



Frequently asked questions regarding FOREST HILLS CENTRAL CREW TEAM

Introduction:

We have attempted, in the pages that follow, to answer the many questions that we have received over the years regarding the FHC Rowing program. While this FAQ document may not answer all of your questions, it contains information that will give you a solid understanding of our program, our goals, our policies and who we really are.

We know that most people have no idea what the sport of rowing (crew) is all about. We also understand that getting involved in any sport at the high school level can be a bit overwhelming and maybe intimidating at first. Please do not let these fears keep you or your child from participating in a sport that we all truly love.

You will quickly find that the FHC Rowing family is very open and helpful. Everyone involved in our program at one time or the other was where you stand right now. We are all eager to help you in any way that we can so that you too can become a part of this very large family.

Please read over the information contained here and let us know if we have missed anything. We look forward to meeting you and having you become one of the family, and the team.

FHC Coaching Staff

FHC Crew Boosters (Crewsters)

General Information:

The best way to keep up with the team and stay current on activities, regattas, events and general information is to periodically check our team web site. During the season the web site is updated weekly. The coaching staff uses the web site, specifically the "Latest News" page, to provide updates and information specific to the current week's activities. During the off-season we periodically update the site with information relative to the time of year. Our home page can be found at:

www.fhccrew.org

To be added to our mailing list, please send us an email at admin@fhccrew.org

Coaching Staff:

Our coaching staff consists of men and women who have many years of combined coaching and rowing experience. You can find coaches bios on our web site on the "Coaches" page.



Goals and Objectives of the Novice Program

The sport of rowing requires technique, strength, endurance, mental attitude and most of all teamwork. The goal of our novice coaches is to teach all of our athletes the fundamental skills necessary to safely compete in the sport. We will work with each student to develop his or her physical strength and endurance. Teamwork will be key as rowing is a team sport requiring discipline and dedication. Most of all, we want the athletes to enjoy the experience, learn the sport and hopefully come to love it as much as we do.

Commitment / Expectations:

The sport of rowing is the ultimate TEAM sport. The objective of our competitions is to get a boat containing several (4 or 8) rowers to the finish line in the fastest time possible. To achieve this goal, it requires all rowers in the boat under the direction of the coxswain to do the same thing at the same time for approximately 200 repetitions while going all out and exhausting every bit of physical and emotional energy along the way.

To get to this race day preparedness, it requires time and dedication during practice. We are a TEAM. We practice as a TEAM. We race as a TEAM. We travel as a TEAM. We win and lose as a TEAM. No one person in the boat can get the TEAM to the finish line by themselves. It takes the whole TEAM.

The coaching staff is prepared to dedicate their time and experience to getting the athletes ready to race. **We expect the athletes to commit to coming to practice and doing their best, every day.** It becomes very difficult for the coaches if athletes do not show at practice and it also lets down the rest of the boat and TEAM that they are a part of.

High school sports are the next level in our young athlete's career. We expect all of our athletes to make a full time commitment during our mandatory season to the team and to the sport.

A brief history

- Started in Spring of 1995 with 7 boys, self sustaining club sport
- Coed team the following year, 1996
- Became a Varsity recognized program in 2001 (Team was up to 107 boys and girls)
- Built and moved into the Forest Hills Boathouse in 2002
- Purchased our first brand new racing shell in 2004

Where do we row?

- On the Grand River at the Forest Hills Boathouse, 8400 Grand River Dr on LeBlanc Row,. Approximately 1 mile east of Ada Park on Grand River Drive in Cascade Township.

What does Novice mean?

- A "Novice" rower or coxswain is any athlete that is participating in their first year of competitive high school rowing.
- The start of a "year" is the school year, meaning the September before the spring season.
- An athlete who started rowing in the fall season of the same school year is still considered a novice for the spring season.
- An athlete in any grade, 9 through 12 can be considered a novice as long as they have not competed in a previous high school rowing season during another school year.



When and Where are practices?

Winter pre-season conditioning:

- Pre-season conditioning is a non-mandatory opportunity for team members and potential team members to work out together in a controlled environment. Attendance at pre-season work out has no bearing on an athlete's opportunity to join the team for the official spring season.
- Conditioning practice is held at the high school, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday unless otherwise noted on our web site
- Length of practice is 1-1/2 hours except for Saturday
- Times are published on our web site on the "Latest News" page
- Saturday is open to Varsity & Novice starting at 9:00 AM (weekly sign-up is required and times vary)

Spring Season:

- The spring season officially starts in early March and runs through the beginning of June.
- We begin our workouts at the high school and eventually move to the boathouse once the weather allows.
- Times and locations will be published on the web site.
- Practice will be Monday through Saturday during the season.

On water practice:

Due to the nature of our sport, it is sometimes difficult to complete practice on time. Unlike other sports, our 'playing field' is constantly changing and our equipment is complex. A change in the weather, mechanical breakdowns and the number of people sharing equipment sometimes causes delays in our schedule. We make every attempt to complete practice on time but ask for patience when problems occur.

- Practice takes place at the Forest Hills Boathouse, 8400 Grand River Dr. LeBlanc Row. Practice time varies throughout the season but averages two hours.
- Actual on water practice schedules will be announced in March after we coordinate with the coaching staff as well as Forest Hills Northern and Eastern who share our boathouse.
- Please be advised that due to the nature of the sport and the varying abilities of the athletes, we may change boat assignments and practice times during the season. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience this may cause.
- Typically we practice Monday through Thursday, load the boats on Thursday after practice, travel on Friday and race on the weekend.
- There are no practices on Sunday's. We do however attend two regattas that have finals on a Sunday, Mid West Championships and Canadian Championships.
- We do ask for 1 hour of help on Sunday's after some regattas to unload equipment back into the boathouse (usually at 2 PM). This is voluntary but helps put us back on the water on Monday for a full practice.
- During spring break, the boathouse will be open to all athletes with one fixed practice time.
- In the case of inclement weather, we will still practice. We may not go out on the water, but there are plenty of things to do on land. A coach or your boat captain will contact you if practice has been cancelled. A telephone tree will be set up when practice begins.
- If, for any reason, school is cancelled for the day, we cannot practice.
- The weather and condition of the water will determine when we start "on the water" practice.

Summer and Fall Season:

- The summer and fall programs are non-mandatory opportunities for our athletes to continue to participate in rowing in a structured, coached environment. Several racing opportunities are afforded the team during these seasons.
- Details regarding the programs will be made available a few weeks prior to the start of each session. Please check our web site for details.



What clothing should be worn during practice?

- Crew is not necessarily a clean sport. It is recommended that you wear clothing that you don't mind getting grease and dirt on.
- Snug fitting shorts, tights and/or pants and tops are recommended.
- **Bring suitable clothes to match the temperature.** (It is always colder on the water than off!).
- It is a good idea to bring a gym bag containing a change of clothes in case of rain or you get wet from rowing.
- Rain suit or poncho if it is raining. Crew is a water sport and we do practice and race in the rain.
- In the beginning part of the season, gloves may be worn if extremely cold.
- As our practices are mixed, all athletes are asked to wear suitable clothing for their gender. Loose fitting tank tops and short shorts are not allowed. Please refer to our team rules for guidelines on practice and race day attire.
- A good pair of running shoes will be needed for the season.

What about Safety?

- Safety is of the utmost importance to our program. We do not take any unnecessary risks.
- All team members must demonstrate an ability to stay afloat in the water. We will conduct a swim test that requires each student to tread water while wearing a full set of sweat clothes for a period of ten minutes. While still in the water, each candidate must demonstrate their ability to place a life vest on and remove it.
- The swim test serves the purpose of providing the athlete with the confidence that they can survive for a few minutes in the water if this situation, while rare, should occur.
- Please see the schedule for the date of the swim test.
- Weather conditions are given careful consideration before launching – “When in doubt, we don't go out!”
- All athletes will be taught safety procedures in accordance with USRowing standards.
- No boats are launched onto the water without having a coach and a safety launch with them. Each safety launch carries approved flotation devices for all rowers and coxswains. Each coach also has a radio for communication with other coaches.

Use of flotation devices

- Wearing a flotation device while rowing is not conducive to being able to perform the technique necessary to move the boat. Every shell, however, is **always** with a coach's boat alongside and they carry enough flotation devices for each person in the shell.
- **NO SHELL IS LEFT ALONE ON THE WATER WITHOUT A COACH!**
- All persons riding in a coaching launch, including the coach, are required to wear a personal flotation device (PFD). The team has PFD's available for use at the boathouse and at regatta's we host.
- During early spring practice sessions, we may ask the coxswains to wear a PFD during practice.

Tryouts / Cuts?

- Our policy is to do everything we can to avoid cuts on the Novice Team. However, the number of students that sign up and the amount of available equipment and practice time may require us to make this difficult decision.
- Our philosophy is that if your son or daughter comes to practice and tries to the best of their ability, they should compete in every regatta in which the novice team participates. However, there are a few regattas that, due to the number of entries allowed and pre-qualifications, only limited crews can compete. We do compensate for this by adding a few 'match' races at our boathouse facility during the season for those who do not have the opportunity to compete in the championship regattas. (See schedule for details.)
- All returning team members (after completion of the novice spring season), will be required to meet certain standards. Please see the section titled “Beyond Novice Year” for further information.



Do you put your best crewmembers together to win?

- As each regatta we attend has different events and categories for novice rowers, we attempt to enter boats that will be as competitive as possible. Sometimes this means that athletes will row in different boats each week depending upon their progressing ability and the chemistry of the 4 or 8 people chosen for a particular boat. Seat and boat assignments will likely change throughout the season. This might be frustrating for some people who really strive to win, but it takes time to perfect the skills, and strength to win races. We do not rush a team unless they are capable of doing so. Winning will come with time spent on the water, race experience and dedication.
- Due to the level of competition involved and the number of entries allowed we typically choose to take a select number of freshman/novice to the Midwest Championships, The tryout procedure (typically a combination of timed erg pieces and seat races) will be announced at practice at least one week before the race.
- The State Championships, US National Championships and Canadian Championships DO NOT have a novice event or category. Based on a combination of erg test performance, rowing technical ability and coach's recommendation, some novice rowers may have the opportunity to challenge for a seat in a JV or Varsity level boat.

How do you choose your crews?

- Boy's and Girl's row in separate events. The only exception is that the coxswain may be of either gender..
- There are several divisions (Novice, Freshman, Junior, Senior, Varsity) depending on the regatta.
- There are weight categories in each division:
 - Girls: 130# and under (lightweight), and Open Divisions
 - Boys: 150#, and Open Divisions (some variations occur at different regattas)
- There are boat classes within each division and weight category (8's & 4's)
- Some of our more experienced varsity rowers may compete in singles, doubles or quads depending on the regatta.

In our opinion, this is what makes rowing a great fit for high school. The divisions enable you to row against equal competition. The only difference then becomes conditioning and technique. Members for each crew will be chosen by the coaching staff based on each individual athlete's performance in testing and practice.

Will everyone get to compete?

- We will make every effort to provide each novice athlete with an opportunity to compete. Please understand that the reality of the situation may dictate that some athletes will not have the same opportunity as others. Race restrictions on number of entries, our actual team numbers, athlete capabilities and other factors all play a part in our ability to distribute competition opportunities.
- Freshman and novice crews do receive the same amount of coaching time as the varsity crewmembers. The coaching staff can recognize the best rowers in a boat, but know it takes ALL the rowers in a crew to succeed – one person does not make a crew.
- We make every attempt to have all athletes participate in regattas. As stated before, we cannot guarantee that every athlete will race in every regatta due to entry restrictions, location of event, pre-qualification requirements, etc.
- Most regattas we attend have a (2) event restriction for each athlete (except coxswains).
- It is possible to race more than two times at a regatta depending on the number of entries for a particular event. At some regattas, particularly the Midwest, SRAM and Canadian Championships, there are one or two rounds of qualifying races to get to the finals. As long as you finish in the posted finish order, you move on to the next round.
- Based on our final participation numbers, it is possible that novice rowers may be paired with experienced athletes in "second or third" boats in an attempt to provide competitive opportunities.
- Academic eligibility and Violations of the Athletic Code take precedence.



“Lightweight Rowing”

- As mentioned previously, there are lightweight categories for both men and women. For the safety of the young athlete, we take a very serious approach with rowers who want to be a “lightweight”.
- An athlete wishing to row as a lightweight may not be more than 5 pounds over the weight limit at the start of the season.
- Any athlete who is over the limit, at any time during the season, will be asked to have their body mass index measured by the school athletic trainer. The trainer will then decide if the athlete can safely lose the appropriate weight in the time frame needed to compete. The trainer's decision will be final.
- All parents with athletes wishing to row as a light weight will be notified and must approve of their child competing in this category.
- The goal of lightweight rowing is to provide opportunities for athletes who are naturally small or lightweight, not to have athletes drop weight to think that will be more competitive.

What if my child does not think they are big or strong enough to row?

- Your child is the person we count on the most. The person in the stern of the boat is the “coxswain”. The coxswain is in command of the boat and the athletes in it. The coxswain's responsibility, along with steering the boat, is to motivate the crew before, during and after the race. He or she becomes the coach of that crew and an important part of its success once the boat leaves the dock, during both practice and races. He or she must inspire confidence in his/her crew, settle nerves and keep them focused during the 6-7 minutes of hard fought competition. A good, experienced “coxie” is sought after by college crews, and is eligible for scholarships at the collegiate level.

When are the races?

- Please see the Regatta Schedule for details
- Most of our scheduled regattas encompass a weekend day or two.
- Some regattas offer events where we will face similar level competitors.
- Some regattas present a level of competition for some of our more experienced crews.
- All Championship Regattas will have tryouts. Due to the level of competition and the distance to the regattas, we are limited as to the number of crews we can take.
- The US Nationals require pre-qualification at the Midwest Championships.
- We may stage periodic “match” races (only two or three schools) during the week against local competition during the normal practice schedule. This information will be posted on our web site as appropriate.

How do you get the crews and equipment there?

- The boats are transported on our boat trailer.
- Equipment and luggage are transported in our equipment trailer.
- School buses or commercial buses are used depending on the location of the event.
- Some events require parent transportation either from or to the location due to existing school district limitations on available school busses.
- Parent Volunteers*

Athletes are NOT permitted to drive to and from events unless they are considered a “Home” event!



Where do you stay?

- We sleep in high school gyms or Hotel rooms depending on the location of the event.
- For Gymnasium accommodations:
 - Most athletes use a self-inflatable or blow up mattress and sleeping bag. Showers are available at each location.
 - Most of the time, there are several crews from different schools staying in the same gym.
 - All FHC boys and girls are designated separate areas during the sleeping hours.
 - Parents are asked to make sure that the sleeping attire worn by their children is appropriate for the situation.
 - Most of the coaching staff and a sufficient number of chaperones stay with the crew in the gymnasiums.
- For Hotel accommodations:
 - We pair up as many athletes as we are allowed in each room provided, typically two to a bed.
 - Boys and girls are housed in separate rooms.
 - The crew booster organization usually reserves a block of rooms available on a first come, first serve basis for parents. Parents are expected to cover the cost of their accommodations.

What about food?

- The crew booster parent group organizes and supplies all meals during the regattas. The cost of food is included as part of the membership dues. Please let our boosters know if your child has any special dietary needs.
- Volunteers are always needed to man the "food tent" as well as at home preparation of meals that can be transported to the events. Please contact the Volunteer Coordinator if you would like to help out.

Regatta Rules

- All team members travel together to and from regattas unless designated a "home" or "local" event. (Prior permission, on a written school district form is required to travel with a parent).
- While traveling on team transportation, athletes are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with school guidelines.
- All team members are required to stay until the conclusion of the team meeting after racing and equipment loading has been completed.
- At the Grand Rapids High School Regatta (sponsored by FHC), all rowers are required to assist with park clean-up, equipment breakdown and equipment storage after the event.
- No one is allowed to leave a Regatta site during an event unless specific permission is granted by the Head Coach.
- All crews are expected to stay together during the day.
- Team members are expected to help out on the docks when other team members are launching or returning from races.
- Food is provided by the team; please notify the coaching staff if you have any dietary restrictions.
- All students are expected and required to follow the athletic code and represent Forest Hills Schools in the best possible way during a regatta and for the entire season.
- The coaching staff has the right to inspect the contents of any and all luggage being transported on the team trailer or team provided transportation.

****Parents attending a regatta may take their child with them when the regatta is over, but not until all the equipment has been packed onto the trailer and a coach has been notified and proper permission form completed. Special circumstances must be discussed with and permission given by the head coach prior to departure.***



What involvement can I have as a parent?

- Parent involvement is both encouraged and needed. We need parents to coordinate and help with food, fundraising, transportation, chaperone, work our home regattas and more.
- The Crew Booster Club (“Crewsters”) coordinate all volunteer activities
- Your children and the coaching staff appreciate your support at all of our regattas. You’ll be surprised at how much fun it can be.
- Without parent support, the crew cannot survive.

How much does it cost?

It has always been the policy of Forest Hills Central Rowing to not exclude anyone from participation due to financial considerations. Please contact the Head Coach to arrange a confidential meeting to discuss your situation.

FHC Rowing is a 501-C3, non-profit organization. All fees paid for dues are considered a donation to the organization.

Each year we strive to keep our costs to a minimum as best we can. Unfortunately, in order to run our program, we must receive support from the families and athletes that participate. Our current season costs are listed in the “Membership Packet” which can be found on the web site on the “Forms / Policies” page.

- Note: Additional payments for commercial transportation and housing for Championship Regattas will be required if an athlete is chosen to participate.

The operating and capital expenses for a typical season are approximately \$40,000.00. Approximately 3% of our budget is covered by the athletic department. 47% of the budget is covered by various fundraising activities and donations. The remaining 50% comes from dues assessed to each athlete. It should be noted that the junior varsity and novice programs for both boys and girls are considered a club sport and therefore not funded by the school district. It is our policy that all costs associated with the program are spread over the entire membership.

In a survey of other west Michigan high schools sponsoring varsity crew teams, Forest Hills Central dues remain as the lowest cost charged to athletes.

Pay-to-Participate Fees

Pay-to-Participate fees are included in the cost of membership. Unlike other teams, we submit one check to the school district to cover all of the athletes. As stated before, all costs associated with the program are spread over the entire membership. Due to our required operational budget, we do not recognize the district maximum pay-to-participate discount structure. Your student does not need to submit pay-to-play fees directly to the school for participation in Crew.



How are the funds used, what do I get for the money?

- Transportation of athletes, coaches and equipment to and from certain regattas
- Lodging and food for athletes and coaches at certain regattas
- Regatta entry fees
- Maintenance and repair of boats, oars, and other equipment
- Fuel and oil for coaching launches.
- Purchase of capital equipment (boats, oars, tents, etc.)
- Team Uniform (one per athlete to be used for their rowing career at FHC)
- General operating expenses.

Additional optional expenses:

The following are completely optional and are a representation of popular items purchased by past crew team members:

- Crew Jacket
- Additional crew logo clothing (T-shirts, sweats, hats, etc.)
- Travel duffel bag
- Purchase of souvenir T-shirts, etc. At regattas

Note: Team logo clothing and other related items will be available for purchase up to the Kick-Off meeting. Most items must be ordered and are usually available before out first on water regatta.

Fundraising

The Crew Boosters direct and conduct fundraising for the crew team. Volunteers and ideas are always needed to help with this activity. Activities and sources for fundraising typically include:

- The FHC Athletic Boosters
- Our home regattas and T-shirt sales.
- Bumper Sticker Sales
- Meijer cash back program
- D&W School Days
- Local restaurant “give back” nights.
- “Wish List”

The Crew Boosters are always looking for good fundraising opportunities.

All team members are REQUIRED to participate in the bumper sticker sale. This is a one day MANDATORY event held at the start of the season and is our major fund raising event for the year.

CREWSTERS

The “Crewsters” is our parent organization that was established to support the coaching staff and team with fundraising and volunteer activities. The “Crewsters” are directed by a board which meets on a regular basis on the third Wednesday of each month. Meeting locations and times are posted on our web site. Every parent/guardian is encouraged to take an active part in the organization by attending meetings and helping with volunteer and fundraising activities.

The “Crewsters” are vital to the existence of this team



What is the next step?

The next steps are very simple:

- Your son or daughter should determine if he or she is up to the commitment required.
- All team members **MUST** take the swim test. (Please see swim test information sheet).
- All athletes wishing to join the team **MUST** have a completed health form on record before they take the swim test.
- Parents and athletes are required to attend the annual team kick-off meeting scheduled in March.
- All required paperwork and dues **MUST** be turned into the coach by the kick-off meeting in March.

Novice team member check list:

- Swim test
 - Athletic Department Medical forms must be on file in to the Athletic Office before the swim test
- Attend meet the team and kick-off meeting in March
- Turn in the completed membership packet
- Sign up for your volunteer opportunities
- Attend mandatory bumper sticker sale
- Have fun and enjoy the season!

Beyond Novice Year

- Hopefully both the student athlete and the parent will have enjoyed their Novice Year and will eagerly look forward to the next season.
- The best way to stay in touch during the “off-season” is to continually check the team web site.
- There are many opportunities during the off-season to continue your participation in the sport including but not limited to:
 - Helping with the summer camps for non team members
 - Summer rowing program that is supervised by our alumni who are current college athletes
 - Fall rowing program
 - Winter conditioning program
 - Monthly “Crewsters” board meetings
 - Various fundraising opportunities

In closing, please be patient with us! The coaching staff and Crewsters are always working together to make a successful team. Thanks for giving us the opportunity to coach your son and/or daughter in a sport we truly love.

Sincerely,

FHC Crew Coaching Staff

FHC Crew Website: fhccrew.org