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# The St. Louis Rowing Club News

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## Head Coach's Report

The visa work isn't done yet but I am happily becoming more acquainted with all of you, your needs, and your dreams. The year has more than begun, and I'm very excited about what lies ahead for us all.

The winter months--such as they are around here--offer us a time to make gains in fitness and strength. If you've subjected yourself to some of the workouts prescribed so far, then you know you're going to be working hard. Hey--a very good song writer named Bruce Cockburn wrote, "nothing worth having comes without some kind of fight." Folks--if you want to get better at this thing we do, then you need to make continuous gains in the fitness and strength departments. It is my thrill and honour to guide you in that endeavour.

This is my first offering for the newsletter. Perhaps a greeting and introduction are in order. Hello and welcome. I am here as your head coach and happy to be a part of helping this club grow and achieve excellence. We will be working very hard and there will be significant highs along the way. From what I've seen thus far, I have no worries about what this club can do. There is a core group in all age categories that sets the tone in workouts, and if the tone is set well there, then racing is a much easier monster.

There are a couple of ideas from my own experience that colour my outlook--ideas that came to me from the coaches that were directing the national program in Canada when I was there, and athletes that were subjecting themselves to that program with whom I trained. The first is that mileage makes champions. Try as you might to avoid the ergs of winter--you can't if you want to race well next spring and summer. Folks--I'm here and hoping to help you through this. The work will be hard but you will see gains and--I hope--celebrate your achievements. The second idea is that achieving excellence is a rush--that if something is worth doing, it's worth doing well. You are working to be great and I am working to help you to that end. These are exciting times.

The boathouse is a reality--we have a home. Training has begun for next spring and summer. We are moving in the right direction. Rest well, eat well, be smart--pull hard. Cheers.

--John Wetzstein

## Rowing Programs

We are beginning to see the benefits from our revamped coaching staff and the hard work that all of you have invested in your training.

We will have a comprehensive set of training goals based on repeated testing during the off water season. This goes for both juniors and masters rowers.

I guarantee that if you put in the work over the winter, you will see the benefit on the water during the next racing season. You have to do the work to keep the dream. Hang in there. You will become more willing to push to your

limits. Those high intensity pieces will become more natural, and you will begin to enjoy watching the meter count down to new PRs.

--Steve Giddings

## Boathouse Update

The boathouse is a reality. We still wait for our occupancy permit, but that will be forthcoming pending some very small changes (putting in a telephone dialer for the fire alarm system and putting the street number on or near the building).

Most of the racks have been prepared, although we still need to install racks in the public bay.

The major issue facing the club at this point is paying for the boathouse. We have raised or have pledged a bit over \$300,000. We anticipate that the final cost will be just under \$1,000,000. We need to retire our remaining, \$200,000 debt to Washington University.

Many adult members have yet to make a contribution. Very few parents of junior rowers have made any commitment. The Club Officers view support of the boathouse as a responsibility that should be shared by the entire membership and we expect that you all will contribute to its cost. As the current tax year comes to a close, please consider making a substantial donation to the boathouse fund. The boathouse has already made a substantial difference in the way we conduct our programs and interact among us. Please chip in.

--Steve Giddings

## And more about the boathouse

While there are still some details to be completed, the boathouse project is almost finished. As soon as the final occupancy permit is issued by Maryland Heights, it will be all ours (and, of course, Washington University's).

The largest item remaining on the punch list is the appearance of the exterior exposed-aggregate walls. The finish is meant to be even in color and texture. Unfortunately neither the color nor the texture are as they should be. The resolution of this issue with the contractors will take some time.

The operating agreement with Washington University is also being completed. This document will spell out the policies and expectations for running the new facility. Until then, please remember to lock the doors, turn out the lights and pick up after yourself.

One of the pleasant outgrowths of the project had been a new sense of cooperation of SLRC with Washington University. What could have been an adversarial relationship has become one of close effort. I would like to thank the various parties at the university, and also Cameron.

Several other notes of thanks are appropriate. Karl Heilman particularly kept the idea of the boathouse alive and is responsible for much of the early planning. Steve Giddings listened to all of the battles and played referee on any number of occasions. Scott Allison kept track of the numbers and acted as a most effective sounding board. Rein Zeidler managed the new boat rack design and installation. And Bob Roewe helped to coordinate the final move. Finally, thanks to everyone who pitched in to volunteer for any of the numerous tasks involved in the project.

There remains, however, one final item. The boathouse construction bill still needs to be settled. Some club members have been very generous and have contributed to the project not only in time but also in dollars. But there are still many members who have not yet made their contribution to the construction fund. Please, please, please, while you are enjoying and marveling at the boathouse, don't forget to make your contribution.

--Chuck Schagrin

## President's Safety Report

A reprint of an email letter that I sent to active adult members recently appears below [Gidding's Reprint]. Please read the important health and safety considerations.

Since I wrote that note, I have read a great deal more and have a more sophisticated understanding of what may happen during "acute coronary syndrome", but I wouldn't change any of the points or advice provided.

SLRC has made some improvements in our safety practices:

- The club has obtained an Automated External Defibrillator. The head coach or his designee to masters' practices will carry it and it will be placed in a central, well-identified location at the boathouse.
- We are forming a safety committee; Colleen Schulte has agreed to chair it.
- We will arrange Basic Cardiac Life Support (BCLS) courses this winter and encourage everyone to learn CPR and how to use the AED.
- We will place smoke flares in all rowing shells to be used only in the event of a medical emergency.
- The safety committee will develop a standard response sequence, and we will practice it.
- The lead coach launch will always carry a cell phone.

Please share your safety suggestions and considerations with either Colleen Schulte or Steve Giddings. We look forward to a rewarding and safe winter.

--Steve Giddings

## Regatta Results

The Atlanta and Lake Lanier Rowing Clubs hosted the Head of the Chattahoochee on November 1 – 2 in Gainesville, Georgia. Over a thousand boats were entered in the regatta. The St. Louis Rowing Club earned the most points of any visiting club and won the Team Trophy for the second year in a row. Congratulations to all who participated. Results can be viewed at [www.atlanta.row](http://www.atlanta.row).

## Holiday Shopping Means...

It's time to think about the SLRC Mastercard. If you already have a card, be sure to use it for all your holiday purchases. Remember, the Club earns 1% on every purchase and up to 11% at selected Bonus Merchants.

For those of you who haven't yet applied for your SLRC Mastercard, it's not too late! To apply call toll-free 1-888-778-9467. Use Priority Code FB5K when calling. Questions? Contact Linda Greensfelder at 314-991-6969 or [lgreensfelder@charter.net](mailto:lgreensfelder@charter.net).

Add Hickory Farms to the list of Bonus Merchants. They offer a 5% rebate to the Club. Also add Spa Wish, offering a 5% bonus and 1-800-Contacts, offering a 4% bonus on contact lenses and lens supplies. For a complete list of Bonus Merchants, go to [www.cardscrip.org/bonusmerchants.htm](http://www.cardscrip.org/bonusmerchants.htm)

## Linda Gibbons Writes

*Dear Diary.... After an 11 hour drive, my head hit the pillow. The boat horns blast a wakeup call at 4:45a.m. I squeeze my body into my uni, ( a challenging physical feat) and pile on the layers. Jamming a banana into my mouth, I am dreaming it's a Starbucks. I was hoping my natural athletic ability would be able to overcome the adversities of lack of sleep and lack of carbo-loading. We make it to the race course (after breaking a few traffic laws) in time to catch the mass transit yellow school bus. Our job is to check the riggers, the nuts, the seats of our boat, but first things first, where are the port-a-potties? We take off without a glitch from the dock, no 3rd call for us. I have a new found admiration for coxswains--getting rowers inspired to hammer down the race course at 8 a.m. As we cruise along, I take in the scenery and the other boats, hoping that they don't manage to overtake us. So we turned and powered up ( a voice says you're on. All the drills suddenly hit my mind--you're not a Laundramat, don't wash-out, you're not a marine biologist, don't examine the flora, don't let my blade take a vacation at the catch, etc. ,etc. Twenty minutes later and no one gaining on us. We have managed to experience that "rowing nirvana", "swing". I was sweating, and panting, but the rowing felt almost easy.*

*Got to go,*

*Til next time, diary,*

*5-seat*

## Annual Meeting

The SLRC annual meeting will be held after the holiday season. The date is Saturday, January 10, 2004 at 6 PM. Place to be announced. Pot luck as usual. Mark your calendars.

## Gidding's Reprint

We have had an unfortunate series of events in our club. Three men have died while rowing or erging in the last year. I have done a great deal of research on this and on the issue of sudden cardiac death in general. I am reasonably convinced that we are an unfortunate and incredible statistical anomaly. Please remember that although we have had three events in the last year, we had none in the preceding twenty years. I am in conversation with individuals at both US Rowing and the Masters Rowing Association as well as individuals in the academic medical community who are expert in sudden death.

The most common causes for rowing deaths are safety related. John Yasaitis, a 55 year single sculler, was gored last year several days before the HOCR while rowing the course. A high school girls 4 speared him when rowing on the wrong side of the river. I have been hit directly twice by other boats, one a sailboat who just tacked in front of me without looking, the other, another sculler coming directly out of the sun so I couldn't see him. The other cause is drowning, which most frequently occurs because people don't have proper flotation equipment, are rowing in marginal or clearly unsafe conditions without proper supervision, etc. Kippie Little went over the dam on the Schuylkill because her coaching launch died. She didn't have a paddle or a whistle, or a rope. She went over the dam, got caught in the undertow and drowned. That's why there is now a safety wire across the Schuylkill below boathouse row. An international caliber men's eight swamped in spring training in Spain last spring. One rower left the boat to swim to shore and drowned. There was no launch in the immediate vicinity and the weather was bad.

I am proposing to US Rowing that we form a standing committee of volunteers who will go to each incident and do a root cause analysis, free of charge, whenever a death or near death occurs.

Now about sudden cardiac death and sudden death during exercise, then specifically death while rowing. It is paradoxical, but the incidence of sudden cardiac death occurs in highest proportion in persons without a known history of heart disease. 50% of cardiac deaths are from sudden death, most commonly out of hospital cardiac arrest. The chance of surviving an event like this are very low, 2 -5 %. Most commonly, the person has a rupture of an

atherosclerotic plaque that allows an occluding thrombus to form suddenly. Usually these plaques are 70-80% stenotic (narrowing), but depending where they are, may be only 30% occlusive before they rupture. When the rupture occurs, the lack of blood flow to a particular area of the heart induces an aberrant heart rhythm termed "V tach" (ventricular tachycardia), which deteriorates into "V fib" (ventricular fibrillation), which deteriorates into cardiac standstill (asystole). The likelihood of this happening is very small, 1 in 7000 masters athletes and 1 in 10.5 million exercise hours. There is no good way to screen for this as best as I can tell.

The AHA recommends that every male over forty who has one additional risk factor (in addition to being male) and every female over 50 who has an additional risk factor, have a screening stress test before starting a new exercise program. It also recommends that anyone over 65 have a stress test before starting an exercise program. The problem is, these recommendations don't apply to most of us because we have been exercising pretty much habitually for years.

Also, the test itself isn't very good. The risk is likely so low in our population that we are going to have many more false positives than true positives, and there will still be about 30% false negatives. Thus, the predictive power of the test is terrible. The newer "heart scan" is very sensitive, but terribly nonspecific. Sixty - 80 percent of men over 50 have some calcium in their coronaries, about 40-60 % of women do. If it is any consolation, I don't know of any woman dropping dead while or after exercise, it is almost purely a male phenomenon.

Vigorous exercise increases the acute risk for sudden death, but the risk is still very small. Habitual exercise decreases that acute increase in risk a great deal. The relative risk imposed but acute, vigorous exercise in sedentary individuals is more than 75 fold. It is increased about 10 fold in chronic exercisers.

The next question is, is there anything about rowing per se that puts susceptible individuals at greater risk than other sports activities? No one knows for sure, but there is no direct evidence to suggest it. Exercise typically causes a moderate increase in systolic and a moderate decrease in diastolic BP. Pulse pressure increases with increase in cardiac output, but over all, mean arterial pressure stays constant or goes up only a bit. In rowing, there is cyclic variation in blood pressure with the rowing stroke because rowers typically perform a Valsalva maneuver (hold their breath and bear down) at the catch. This may raise blood pressure immediately, then lower it because it alters blood return to the heart momentarily as well, so that there is a cyclic variation of rate of blood flow. Whether this change produces a clinically significant increase in sheer force at points where plaques have formed, increasing their chance for rupture, is a point for debate, but there is no evidence for it.

So what can we do? Most important, don't ignore symptoms. Men do, rowers in particular do. Rowing is inherently painful, You often have to row through pain. Don't row through chest pain. Don't row through dizziness, unusual shortness of breath or any other symptom that is new to you and concerning.

I think we should start to gather data in an organized, prospective manner. Masters sporting organizations could provide us a list of individuals to whom we could give carefully developed questionnaires, similar to the Harvard Physicians and Nurses longitudinal health studies. Then we investigate events to see if there are any common prodromal factors.

The last thing we can do is maximize the chance for survival/recovery, even though it may be slim. Every second counts. Survival to normal function is increased to greater than 50% if DC countershock is given in the first two minutes after a cardiac arrest. Chance of survival decreases by 10 % by every minute that return to an effective heart beat (established by countershock) is delayed. Defibrillators are now foolproof and relatively cheap (\$1200 ) every club should have one and be prepared to use it.

Everyone should learn CPR. CPR increases the chance of survival by 50% at every time point for dc counter shock if it is established immediately. We should have all boats carry a signaling device that is immediately recognized as a medical emergency distress signal. We plan to put a 4 minute marine smoke bomb device in each rowing shell. When the driver of the safety launch sees it, (s)he has someone call 911 immediately and heads to the site with the defibrillator.

Finally, we need to make sure that persons who become unconscious or otherwise incapacitated do not fall out of the boat. Everyone should be instructed to lie back if they feel disoriented, dizzy or are otherwise unable to row. The person behind them (works for everyone except bow) should be ready to reach forward and pull them down if they aren't thinking clearly enough to do it themselves.

That's all I know right now. It is a safe sport, certainly safer than biking on a highway or street and many other common activities, but we can make it safer.

--Steve Giddings

## SLRC Member Dies

Ronald H. Suermann, 67, died Saturday (Oct. 18, 2003) in Rockford, Ill., after collapsing in a boat at the Head of the Rock. Ron loved to row. We will miss him.

Memorial contributions can be made to St. Louis Rowing Club or American Heart Association in care of Stygar Mid Rivers Funeral Home, 5987 Mid Rivers Mall Drive, St. Charles, Mo. 63304.

## St. Louis Indoor Rowing Championships

### 2004 St. Louis Indoor Rowing Championships

*January 31, 2004*

### Washington University Athletic Complex

The 11th annual St. Louis Indoor Rowing Championships will be held on January 31, 2004 at the Washington University athletic complex starting at 9:00 AM. There will be multiple event categories depending on gender, age and experience level. Medals will be awarded to the top three finishers in each category and trophies to the top three overall male and female competitors. The race will be for a distance of 2000 meters on Concept II Model C Indoor Rowers. The categories will be as follows:

Open Junior Women	Open Junior Men
Lightweight Junior Women	Lightweight Junior Men
Open Collegiate Women	Open Collegiate Men
Lightweight Collegiate Women	Lightweight Collegiate Men
Open Women (19-29)	Open Men (19-29)
Masters Women (30-39)	Masters Men (30-39)
Senior Women (40-49)	Senior Men (40-49)
Veteran Women (50-59)	Veteran Men (50-59)
Veteran Women B (60+)	Veteran Men B (60+)
Cox women	Cox Men
Novice Junior Women	Novice Junior Men

Lightweight divisions defined by 135 lbs. max for women, 165 lbs. max for men. Weigh-ins will take place the morning of the race.

-----St. Louis Indoor Rowing Championships Registration Form-----

To register, send this form plus the registration fee and [liability waiver](#) to St. Louis Indoor Rowing Championships c/o John Mason, 8 Suffield Place, Creve Coeur, MO 63141. The registration fee is \$10.00 if mailed prior to January 17, 2004 and is \$12.00 thereafter payable at the event. Checks should be payable to St. Louis Rowing Club. Proceeds will benefit the St. Louis Rowing programs. Call John Mason at 314-872-8705 with questions.

PLEASE PRINT:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

AGE \_\_\_\_ MALE  FEMALE  LIGHTWEIGHT: YES  NO

STREET ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

STATE, CITY, ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ Rowing, fitness, or company club affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

All entrants must sign a liability waiver. A waiver form is available by clicking [here](#). Enclose the signed waiver with your entry form and check.

### Winter Learn to Row

Again this January we plan to conduct a winter learn--to-row program. The course will include two weeks of intensive instruction on the ergs...five evenings/week during the period from 1/12-1/23....followed by participation in the Intermediates' regular indoor practices and culminating in two weekend on-the-water sessions when the weather permits. The entire package will cost \$200.00.

If you have friends or family members who are interested in learning to row, encourage them to contact Scott Allison (314 965 9456 or [swallison@alum.mit.edu](mailto:swallison@alum.mit.edu)) to sign up.

--Scott Allison

### Treasurer's Report

Our cash balance is adequate to cover our anticipated costs through the end of the year. The November 1 deadline for payment of Fall/Winter dues has passed with only about half of the juniors having made their payments.

We will begin an aggressive campaign to collect the remaining dues. Those who have not met their obligation by December 1 will be barred from further practices until payment is received.

Invoices for annual dues for adult members will be mailed in mid-December.

--Scott Allison

### Officers Needed for 2004

The Club needs a Secretary and a Lieutenant for 2004. Anyone who would like to participate in either capacity, please contact Steve Giddings before the annual meeting on January 10.

### SLRC Executive Committee

#### St. Louis Rowing Club

President: Steve Giddings

Vice President: Jan Adams

Secretary: Barbara Dite

Communications Sec'y: Kelly Vogel

Treasurer: Scott Allison

Captain: Rein Zeidler

Lieutenant: Jay Lyons

Boosters Liaison: Pat Hoye

#### St. Louis Rowing Club Boosters

President: Pat Hoye

Vice President: Cheryl Feutz

Secretary: Valorie Adrio  
Treasurer: Roy Cleveland  
Regatta Coords.: Cheryl Feutz  
Barb Johnson  
Travel Coord.: Jeff Remus  
Uniform Coord.: Donna Harper  
SLRC Liaison: Scott Allison

## SLRC Coaches

John Wetzstein--Head Coach  
Ben Boyd-Varsity Men  
Jonathan Buchanan-Novice Men  
Olivia Giddings-Varsity Women  
Anne Williams-Novice Women  
Erin Gladding--Assistant Coach  
Greg Powell --Assistant Coach  
Scott Allison--Intermediate Coach

## About the Newsletter

Thank you for contributing to the SLRC newsletter. Articles are published as submitted, with a few exceptions.

To submit an article for the 2004 January/February SLRC newsletter, attach a file to an email message to:

[VogelKellyA@msn.com](mailto:VogelKellyA@msn.com)

The due date for submissions is December 20, 2003. Please be certain submissions are in final form.

--*Kelly Vogel*