

Crew team positions itself for the fall semester

Puneet Bansal, Sports Editor

“Not many people have known about rowing coming into it, especially the people from Case Western Reserve University or from the Midwest. There’s just not many programs. It’s a lot more common on the coasts since there are more rivers and waters,” said Liam Ryan, a third-year CWRU student and president of the crew team.



Courtesy of CWRU crew

Boasting both men’s and women’s programs, the crew team brings athletes together to train and row on the Cuyahoga River, weather permitting, at the Cleveland Rowing Foundation, which is near the Flats neighborhood. Though the team uses boats of different sizes, ranging from singles to eight-seaters, they primarily focus on the four-person and eight-person boats.

With practices starting early in the mornings at 5:30 a.m., the crew team gets to enjoy the beautiful sunrises and sites of Cleveland.

“The rowing team practices early. We usually practice around 5:30 a.m. every weekday [through Saturday] and go out there for two hours or so,” Ryan said. “We have a big coaching staff [to] help us out. It’s bright and early, but it’s nice because you get to see the sunrise. Cuyahoga River goes through the downtown a bit, so you get lots of good views.”

When the weather becomes colder, the team trains indoors at the boathouse, which harbors many rowing machines. They also hold weight training sessions and other events throughout the winter.

What makes the crew team so special is that the club is competitive. During the racing season in the fall and spring, the team races against many schools throughout the Midwest. This includes state schools, Division-III teams and even some Ivy League teams. This competitive focus is what initially drew Ryan to the crew team.

“I started rowing in 8th grade. In my hometown, there is a rowing club that I came across almost randomly and decided to attend their learn-to-row camp ... I was a part of that club all throughout high school and it was a good experience. But, I was looking for more of the competition side of things since that club was very recreational. So when I ended up coming to CWRU and saw that they had a team, I was really excited for that. We really train and compete as a competitive club and race against a lot of competitive programs in the rowing world.”

As with many other sports teams and clubs, things for the crew team have looked different this year. To this point in the spring semester, the team has been working out on-campus in the Veale Recreation Center. The club got approval from the athletic department and the university to work out in pods in the center’s rowing room. However, it is difficult to replicate the typical atmosphere of spring practices.

“It’s been going pretty well, but it’s definitely not the same because it’s smaller groups and it’s kind of cramped in [the Veale center]. We’re used to rowing with [the entire team] at the boathouse.”

For this semester, the club has a roster of 48 students, eight of whom are novices to the sport. The team's leaders have been teaching the new members proper stroke technique on indoor machines, and they hope to get the team training at the boathouse as soon as possible.

While the crew team hopes to get approval to get back to rowing on the water, the team has been trying to adapt to the circumstances. They have held virtual workouts, yoga nights and organized some team-bonding events online.

To maintain the competitive aspect of the club, the crew team participated in a challenge over the summer against the Northwestern University and University of Chicago rowing teams. It was a virtual fitness challenge to see which team could do the most pushups, run the most miles and outdo the other squads in various categories.

Though there are no official competitions being held in the spring semester, the crew team hopes to organize a rowing marathon challenge against the University of Chicago. The plan remains in development, however.

On Saturday March 27, the crew team will be holding a fundraiser at the Chipotle on Euclid Avenue between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. People can support the team by ordering online and using the special code (which can be found on the flyer on the crew team's website) or by telling the cashier that they are supporting the cause.

"[Rowing] costs a lot, but we're trying to make the sport accessible to everyone on campus and to not have any financial barriers. So we're trying to raise a couple bucks to have a good start going into the fall," Ryan said.

The crew team plans to use the proceeds from the fundraiser to make a scholarship available for the upcoming fall season. The scholarship will cover the costs for an athlete interested in joining the team.

The club is a fantastic way to get involved in an outdoor activity and make new connections. The crew team is always looking to add more people.

"Anyone is welcome to join. There's a good chunk of people who never even heard of rowing until they came to college and saw us at the sports activity fair," Ryan emphasized. "You don't have to have any rowing experience at all: we teach you everything. We train and compete, and it's really good for people who are looking for a competitive edge in the sport. Although we're labeled as a club sport, we really train and compete at the varsity level."

"My best friends so far at the university are all on the rowing team," Ryan added. "It's really one big family for sure."

To learn more about the crew team, visit their website, where an interest form is available to get information about the team's upcoming practices and events.