

Come Boating! Racing Program



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Racing Coordinators

There once was a man from Cornwall...

Malcolm Gater, former Harbor Master in Newquay, Cornwall (origin of Pilot Gig racing) showed up in Belfast in 2005. CB legend has it that upon discovering Come Boating! he boldly claimed, “You should be racing these boats!” and took on the mantle of racing coach/coxswain. Malcolm soon started telling people “You’re on the team!” and when they were going to race, and the CB passion for racing was born.

Since the beginning, gig racing has provided an outlet for rowers who want to row harder and continue improving their skills in a fun competitive team environment.

Come Boating! participates in several racing events throughout the year. Racers represent Come Boating! in races and regattas throughout New England and even abroad. Whether it’s a 2-mile sprint or a formidable 20+ mile endurance race, river, estuary, or open water, home or away, strong crew or fun/low-key crew...there’s a race for pretty much any comfort level.

General Racing Season

- Snow Row: End of Feb/Mid-March (must be Winter Rower qualified)
- Essex River Race **TBD**: May (must be Winter Rower qualified)
- Dharma Voyage: June
- Blackburn Challenge: July
- Belfast Regatta: August
- Lake Champlain Challenge: September
- Gloucester Harbor Race: September
- Head of the Weir: October
- Head of the Tide: in-house scrimmage in October (posted as a row in the CB rowing portal).

How it works

- At the beginning of the Winter Rowing season, we send out a tentative Racing Season schedule for the following year.
 - We ask that racers consider which races they might be interested in and let us know.
 - Early interest does not obligate anyone to any race.
- Racers are notified of individual races via email and asked to respond with their interest within a week of notification.
- Racers must respond with their interest, including what type of team they'd prefer to be on (women's, men's, mixed & casual or competitive, etc.) and if they would consider coxing the race.
- Racing Coordinators assemble crews based on responses and other variables (more on that shortly).

How it works

- Racers are notified of team assignments including alternates and subs. Our goal is to have the assignments within two weeks of notifications. This depends on the number of responses and how we can best assign everyone. Sometimes it takes longer.
- Crews are responsible for finding their own Coxswain. Racing Coordinators can assist with this, but we don't assign the coxswains, unless someone responded with their interest to cox a specific type of team.
- Crews are responsible for making their own training schedule. A crew doesn't have to wait until they have a race coxswain to start training ... they can train with any coxswain who will go out with them while they are finding a race cox.
- The goal is to have no less than 5 solid weeks available for training. Summer/Fall races are very close together and this may not be possible without overlaps.
- Train, train, train, train, and train some more!
- Go to the race and have fun!

Racing Costs

- You must be winter qualified to race in Snow Row and Essex River. You must be a member of Come Boating! to be Winter qualified. Membership is \$35.00 per year for an individual, and \$60.00 per year for a family. Racers aren't required to be members for non-winter races, however it is encouraged and subject to change.
- Racers are responsible for their own registration fees. Registration fees range from \$25.00/person to \$90.00/ person. Tradition holds that rowers pay the Coxswain's registration fee.
- All races but one are away and require boat towing. Crews pay towing expenses (gas and tolls) plus \$0.50 per mile for wear and tear on the tower's vehicle. If a truck is rented, crews pay the rental fee and fuel cost.
- Maintenance: \$20 per rower (not the coxswain) per race, payable to Come Boating! This only applies if you are actively participating in a race.
- Lodging/meals: Racers are responsible for their own meals and lodging.

Can any rower in Come Boating! race?

The simple answer is YES ... and ... NO.

The YES Part

- Underlying CB's mission to create educational boat-related programs is a commitment to inclusivity and using our programs to help unify and build community. CB offers a broad range of rowing opportunities to meet all levels of rowing ability and interest.
- We don't have "tryouts" for most races** and we don't set crews for the whole season. We strive to field competitive teams and do well, but we don't place that above a positive experience. Our goal is teamwork, camaraderie, and fun where every crew member contributes to the success of the boat.

The NO Part

- Part of the decision-making process in setting a team is considering boat dynamics, potential team cohesion, and safety in a racing environment.
- Rowers interested in being on a race team must demonstrate basic foundational skills, or be actively working towards them, showing improvement, and likely to gain those skills with training.
- Rowers must also demonstrate that they are physically capable of steady state rowing for 3-5 miles or will likely get there during training.
- Our commitment to inclusivity doesn't mean that we will put rowers who are not suited to racing on a team. Doing so is irresponsible and makes for bad boat dynamics, negatively impacts team cohesion, and poses a potential safety hazard in a racing environment.
- It is rare that someone interested in racing doesn't have an opportunity to do so, but it can happen.

Foundational Skills

Basic Foundational Skills

- Oar control
 - Timing
 - Feathering
- Attention to cox's commands on and off the water
- Responsiveness to skill/technique instruction

Skills to improve racing at every level

- Hands away
- Leanback
- Leg drive
- Straight arms

Who decides if a rower has those skills?***

- Racing Coordinators are also racers, but we can't be on every row to observe rowers, and we are not coaches.
- We rely on our coxswains to help us evaluate a potential racer, especially those coxes who cox power, skills/drills, and racing development rows. We also check in with coxswains annually regarding current racers.
- We ask coxswains to give us their honest opinion on several things, including a rower's:
 - Basic skills
 - Power and physical ability for sustained steady-state rowing.
 - Attention to coxswain commands
 - Responsiveness to skill/technique instructions, and coaching.
- Not having a skill (yet) or not being able to row for a solid 3-5 miles (yet) doesn't necessarily mean a rower won't be considered for a race. A lot depends on the rower's ability to respond to coaching and the potential to gain skills during a practice.

How rowers are placed on teams**

- Come Boating! is committed to offering rowing at a variety of levels, and racing is no different. Teams can be all women, all men, mixed, super strong, low-key, or any combination therein. The more racers we have in the pool, the greater the variety of teams we can put together.
- Team placement depends first on the number of interested racers vs the number of available boats.
- Because we don't have tryouts for teams we have to consider a number of other variables for team placement.
- Assuming a team isn't simply the only 6 people who responded in the only boat available, other considerations may include:
 - Racers' preference (mixed, women's, men's, etc.)
 - Cox's assessment, if applicable
 - Possible power balance and potential team cohesion
 - Whether a racer has had other racing opportunities
 - Malcolm G use
 - The race or challenges from another club
 - Whether or not Mercury is in retrograde...ok, maybe not.
 - It's not always simple...and sometimes it's messy, but we do the best we can.

Next steps for both New and Seasoned Rowers

New Rowers

- Talk to your coxswains about your basic foundational skills.
- Look for rows on the schedule that will help you with those skills.
- Coxswains on Skills and Drills rows have been trained in good rower techniques and can guide you along your way to becoming a better rower/racer.
- Sign up for Intro to Racing or Racer Development rows.

Seasoned Rowers

- Make sure you are participating in rows that are helping you increase/sustain your power levels.
- If you are struggling with any particular skill, sign up for some Skills and Drills rows.
- Even if you've been rowing for a while, working on skills can only up your game for racing.

Both

- Work on skills/strength and listen to coaching direction.
- Practice doesn't make perfect if you are practicing wrongly.
- If you want to express interest in being on a strong team, you need to be (or get) strong.

**** What's this? The exception to our process.**

The World Pilot Gig Championships

Isles of Scilly, United Kingdom

- The WPGC is the “Olympics” of our sport.
- When teams from Come Boating! fo to the Scillies, they are representing both our club and the United States.
- Cornwall takes Pilot Gig racing seriously!
- This level of competition requires a try-outs with a more robust selection criteria that includes:
 - Physical fitness
 - Coxswain input
 - Peer input
- The Come Boating! Racing Coordinators help facilitate the selection process but we're not on the Selection Team. The Selection Team consists of coxswains who are not trying out for the race, and who have demonstrated the ability to coach rowers and assess skills and power.
- There is a separate presentation for this race.

If you are interested in racing
or have any questions, please
email us at:

cbgigracing@gmail.com

