



Daily Nebraskan photo

UNL's Crew prepares for its trip to the Head of the Charles Regatta in Boston.

Pre-dawn practice sessions prepare UNL Crew team for Boston regatta

By Mary Jo Howe

They call themselves "The Twilight Zone" and appropriately their most active hours are during that time of day.

Every morning at 5, their entourage of cars pull out of a UNL parking lot and quietly stretch out on the highway toward Branched Oak Lake, near Raymond, headed for their daily workout.

The stars still are bright when these mysterious persons reach their destination and accumulate in shivering huddles at the water's edge.

Under commands of a shadowy figure, they lift long, thin rowing structures from the boat racks over their heads and roll them gently in the water.

Then, in military fashion, they noiselessly climb into the boat and with one simultaneous flick of the oars, glide over the mirror-smooth water and disappear into the night.

This is not a covert UNL intelligence unit, or a Navy ROTC maneuver, but a group of UNL students dedicated to one of the world's oldest sports—rowing.

The real name is the UNL Crew and this week they are preparing for the Head of the Charles Regatta Sunday in Boston.

Why would anyone want to leave their warm beds long before anyone else is up to brave the dark, cold and wet of these morning workouts?

None of the crew could give a straight answer. With a laugh and a shrug of the shoulders, most members say they don't really know. It's just something different said one. The competition, added another.

They're sure to get competition at the Charles Regatta. Frank Sands, head coach of the men's varsity crew called it one of the most prestigious regattas in the world as well as one of the largest sporting events in the U.S. by virtue of persons competing.

More than 140 crews from nationwide colleges and high schools will compete in the three-mile race on the Charles River.

UNL is expected to place in the top 15 this year, Sands said. Two years ago the men's varsity eight finished ninth. Everyone making the trip is a returning letterman with the

exception of one freshman female.

The crew will leave Tuesday and return Oct. 25. They will stay at Harvard University.

"Nebraska is considered something of a novelty in the east and that could be one reason why Harvard has invited us to stay there—free of charge. It should be a great experience for both groups", Sands said.

The regatta will consist of 25 races with as many as 40 crews in each race, Sands said.

It's a big deal in the Boston area, he said. The regatta dates back to 1937 when Harvard challenged Yale to the first rowing dual.

Sands said the crew will be reaching Boston on Thursday so to have time to run the course and take in some of the sights in Boston.

The crew receives no funding from UNL so must raise its own funds.

Money for the Boston trip was raised through sweepstakes, stamp drives, collecting dues, donations from Friends of Nebraska Rowing and cleaning the stadium and sports complex after sporting events.

The crew also supports the salaries of their three coaches, Sands, Ron Korpi, women's crew coach, and Mark Potadle, the freshmen coach.

The crew has come a long way since its meager beginning in 1970 when it had to borrow rowing shells from other schools.

They now own their own Schoenbrod shells, the finest in the world, according to Sands. The shells, from New Bedford, Mass. cost \$6000 each. The eight-man shells are 61 feet long and the four-man shells are 45 feet in length.

The length of the shells has caused a few problems in transportation, Korpi said. It is illegal to transport anything in excess of 60 feet on the highways, which has resulted in some police escorts through states, he said.

The Crew will host a Row-a-thon Nov. 12 in a stationary tank outside the Union for Muscular Dystrophy.

The crew also is preparing for its next race, the Branched Oak Regatta Nov. 6 at 7 a.m.

"The Twilight Zone", a fourth crew consisting of varsity and junior varsity men will compete in this race. Other crews will include Kansas State, Wichita State, Oklahoma State, and Creighton University.

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Mon., Oct. 17 Two meetings, one at 6:30 P.M. and again at 8:30 P.M.

Tues., Oct. 18 Two meetings, one at 6:30 P.M. and again at 8:30 P.M.

Wed., Oct. 19 Two meetings, one at 6:30 P.M. and again at 8:30 P.M.

TWO FINAL MEETINGS

Thurs., Oct. 20 One at 6:30 P.M. and again at 8:30 p.m.

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