**2017 Mercer Juniors Fall Programming Plan**

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**Fall Racing Schedule**

***Head of the Housatonic – Shelton, CT – October 7th, 2017***

**Who is racing**: Top 2-3 Girls and Boys Varsity boats

**Where**: Shelton, CT

**When:  (tentative schedule)**

9:40 AM Men’s HS/Junior JV 8+

11:30 AM Women’s HS/Junior JV 8+

1:45 PM Men’s HS/Junior 8+

3:10 PM Women’s HS/Junior 8+

**Travel Plans:** All participating Mercer athletes will depart from the boathouse for Shelton, CT on Friday, October 6th@ 4:00pm.  We will be taking four 15-passenger vans (driven by parent volunteers). Athletes will return after racing on Saturday.

# Hotel Details: PNRA has secured rooms at Courtyard Marriott and Hilton Garden Shelton for athletes and coaches.

**Hotel Address: Courtyard Marriott-** 780 Bridgeport Ave, Shelton, CT 06484

 **Hilton Garden Inn**- 25 Old Stratford Rd, Shelton, CT 06484

**Dinner Friday**: Sandwiches

**Lunch Saturday**: We will be ordering boxed lunches from Panera Bread

**Notes:** Coaches will announce who is going to the race by the end of practice on Friday, September 29th. Boating decisions will be made in accordance with the policies outlined in the ***Guide to Boat Selection*** that can be found[here.](https://www.rowpnra.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Guide-to-Boat-Selection.pdf)

**Estimated Cost:** $250-300

***Head of the Charles Regatta – Boston, MA – October 20th-22nd, 2017***

**Who is racing:** 2 Varsity Girls 8+, 1st Varsity Boys 8+

**Where:** The Charles River, Boston, MA

**Race Website:** www.hocr.org

**Travel Plans:** All Mercer athletes will depart from the boathouse for Boston on the morning of Friday, October 20th. We plan to get to the course in the afternoon to rig the boats and have a practice row. We will be taking three 15-passenger vans (driven by parent volunteers). Athletes will return after racing on Sunday.

**Tentative Race Times (all on Sunday, October 22nd):**

Youth Women’s 8+:  10:10 am

Youth Men’s 8+:  12:34 am

**Travel Note:** The Head of the Charles is a unique event. It is very hard to obtain an entry through the open lottery system. The only way to avoid the lottery and guarantee an entry for the next year is to finish in the top half of your event. For the third time in the history of the club, Mercer has three guaranteed entries -- three in the youth 8s.

The second unique aspect of the Charles is that it is an incredibly difficult course to navigate for a coxswain. There are a couple of extreme turns, six bridges, and many boats to pass along the way. Therefore, we want to make sure our coxswains are prepared.

We want to ensure that we have the best possible chance of finishing in the top half of each race, so future Mercer rowers have the opportunity to participate at this great event.  We believe it is crucial for us to have the ability to get athletes out on the course for a row on Friday because there is no opportunity to practice on Saturday and have our coxswains attend the coxswain clinic on Saturday as it will help them be relaxed and prepared for the race on Sunday.

**Hotel Details:** PNRA has secured rooms at the Boston Marriott Newton for athletes and coaches.

**Hotel Address:**Boston Marriott Newton, 2345 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA  02466

**Lunch Friday:** Sandwiches from Jimmy Johns

**Dinner Friday**:  Will be decided by the boat

**Dinner Saturday**:  Bertucci’s Newton Corner

**Lineups/Selection:** Lineups and events will be tentatively announced by Wednesday, October 11th. While there is a possibility one or two seats may change after this date, the majority of athletes will know the lineup and the event they are racing by this date. Final lineups will be announced by Friday, October 13th.

**Estimated Cost:** $500-650

***Head of the Halloween – Mercer Lake, NJ – October 28th, 2017***

**Who is racing:** All Varsity and Novice Athletes who are not racing at The Head of The Schuylkill

**Where:** Mercer Lake – West Windsor, NJ

**When:**10:00 am until around 1:00 pm

**What to wear:**The best Halloween costume of your life (that you can row in)

**About the race:** Head of the Halloween is a fun intra-squad race. We try to create boats that contain two varsity girls, two varsity boys, two novice girls, and two novice boys. We then race an ATL(around the lake). Parents are encouraged to come watch and partake in a small Halloween party after the racing.

***Mercer Challenge – Mercer Lake, NJ – Wednesday, November 1, 2017***

**Who is racing:** All varsity and 1-2 boats of novice athletes

**About the race:** This race is an intra-boathouse race among Mercer, Peddie, and Lawrenceville. Varsity athletes will race around the lake while novice athletes will race shorter distances. The race will be run during our normal practice time.

***Frostbite Regatta & Bill Braxton Memorial Regatta  – Mercer Lake, NJ – November 11th & 12th, 2017***

**Who is racing:** First 4-5 Varsity boats, plus all novice boats that safely can compete

**Where:** Mercer Lake – West Windsor, NJ

**Guide to Boat Selection**

**What are the qualities coaches look for in an athlete?**

At Mercer, we try to focus on fostering the experiences that help our athletes learn the best lessons the sport has to offer. Leadership, sportsmanship, perseverance, competitiveness, and compassion are all important qualities in rowing, and we look for our athletes to demonstrate these qualities over the course of the season.

Rowing is an extremely challenging sport, both physically and mentally. We are looking for people who are up to the challenge and are ready to approach the challenge enthusiastically, all the while knowing that even the most talented rowers are often humbled repeatedly by the sport.

**How do you determine who makes the 1st boat and who makes the 4th boat?**

Coaches rely on a wide range of data to ensure that the people who make the boat go the fastest end up in the fastest boat. There are many things that make a great rower.  We want our athletes to try to excel at all aspects of the sport.   We consider these elements to be absolutely critical . Erg score, rowing technique and positive attitude/coachabality. Attendance at practice is critical.  In other words, having a strong erg score but a bad attitude will probably not get you into the seat that you desire. Likewise having a great attitude and a great erg score but bad technique won’t get you there either. We want to see progress across each of these key criteria and this can only be achieved through regular attendance at practice.

**Criteria for Selection**

**Erg testing:**

*“Erg testing is to rowing as the SAT is to college admissions, you have to have a competitive score, but it is only one part of the puzzle.*”

Physical testing on the rowing machine allows athletes to demonstrate fitness capacity, power, and mental toughness. Mercer coaches will primarily use distance tests of 5-6 kilometers in the fall, and transition to 2k tests in the spring. These distance tests last anywhere from 19 to 24 minutes.

In the spring athletes will test 2000 meters. A great 2k time for Boys would be 6:15, while a great time for girls would be 7:15. For lightweight boys, a good time for 2k would be 6:30, and for girls around 7:30.

We understand that not everyone is capable of pulling these times right now, but we are always looking for improvement over the course of the athlete’s career. Generally an athlete capable of producing one of those scores is a junior or senior who has been athletically competitive in rowing or another endurance sport for 3-5 years. It is important to us that no matter where the athlete starts out, they continually are striving to improve as the training continues.

**Technique:**

Similar to golf, technique in the boat is critical to being effective. Coaches spend a great deal of practice time working on drills to help athletes understand the best way to move the boat. It is important that the athletes are listening during drilling and other instructional parts of practice so that they can form an understanding of what the coach is looking for. Just like they study math or science, when they are at rowing practice they are students of the sport of rowing, and their coach is their teacher.

With technique, coaches are looking for improvement, “coachability,” and for the athlete to take individual ownership of his or her progress. All athletes will receive feedback on and off the water; however, when an athlete is not responding to that feedback, coaches will eventually move on to athletes who are responding, and selections will be made based on that experience. Practice will include many drills and concepts that athletes can do on an erg on their own. The boathouse is equipped with mirrors to provide immediate feedback for them to make changes, as long as they understand what the coach is looking for. Even when the coach is not directly speaking directly to an athlete the coach is still evaluating and analyzing their stroke(coaching the boat as a whole).

**Seat Racing:**

Seat racing is an on-the-water test of one athlete’s boat moving ability versus that of another athlete. Generally seat racing will take place in coxed 4s and will involve a series of intervals at a set time or distance. After one interval, the two athletes will switch boats and race the interval over again. The coach will look for the change in margin between the two intervals to determine which athlete had a greater effect on boat speed and thus makes the boat faster when he or she is in it.

Seat racing can be useful in certain situations, but it is certainly not the sole deciding factor in who makes the boat. Seat racing is used as a final selection procedure, often between two athletes who have performed similarly when all aspects of the selection criteria are taken into account. **Therefore, not everyone is entitled to a seat race for every boat, and due to time constraints it would be impossible to seat race everyone against everyone.** The coaches will do their best to determine the depth chart of their team and conduct fair seat races with transparent outcomes when they feel necessary.

**Attitude, Work Ethic, Attendance, Competitive Spirit, Enthusiasm:**

As we have previously stated, rowing is physically and mentally demanding. Coaches are constantly challenging athletes to be the best they can, and through the response to this challenge athletes gain a level of confidence, determination, strength, and mental toughness that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

We look for athletes who are team players and for those who bring a positive, can-do approach to practice. Furthermore we look for athletes who will handle the competitive nature of the sport with grace and react well to the difficult situations that come with selection and competition. We want athletes to work hard and demonstrate the desire to achieve their best performance through putting forth a relentless level of effort.

Finally, we want to reiterate how important it is for athletes to come to practice. We understand things come up and that students have many competing demands. ***Attendance at practice is crucial for making progress and contributing to fast boats***. Missing practice or practices does impact the lineups we row at practice and how well certain lineups row together is one of the things coaches use for selection for races.  As such, missing practice can affect boat selection.

**Coaches’ Judgment:**

We are lucky to have a highly experienced junior coaching staff at Mercer. Our coaches have been successful at the international, national, collegiate, and youth levels both as athletes and coaches. We trust them with all aspects involved with teaching, training, and assembling the fastest crews we can possibly put on the water. In certain circumstances when two athletes are extremely close, the coaches may be forced to make a judgment as to who is a better fit in a particular crew.

*Example***:** Athlete A is just a little smoother and more experienced technically than Athlete B, but A is slower on the erg and narrowly lost a head-to-head seat race versus B. However, Athlete A demonstrates the ability to blend in better with the top lineup of athletes and ultimately makes that boat go faster. In this example Athlete A might allow the other rowers to row technically better, and thus he or she adds an element that is hard to extract though the other parts of the selection process. In this example the coach will have to look at all the data and ultimately make a judgment call about what is better for the crew.