal of increasing on-the-water skill development.

Upon successful completion of the Learn to Row program, participants will have the option of pursuing the sport with the Mercer Masters in either a recreational or competitive capacity along with other rowers of a comparable skill level.

Fitness & Recreational Rowing

Pre-requisites: Successful completion of Learn to Row or equivalent.

The Fitness & Recreational Rowing program is an intermediate program that provides rowers the opportunity to improve their rowing technique and begin incorporating workouts. Athletes will continue solidifying their rowing technique while simultaneously developing a fitness base.

This program is geared for those participants who have aspirations of rowing competitively but are lacking the technical foundation as well as those who enjoy the benefits of the sport but are looking for a less competitive experience. Participants who are not interested in competing or are unable to meet the necessary requirements of the Mercer Master Racers should register for the Fitness & Recreational Rowing program.

Upon completion of the Fitness & Recreational Rowing program, participants will have the option of joining the Mercer Masters Racers or staying in the Fitness & Recreational Rowing.

Mercer Masters Racers

Pre-requisites: Successful completion of Learn to Row, Fitness & Recreational Rowing, or equivalent as well as a high attendance rate for the current season.

The Mercer Masters Racers are comprised of athletes with a desire to race and are dedicated to competing at a high level against other teams. Training focuses on increasing the technical skills and developing the physical strength, fitness, and stamina necessary to perform well in the competitive arena. Athletes will be paired with teammates of similar goals and skill levels whenever possible and appropriate.

Athletes in the racing program will have the opportunity to travel with the team to away regattas. The costs associated with each regatta (boat and van rentals, gasoline, entry fees, etc.) are shared by all participants excluding coxswains and are in addition to the program fees.

An effort is made to give everyone who wishes to participate in a regatta a chance to race. Even so, there is no guarantee that an individual rower will be boated for every race, nor can we guarantee that each participant in the competitive program will have the opportunity to race at all. It depends on individual participants' schedules and availability as well as the events available at the regatta. Boat line-ups will be selected based on erg scores, athletic ability/potential, work ethic, attendance, and rowing technique at the coaches' discretion.

** It will be at the discretion of the coaching staff to decide if participants are registered for the appropriate program level and participants may be reassigned accordingly.*

2.2 Crew Line-Ups and Boat Selection

During the competitive seasons, the rowers may be assigned to boats within their respective programs. Boats for the Mercer Master Racers will be chosen based on erg scores as well as through seat races in which rowers will compete with one another on the water to demonstrate their effectiveness in the boat. Race results against other teams will be used as additional indicators for seats in the top boats. Athletes' attendance will also be a factor in selection. Racers are expected to attend a minimum of 80% of the practices per week. Coaches will use their discretion in the final selection process.

2.3 Practices

It is recommended that rowers participate in as many practices as possible to ensure that they get as much benefit as possible from the program. Practices are run Monday through Saturday mornings from 5:30 – 7:00am. Mercer Masters Racers need to attend 80% or more of the designated Racer practices/season.

Practices are approximately 1 1/2 hours long. In the fall and spring practices will be held on Mercer Lake. Coaches will supervise and instruct rowers from the launch boats alongside. To vary workouts, athletes will take part in various cross-training, ergometer and strength & conditioning sessions. In the winter or in poor weather, practices will be held indoors. Rowers should arrive promptly in order to take out the oars and prepare the boats. Boat line-ups are announced by the coach and individual crew briefings occur.

At the conclusion of practice, crews will put the boat and oars away in the boathouse, be debriefed on the practice and ensure any tasks that need to be performed are completed.

2.4 Weather/Cancellation Policy

While every attempt is made to assess the weather conditions prior to practice, it is not always possible to determine if the course is row-able until arriving in the mornings. Participants should assume that morning practice will be held unless you receive a phone call from your coach or through a designated phone tree or a text message. Athletes should bring indoor workout clothes & sneakers as a back up in case the weather is not cooperative.

2.5 Parking

Rowers must park their cars in the upper parking area. The upper parking area is the area that is furthest away from the boathouse. Cars are not to be parked in front of the boathouse, on the grass, or the road leading to the boathouse at anytime.

2.6 Showers and Change Rooms

Mercer Masters participants are not allowed to use the showers and locker rooms except in the case of an emergency.

2.7 Rowing Season Outlines

▪ **Fall: Early September through Mid November**

Practices will be held on Mercer Lake. Participants in the competitive program will have the opportunity to compete in several head races. These are longer races, between two and a half and three miles, and due to their length are usually held on rivers such as the Christina River in Delaware, the Charles River in Boston or the Schuylkill in Philadelphia. In head racing, crews begin individually and race against the clock.

▪ **Winter Session: Early December through Mid February**

The winter is an invaluable time for rowers to fine tune general skills and focus on developing a strong physical foundation for future competition or simply enjoy the benefits of general aerobic fitness. For novice athletes in particular, it affords them with the opportunity to further develop the mechanics and dynamics of their stroke in a stable, flexible training environment.

The winter session provides the experienced athlete the opportunity to draw attention away from integrating with a crew and focus upon specific, individual technical development. Each athlete's training will be characterized by a strong emphasis on individual skill, long-term physical development, and for those interested, a focus preparing for select summer and/or fall races.

Due to cold temperatures, practices will be held inside at the Caspersen Rowing Center’s training room. Rowers will work out on stationary ergometers, or “ergs.” These are rowing machines designed to simulate the rowing stroke and help athletes get in shape for competitive rowing in the spring and summer.

In addition to “erging”, Winter Session athletes will participate in circuit training, aimed at developing and increasing power, aerobic endurance, flexibility, and core strength. .

The possibility exists for Winter Session athletes to train for and compete in the C.R.A.S.H. – B. Sprints World Indoor Rowing Championships, held annually in Boston, MA, or participate in one of the more local satellite competitions.

Practices will be held indoors at the Caspersen Rowing Center’s training/erg room. *Space is limited for the Winter Session.*

▪ **Spring: Mid February through Mid June**

Practices will be held on Mercer Lake. Those in the competitive racing program will train for and compete in “sprint” races. For sprints races, crews begin simultaneously at the starting line and race against each other.

▪ **Summer: Mid June to Mid August**

Practices will be held on Mercer Lake. Those in the competitive racing program will train for and compete in “sprint” races in regattas throughout the season. Sprint races for masters rowers are 1000 meters in length. For sprints races, crews begin simultaneously at the starting line and race against each other.

2.8 Regatta Schedule

Each season, the steering committee will work with the coaching staff and develop a regatta schedule. The regattas that we have participated in the past include the following:

<u>Season</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Location</u>
<i>Fall</i>	<i>Head of the Christina</i>	<i>Wilmington, DE</i>
	<i>Navy Day</i>	<i>Philadelphia, PA</i>
	<i>Hutchinson Cup</i>	<i>Philadelphia, PA</i>
	<i>Head of the Charles</i>	<i>Boston, MA</i>
	<i>Head of the Schuylkill</i>	<i>Philadelphia, PA</i>
<i>Winter</i>	<i>C.R.A.S.H.-B. Sprints</i>	<i>Boston, MA</i>
	<i>C.R.A.S.H.-B. Satellite Sprints</i>	<i>New York City, NY or Villanova University, PA</i>
<i>Summer</i>	<i>Schuylkill Navy</i>	<i>Philadelphia, PA</i>
	<i>Independence Day Regatta</i>	<i>Philadelphia, PA</i>
	<i>Diamond States</i>	<i>Middletown, DE</i>
	<i>Quaker City Masters Regatta</i>	<i>Philadelphia, PA</i>
	<i>Carnegie Lake Sprints</i>	<i>Carnegie Lake/Princeton, NJ</i>
	<i>Masters Nationals</i>	<i>Oklahoma City, OK</i>

Section 3. Club Organization

The Mercer Masters are a participant driven organization. The club does not receive any government funding of any kind. The organization is not officially affiliated with any schools or other organizations that might provide financial aid. The operation of the club is entirely dependent on rowing fees, fundraising, and more importantly volunteerism.

Members of the Mercer Masters are responsible for helping with membership promotion, recruitment, learn to row programs, fundraising, logistical support and travel. The club has formed various committees that facilitate the management of these functions. A chair person is chosen to head each committee, meet periodically with the Mercer Masters staff, and have the ability to help form team policies and procedures based on input from other members. Every club member with Full Membership is expected to participate on a committee. It is the best way for members participating in different club programs to meet each other and to voice their opinions about the program.

The Mercer Masters would greatly appreciate any help that participants would be able to provide to the club. In the past, members with specific skills such as welding, accounting, and mechanics have been an asset to the club, as have those without a specific skill. Some people have also generously provided the club with contacts in the business world, who have been involved with the program and/or regattas through providing goods and services, or sponsorships.

3.1 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is responsible for the future of the Mercer Masters Program. They are responsible for long term planning, the ability to identify trends in masters rowing and the implementation of a long-term plan for Mercer.

The Steering Committee is nominated by the team at large on a yearly basis and is comprised of the following positions:

President: Communicates with PNRA Executive Director, ensures communication with full membership, oversees all committees, oversees all members of our Mercer Master Steering Committee, and conducts team meetings.

Vice President: Fulfills duties of President in their absence and assists in the delegation of all responsibilities.

Secretary: Responsible for the distribution and collection of all forms for each member for the season and all applicable regattas, regulates the Team Snap webpage.

Treasurer: Works with PNRA staff to ensure the collection of fees for registration, regattas and membership, manages with the help of a subcommittee any fundraising for boat purchase or equipment.

Mercer Master Advisor: Works with Steering Committee to ensure that the goals of the program are met.

3.2 Sub Committees

Committee members will work under the direction of their committee chair in carrying out the goals and responsibilities of that committee which have been established by the steering committee. These duties are decided on between the steering committee, the committee chair and members of the committee.

- **Membership & Recruiting:**

The goal of the Membership & Recruiting Committee is to generate marketing and promotional strategies aimed at expanding the Mercer Masters membership and put these strategies into place. It is recommended that the Membership & Recruiting Committee help out with the Learn to Row program. The chairperson will coordinate efforts with the steering committee to ensure that the needs of the committee are met.

- **Social/Hospitality:**

Mercer Masters strives to promote fellowship amongst club members. The social committee is responsible for organizing events that bring members and their families together outside of the boathouse setting. They are also responsible for organizing the food and beverages for the regattas.

- **Fundraising:**

PNRA, MJRC, and the Mercer Masters do not receive any government funding. The organization is not officially affiliated with any schools or other organizations that might provide financial aid. Thus, the operation of the club is entirely dependent on rowing fees and fundraising. The Fundraising Committee is responsible for the research, planning, and organizing of any and all fundraising events. The chairperson will coordinate efforts with the steering committee and PNRA staff to ensure that the needs of the committee and organization are met. The Masters Fundraising Committee works closely with the PNRA Staff and the Mercer Juniors to coordinate Fundraising for the entire PNRA family of programs.

- **Clothing & Club Merchandise:**

This committee will be responsible for organizing and ordering all team uniforms. They will research and recommend additional team merchandise for team members as well as work with the fundraising committee to identify merchandise for resale. Team gear will be ordered through Clothing & Club Merchandise Chairperson.

- **Repair & Maintenance:**

The equipment used by PNRA MJRC and Mercer Masters need continuous maintenance and repair to be practice and race ready. This committee works with PNRA staff to help with any necessary repair and maintenance.

3.3 Meetings of the Membership

Members of the Mercer Masters, Steering Committee, Committee Chairs, and PNRA Staff Members meet periodically throughout the year to discuss club business. While we strongly recommend that all members attend, it is not mandatory. All meetings take place at the Caspersen Rowing Center unless an alternate location is chosen.

3.4 Communication

The best way to get up-to-date information is through Team Snap. This online team management website contains our calendar and practice schedule. It is used to sign-up for practices and regattas, communicate with members of the team and post important documents such as forms. Once you have registered for the team, you will be invited to join. You can log into the Mercer Masters page at Team Snap with the following link: <http://www.teamsnap.com>

Section 4.Fees

4.1 Program Fee Structure

Fall, Winter and Summer Fees:

Program	Individual	Couples Registering Together (\$100 discount)	Parents of Mercer Juniors (\$150 discount)
Learn To Row	\$350	n/a	\$200/person
Fitness & Recreational Rowing	\$450	\$800/couple	\$300/person
Mercer Masters Racers	\$450	\$800/couple	\$300/person
Coxswains	<i>Fee Waived</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>

Spring Fees:

Program	Individual	Couples Registering Together (\$100 discount)	Parents of Mercer Juniors (\$150 discount)
Learn To Row	\$350	n/a	\$200/person
Fitness & Recreational Rowing	\$550	\$1,000/couple	\$500/person
Mercer Masters Racers	\$550	\$1,000/couple	\$500/person
Coxswains	<i>Fee Waived</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>

4.2 Discounts

Learn to Row Graduate Discount:

Graduates of our Learn to Row program who wish to continue on with the Mercer Masters will receive a discount (equal to 50% of their initial LTR fee) upon registering for an ongoing session of Fitness & Recreational Rowing or the Mercer Masters Racers within the same season.

Recruiting Discount:

Current members can earn a discount of \$50.00 for each new member he or she refers to Mercer Masters Rowing. The referred individual must register for one of our programs and there is a maximum discount limit of \$150.00/current member which will be applied to the next season's registration fee.

4.3 Payment of Fees

Participants will register and pay for the program on line directly through Regatta Central on the PNRA website www.rowpnra.org

- **Installment Plan**

There is an option to pay fees for advanced programming in installments over the course of the season vs. one lump sum at the time of registration. Athletes who wish to pay over installments will be charged an additional fee of \$25.00, which covers administration costs. This option is not available to those paying for Learn to Row programs.

With the installment plan, 50% of the program fee is due at the time of registration (on or before the first practice of the season). The remainder of the balance is due at the half-way point of the season. Athletes that still have a balance after this date will have his or her rowing privileges suspended until the balance is paid.

- **Late Fees**

Payments over two weeks late will be assessed a \$25 late fee. After 30 days an additional \$10 charge will be added for every week that the bill is not paid. Athletes paying via the Installment Plan will be charged a late fee on any overdue portion of their balance.

4.4 Refunds & Pro-Rated Fees

Refunds

Due to IRS restrictions regulating distribution of monies, refunds will not be issued for any reason after the start date for each session. In the case of injury or special circumstance that prevents an athlete from completing a substantial portion of a season, a credit will be applied on a case-by-case basis to that athlete's fee for the next season. Credit will not be issued for athletes that remove themselves from the program willingly after the first week of the season.

Pro-Rated Fees

Athletes who join the program later in the season will be charged the full amount of the program fee. We do not offer pro-rated fees.

4.5 Regatta Fees

Regatta fees will be evenly divided among each member of the boat. You will be charged a seat fee for each race. The masters coach will be responsible for registering the boats in each regatta after the coach has assigned the line-ups. Regatta fees must be turned in prior to each regatta; failure to do so by any individual may result in scratched entries for any crew for which that person is rowing. Travel associated with away trips and various team expenses that are not covered by fees will be shared among athletes participating. Each athlete will also pitch in to pay the coxswain for their time at the regatta. Fees are based on paying the Cox \$10 per hour of the regatta not including travel time.

Section 5. Safety

5.1 Safety Guidelines

In the event that a person should become injured at the boathouse or during rowing practice, they should report it to their coach. Coaches are trained in first aid and CPR & AED. In extreme circumstances, athletes will be transported for treatment. Rain, snow, and cold weather do not restrict rowing activity unless they reach extreme levels. However, boats will not practice when the lake is icy, during a thunderstorm, when the air temp is below 35 degrees or in extreme wind (i.e. whitecaps). If a coach or rower hears thunder, all boats will return immediately to the dock. On Mercer Lake, a boat is never more than 3000 meters – a 10 minute row – from the docks, and if thunderstorms are predicted, boats will remain even closer to the dock throughout the duration of practice.

5.2 Swim Test

Rowing teams, including the Mercer Masters, require all athletes to pass an annual swim test before participating on the water. The fall season is the annual swim test for all athletes.

In the infrequent event that a boat flips, the oars and the shell itself may be used as flotation devices. Do not try to swim to shore. Rowers should stay with the boat until they can be transported to shore via safety launch.

5.3 Coxing Safety, Guidelines, & Clinics

Coxing is a big responsibility. The number one priority on the water is safety and coxswains need to be able to keep their crews safe at all times. It requires a fair amount of skill and knowledge to perform this task well. A coxing guide is available on the website for your review prior to going out on the water.

Section 6. Equipment

6.1 Boats & Oars

Currently, the Mercer Masters shares all of its equipment from the Mercer Junior Rowing Club. This includes racing shells, sets of oars, coaching launches with outboard engines, coxswain speaker systems, and a truck and boat trailer for towing equipment to regattas. MJRC has been able to purchase this due to the generous support of donors, fundraising by rowers, and the hard work of dedicated parents, masters rowers and others, who have volunteered at PNRA sponsored races.

Due to the high cost of rowing equipment (a new shell can run over \$36,000), it is imperative that all of our equipment is treated with respect. Any damage that occurs should be reported to a coach for repair.

6.2 Dress

It is important that rowers do not wear clothing is not too baggy, as it can become caught in the slides in the boat. Spandex shorts/leggings and snug tops that do not hang down below the seats are recommended. Socks and sneakers are required for erg sessions and land training.

The most effective way to dress for rowing in cold weather conditions is to layer clothing, allowing the top layers to be removed once the athlete is suitably warm. Thermal tops are a good idea, as they will keep you warm, even when they are wet. It is also a good idea to bring some spare warm clothes to put on after practice, when clothes may have become wet.

6.3 Racing Gear

The United States Rowing Association has mandated that in races, all rowers must dress identically. The Mercer Masters uniform consists of a Mercer racing shirt and black trou (spandex/lycra shorts or leggings). Racing shirts should be purchased at an additional cost to athletes (not included in program fees and regatta fees) before the racing season begins. Athletes can order rowing trou at the same time as racing shirts or they can purchase basic trou at a sporting goods store. Coaches will allow plenty of notice when they will be required.

Section 7. Forms

7.1 Standard Waiver of Liability

The Standard Waiver of Liability must be filled out completely and turned in before the first practice. It is valid for one calendar year. This form can be found on the Masters' registration page on www.rowpnra.org.

7.2 Health History Questionnaire

The PNRA Health History Questionnaire must be filled completely and turned in before the first practice. A new form must be completed every session. This form can be found on the Masters' registration page on www.rowpnra.org.

7.3 Swim Test Waiver

In order to fulfill the swim requirement, participants need to perform the designated swim test under the supervision of a certified lifeguard, who should complete and sign the Swim Test Waiver form. These forms need to be turned in before the participant is allowed to go on the water. The test only needs to be completed once. This form can be found on the Masters' registration page on www.rowpnra.org.