

News from OWRC and Beyond

Open Water Rowing Center
Sausalito, CA



August 2011 Newsletter

A Sausalito Rower's Guide to Summer Winds

Forecasting wind in the summer is really pretty simple, at least for a sculler's purposes. Summer winds in Sausalito are almost always from the west and come up fairly predictably in the late morning. By early afternoon, Bay Area sailors are rejoicing in 15 to 20 knots of steady wind coming through the Gate. The good news for us is that we're usually off the water by then, and if not, should at least be heading back into Richardson Bay to get some protection from those summer Westerlies (winds are described by the direction from which they come) by staying under the shelter of the Sausalito hills.

For rowers who find themselves out in windy conditions – whether on purpose or not – here are the some truths about rough conditions on the Bay.

1. Strong winds cause more trouble than strong currents.
2. Strong winds blowing against strong currents or tide cause even more trouble, creating particularly steep chop.
3. A wind coming up in the morning will probably get much stronger before it lightens.
4. Rowing parallel to big chop in a shell is an extremely difficult balancing act.
5. The harder the wind blows and the rougher it gets, the more you'll want to grab onto the oars for help.
6. The easiest way to get in trouble in the first place is to not pay attention to changing conditions while you're on the water.

So if those are the problems, what's the answer?

1. Pay attention.

Before you go out, look around at trees, flags, and wind vanes on boats in the marina, to see what's going on. If the conditions seem manageable and you do go out, be aware of the breeze as you row, and if it freshens noticeably, be ready for rougher conditions.

2. Notice where the wind is coming from.

Stop rowing and feel the breeze hitting your face; you may need to turn your head a few times from side to side to be sure of the direction.

Look at the water. A darker area of water means more wind there than where you are. Particularly if the day started out very still, you can frequently see the dark wind line moving across the water as the breeze starts up.

Tip – during the summer, when winds are most often from the west, the best place to seek shelter is near the Sausalito shore where the hills give you some protection.

3. Choose the best route home.

If you are far from OWRC, plan the route back that will take advantage of any land feature that will block the wind. In simpler words, put as big a pile of dirt as possible between you and the wind.

If that isn't possible, then plan a route that doesn't take you across the wind direction. Instead, triangulate, by rowing upwind until you are about even with a halfway point across that patch of water,

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then turn and row down to your destination. As you row both upwind and down, quarter the waves rather than pointing directly into them. This will be a longer route than rowing directly across the wind to your destination, but the shell will be far easier to handle. As a bonus, the downwind run can be fun with extra push from the wind.

4. Remember the basics of handling a shell in rough water.

RELAX! The worse it gets, the more you need to relax. Balance the shell with easy pressure out to the oarlocks, keep a light grip on the oars, and take shorter strokes - anywhere from three-quarter to half-slide, to keep the shell punching through the chop, and to keep your center of gravity low.

5. Do not grab the oars and try to just muscle through it.

The more you do that, the rougher the water will seem. A tight grip interferes with the oars' natural buoyancy in the water, and will make it more likely

that you will miss water at the catch, pull out of the water before the finish, and lose the balance that buoyant oar blades can give you. You'll also tire a lot sooner.

6. Remember you're in an open water shell (or, you should be!).

Open water shells were designed to handle rough water. They can't swamp - the deck is sealed and there's flotation in the hull - and the hull shape is designed to make balancing easier.

The self-bailers will get water out of the cockpit - assuming you're pushed it all the way open.

7. In preparation for bad conditions, always check your shell before you go out.

Stern plug in tight, inspection port in tight, oarlocks closed tight. Even if someone has used the shell before you, don't assume that those little details have been looked at. Take 30 seconds and check for yourself!

- Shirwin Smith



Those strong summer Westerlies bring out the sailing crowd.

Keeping Your Shell Shipshape



Maas Aeros on clear Lake Tahoe waters.

Some suggestions for keeping your shell looking as good as new.

Number one in importance for keeping your shell and oars in like-new condition looking is rinsing off salt water after EACH row. Mild water pressure is recommended to avoid making microcracks in the Gelcoat finish. Also rinse the PFD.

Accumulated salt water can quickly cause parts to rust. When rinsing, be sure to include any hardware: give an extra splash of water to the oarlocks and the back of the foot stretcher. Drain any water out of the shell hull. The golden rule is to dry out the shell between rows.

Remember a little bit of visible rust means more is lurking under the metal parts. If you know how to disassemble the shell, remove the part, such as the foot-stretcher, to remove the rust under the metal parts. If you're not sure how to do this, or it's a club shell, talk with OWRC staff.

For a quiet, smooth ride, remove the grey salt deposit on the seat tracks and wheels using a scruffy and some Superlube spray. Take care not to scratch the Gelcoat when cleaning off the rust and stain when

using any abrasive materials such a scruffy or a metal wire brush.

For effortless rowing, check the oarlocks with a quick spin. If they are reluctant, reseal the bushing by giving the oarlock a firm pull upward.

As time goes by, yellow-brown stains may appear on the hull. Wipe on Soft Scrub soap for a few minutes and then rinse off hull. Older hulls may need stronger cleaners such as Fiberglass Stain Remover. We can clean the hull for you with this and finish with a coat of polish.

Open your PFD and inspect your CO2 cartridge for rust every 3 to 6 months.

Had a close encounter with a rock or sand bar? Tell us about it when you return and we can check the shell and Gelcoat for cracks or scratches. A quick fix is to cover a scratch with a strip of electrical tape. This keeps out any moisture until a repair can be arranged. A dry shell with no cracks is essential for the integrity of the hull and the longevity of both shell and rower.

Happy Rowing.

- Liz Stone



A rowing shell is no match for this sailboat!

Right of Way ... Who Has It?

We'd like to make this really simple right up front - rowers don't have the right of way. Over anyone. Or, as was said during the years of the Catalina to Marina del Rey race (36 miles of ocean racing that crossed a shipping channel): "The tonnage rule applies." Anything bigger than you had the right of way.

Here, in more confined waters, we've found that the safest, sanest rule to follow is: give way to all other craft on the water, be it a rowboat, sailboat, ferry or container ship. A rowing shell is lighter and more maneuverable than just about anything else out there, thus we - for our own preservation - can and should give right of way to all others. If you must cross the path of another boat, sail, power or otherwise, cross behind them and avoid any chance of a collision. If a docked boat is preparing to leave - stop and let it back out or change your course to avoid interfering. Being a human-powered craft does not give you special right of way, and to insist that it does courts disaster.

- Shirwin Smith

Help Yourself!

A chat with Morgan Fenner as to how members can help the staff (and themselves).

There are a few easy things members can do to help the staff at OWRC and quite possibly improve their rowing experience at the same time.

1. Meet fellow rowers by helping other members carry boats.
2. Come in off the water at your appointed time. If you plan to be out longer, let the staff know prior to going out to make sure the shell is available for the extra time.
3. If it's a beautiful day or a weekend, call ahead to reserve a boat.
4. Don't change the rigging of a club boat. If you feel it needs to be changed, ask a staff member to do it for you. Remind staff when you get back to the dock, and before another rower takes the shell, that the rigging was changed so that we can reset the rigging as needed.
5. It sounds simple, but put things back where you found them. Please remember to put oarlock covers in the bin beside the PFDs when you take a shell out of the boathouse.
6. The dock is a tight space for a boathouse that holds 85 shells. Especially when the boathouse is busy, please respect the dock schedule and staff requests to wait until dock space is available.
 - Weekends: Club boats go out on the hour and private shells on the half hour
 - Weekdays: Club boats go out on the half hour and private shells on the hour
7. Let the staff know where you're planning to row - that way we can learn each rower's habits and if we ever have to look for you, we'll know where to go.
8. The stand up paddle board is available for members only. Please check with the staff before use.

Open Water Events

Sunday, September 4: The Petaluma River Marathon, www.RegattaCentral.com

September 18: Bridge to Bridge Regatta, www.South-End.org

Clinics at OWRC:

Friday Technique Clinics are held from 7:30 to 9:00am on the second and fourth Friday of the month. They are open to all levels of scullers who have completed the novice program.

- Fall schedule 9/9, 9/23, 10/14, 10/28, 11/11



Winter Hours

Beginning Monday, September 5, weekday hours change to 7:00am to 1:30pm

Beginning Sunday, October 1, weekend hours will change to 7:30am to 2:00pm

Newsletter Notes

All photos in the August 2011 newsletter were taken by Bruce C. Brown

Department of corrections: The great pictures from the Tahoe regatta in the last newsletter were shot by Dave Ehrhardt, thanks Dave!

Announcements

Wine Raffle:

Thanks to Alan, of Alan's Wine Cellar, we are able to host a raffle of two half cases of exceptional wine. The drawing will be around Labor Day and you are able to buy tickets at OWRC now. Tickets are \$10 each or 3 for \$25.

OWRC logo wear (jackets, vests, shirts and hats) will be soon available. These items can be worn on and off the water to represent OWRC. Clothes will be available for purchase online and we will have samples at the boat-house. Watch for an email in the next few weeks announcing the opening of our online store.

Upcoming Wine Tasting:

We haven't set a date yet for the wine tasting and sales, but it will be in time for the holidays. Information about the specific wines will be posted at OWRC.

OWRC is still looking for a new manager. The job description is on our website. Please forward it to anyone who you think might be a good candidate.

Want to share your love of rowing?

OWRC is looking for rowers who are interested in weekend coaching opportunities. With nice fall weather comes an increase in demand for novice lessons. OWRC is looking for rowers interested in teaching novice lessons on the weekends. If you are patient, knowledgeable and interested, give Morgan a call at the boathouse.