



Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020

USA Press Kit

Sea Forest Waterway
Tokyo, Japan

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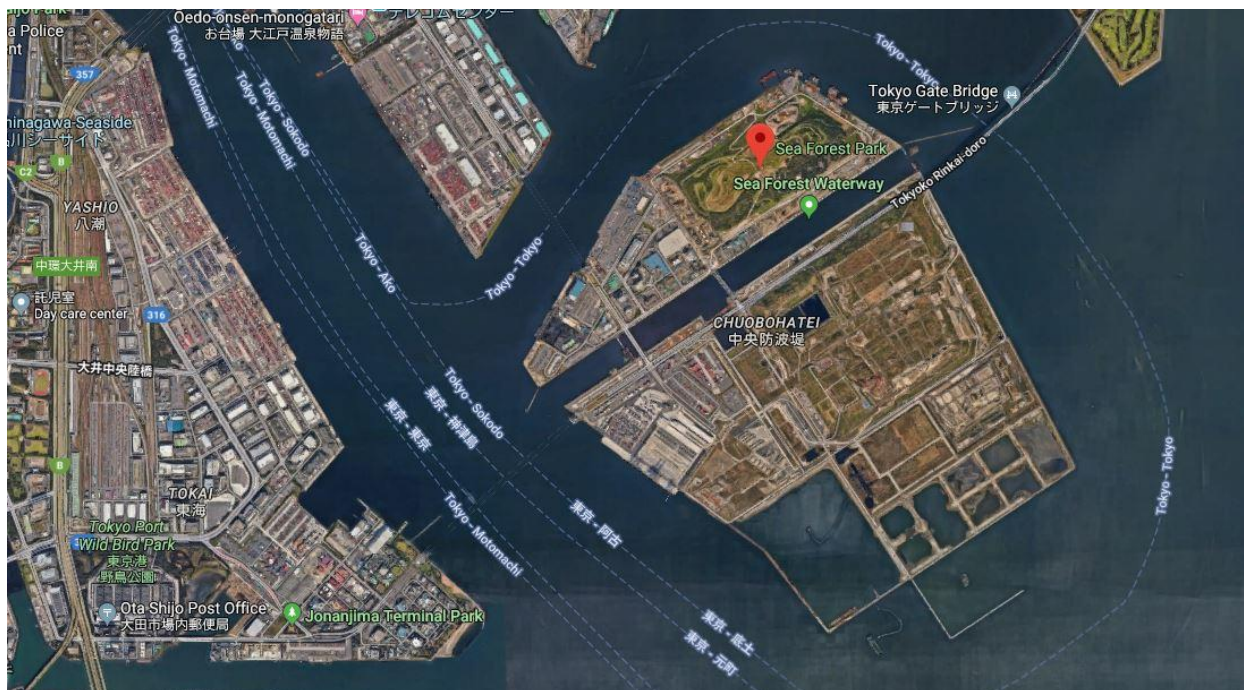
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About the Venue ([Maps](#))

Sea Forest Waterway

6-44, 3chome, Uminomori, Koto-ku, Tokyo

The rowing and canoe course is on this waterfront site, which is also located close to central Tokyo. Following the 2020 Games, the course will be used for international rowing and canoe competitions and will become one of the premier locations in Asia for water sports.



Tentative Schedule (check updated schedule at www.worldrowing.com)

[Click here](#) for the full schedule on the Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 website

[Click here](#) for a pdf of the provisional schedule.

Overview

Rowing made its Paralympic debut in 2008 in Beijing, with events contested over 1,000 meters. In 2017, the distance was extended to 2,000 meters, meaning that for Tokyo 2020, the Paralympic race distance will be identical to the Olympic distance.

There are four boat classes: the PR1 men's and women's single sculls, PR2 mixed double sculls and PR3 four with coxswain. Eligibility for the three sport classes is determined according to the athlete's degree of physical impairment.

The Tokyo Paralympic rowing venue is located at the Sea Forest Waterway, next to the Sea Forest Park, close to central Tokyo. In addition to rowing events, the Waterway also will host all Paralympic canoe events and will continue to host various international rowing and canoe competitions after the conclusion of the 2020 Paralympic Games.

The names of the sport classes were changed in 2017 to bring them into line with other para sport naming conventions.

The Summer Games were last held in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. The U.S. won silver in the then legs, trunk and arms four with coxswains.

Initial qualification for the 2020 Paralympics occurred at the 2019 World Rowing Championships in Austria. Through the competition, the U.S. qualified all four of its boats -- the PR1 men's single sculls, PR1 women's single sculls, PR2 mixed double sculls, and the PR3 mixed four with coxswain.

Boat-By-Boat Preview

PR1 Men's Single Sculls (PR1 M1x)

[Blake Haxton](#) (Columbus, Ohio/Ohio State University) returns to the single for his second Paralympic Games, having finished fourth in the arms-only men's single sculls in Rio. Haxton finished seventh in the event at the 2019 World Rowing Championships and fourth in 2018.

Ukraine's Roman Polianskyi, the defending Paralympic champion, won the event at the 2019 World Rowing Championships, with Russia's Aleksey Chuvashov finishing second and Australia's Erik Horrie finishing third.

The U.S. has never won a Paralympic medal in the event. Haxton also will be competing for the U.S. in para canoe in Tokyo.

PR1 Women's Single Sculls (PR1 W1x)

[Hallie Smith](#) (Washington D.C./Smith College) will be racing at her first Paralympic Games in Tokyo. Smith won a bronze medal in the event at the 2018 World Rowing Championships, before finishing sixth in 2019.

Norway's Birgit Skarstein won gold in the event at the 2019 World Rowing Championships and at this year's European Championships. France's Nathalie Benoit finished second in 2019, followed by Israel's Moran Samuel. Samuel turned the tables on Benoit at the 2021 European Championships, flipping spots with the Frenchwoman.

Laura Schwanger won bronze at the 2008 Paralympics in Beijing, the only medal the U.S. has won at the Paralympics in the event.

PR2 Mixed Double Sculls (PR2 Mixed 2x)

Two-time Paralympian [Laura Goodkind](#) (Los Angeles, Calif./Whittier College) will race with a new partner in Tokyo in [Russell Gernaat](#) (Redwood City, Calif.) Goodkind rowed with Helman Roman in 2016, finishing 10th in the then trunk and arms double sculls. Goodkind and Gernaat finished eighth in the event at the 2019 World Rowing Championships.

Great Britain won the event in 2019, with The Netherlands and France taking the silver and bronze medals, respectively. The three crews repeated that performance at the 2021 European Championships.

The U.S. won bronze in the event in 2012 with Oksana Masters and Rob Jones.

PR3 Mixed Four with Coxswain (PR3 Mixed 4+)

The U.S. PR3 mixed four with coxswain brought home the silver medal for the sixth consecutive year at the 2019 World Rowing Championships -- a streak that includes the 2016 Paralympics in Rio.

This year's crew of coxswain [Karen Petrik](#) (Glastonbury, Conn.), [Dani Hansen](#) (Patterson, Calif.), [John Tanguay](#) (Pennington, N.J.), [Charley Nordin](#) (Alameda, Calif.) and [Allie Reilly](#) (North Kingstown, R.I.) returns intact from 2019 as it tries to end Great Britain's six-year hold on the event. Hansen, a two-time Paralympian, has been part of all six silver-medal crews, while the remaining athletes are first-time Paralympians.

Italy finished third at the 2019 World Rowing Championships behind Great Britain and the U.S. The British crew also won the 2021 European Championships, with France coming in second ahead of the Italians.

In addition to 2016, the U.S. won silver at the 2008 Paralympics as well.

2020 Paralympic Team Roster

Name (Hometown/University)

PR1 Men's Single Sculls

Blake Haxton (Columbus, Ohio/Ohio State University)

PR1 Women's Single Sculls

Hallie Smith (Washington D.C./Smith College)

PR2 Mixed Double Sculls

Russell Gernaat (Redwood City, Calif.)

Laura Goodkind (Los Angeles, Calif./Whittier College)

PR3 Mixed Four with Coxswain

Dani Hansen (Patterson, Calif./University of Washington)

Charley Nordin (Alameda, Calif./Gonzaga University)

Karen Petrik (Glastonbury, Conn./University of Rhode Island)

Allie Reilly (North Kingstown, R.I./University of Rhode Island)

John Tanguay (Pennington, N.J./Columbia University)

Coaching Staff

Shelagh Donohoe – PR3 Mixed Four with Coxswain

Alice Henderson – PR2 Mixed Double Sculls

Patrick Kington– PR1 Men's Single Sculls

Jenny Sichel – PR1 Women's Single Sculls

Tom West – PR3 Mixed Four with Coxswain, Assistant Coach

Support Staff

Maeve Berry – Press Officer

Geoff Keller – Physical Therapist

Ellen Minzner – Para High Performance Director

Wendy Wilbur – Team Leader Coaching Staff

Paralympic Rowers by State

California (4)

Russell Gernaat

Laura Goodkind

Dani Hansen

Charley Nordin

Connecticut (2)

Karen Petrik

District of Columbia (1)

Hallie Smith

New Jersey (1)

John Tanguay

Ohio (1)

Blake Haxton

Rhode Island (1)

Allie Reilly

Paralympic Rowers by University

Columbia University (1)

John Tanguay

Gonzaga University (1)

Charley Nordin

Ohio State University (1)

Blake Haxton

University of Rhode Island (2)

Karen Petrik

Allie Reilly

Smith College (1)

Hallie Smith

University of Washington (1)

Dani Hansen

Whittier College (1)

Laura Goodkind

Athlete Bios

Russell Gernaat

PR2 Mixed Double Sculls

Hometown: Redwood City, Calif.

Date of Birth: 7/9/1966

Height: 6'5"

Weight: 220

Years on National Team: Three – Senior, 2017, 2019, 2021



International Results: Finished eighth in the the PR2 Mixed Double at the 2019 World Rowing Championships...Finished fifth in the PR3 mixed double sculls at the 2017 World Rowing Championships.

National Results: Won the PR2 mixed double sculls at the 2020 U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Team Trials - Rowing...Won the PR3 mixed double sculls at the 2017 Senior and Para World Championships Trials.

Personal: Russell was born on 7/9/1966 and is the previous American record holder for 50 and 100 free SYC. He attended Navy Seal training, while serving in the U.S. Navy.

Laura Goodkind

PR2 Mixed Double Sculls

Hometown: Los Angeles, Calif.

Date of Birth: 4/22/1986

Height: 5'7"

Weight: 145

Undergraduate Education: Whittier College

Training Location: Redwood City, Calif.

Years on National Team: Five – Senior, 2016-19, 2021



International Results: Finished eighth in the the PR2 Mixed Double at the 2019 World Rowing Championships...Finished sixth in the PR2 single sculls and PR2 mixed double sculls at the 2018 World Rowing Championships...Finished fifth in the PR2 mixed double sculls at the 2017 World Rowing Championships...Placed 10th in the trunk and arms mixed double sculls at the 2016 Paralympic Games.

National Results: Won the PR2 mixed double sculls at the 2020 U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Team Trials - Rowing...Won the PR2 mixed double sculls at the 2017 U.S. Senior and Para World Championship Trials.

Personal: Laura was born on 4/22/1986 and attended The Forman School. She is an athlete ambassador for Angel City Sports. Laura said the pandemic has afforded her development in many areas including mindset and teaching herself ukulele. She belongs to an amazing spiritual community, IKAR. She likes to head to ocean weekly and take pictures.

Dani Hansen
PR3 Mixed Four with Coxswain

Hometown: Patterson, Calif.
Date of Birth: 10/16/1993
Height: 6'1"
Weight: 165
Undergraduate Education: University of Washington
Training Location: Boston, Mass.
Years on National Team: Six – Senior,
2014-5, 2017-19; Paralympic, 2016, 2020



International Results: Finished second in the the PR3 mixed four with coxswain at the 2019 World Rowing Championships...Won gold in PR3 mixed four with coxswain at the 2019 World Rowing Cup II...Won gold in the PR3 women's pair and silver in the PR3 mixed four with coxswain at the 2018 World Rowing Championships...Finished second in the PR3 mixed four with coxswain at the 2017 World Rowing Championships...Finished second in the legs, trunk and arms mixed four with coxswain at the 2016 Paralympic Games...Finished second in the legs, trunk and arms mixed four with coxswain at the 2015 World Rowing Championships...Finished second in the legs, trunk and arms mixed four with coxswain at the 2014 World Rowing Championships.

National Results: Won the novice eight at the 2014 Pac-12 Championships.

Personal: Dani was born on 10/16/1993 and attended Patterson High School. She lists her hobbies as going to church and the beach, rowing, playing guitar and ukulele, and hanging out with her friends and family. She chose rowing because it was the only sport a coach would let her play with Erb's Palsy in her arm. Her parents are the most influential people in her sporting career because they have worked hard their entire lives and always stay humble, persevere through setbacks and put God first.

Blake Haxton
PR1 Men's Single Sculls

Hometown: Columbus, Ohio

Date of Birth: 12/17/1990

Weight: 160

Undergraduate Education: The Ohio State University

Training Location: Columbus, Ohio

Years on National Team: Seven – Senior, 2014-19, 2021



International Results: Finished seventh in the the PR1 single sculls at the 2019 World Rowing Championships...Finished fourth in the PR1 single sculls at the 2018 World Rowing Championships...Placed sixth in the PR1 single sculls at the 2017 World Rowing Championships...Placed fourth in the arms and shoulders single sculls at the 2016 Paralympic Games...Placed fifth in the arms and shoulders single sculls at the 2015 World Rowing Championships...Placed fourth in the arms and shoulders single sculls at the 2014 World Rowing Championships.

National Results: Won the PR1 single sculls at the 2020 U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Team Trials - Rowing...Finished first in the PR1 single sculls at the 2017 U.S. Senior and Para World Championship Trials...Won the arms and shoulders single sculls at the 2016 Olympic & Paralympic Team Trials...Won the arms and shoulders single sculls at the 2015 Para Rowing and Junior World Championships Trials... Won the arms and shoulders single sculls at the 2014 U.S. Para-Rowing World Championships Trials... Winner of the 2014 C.R.A.S.H. B. Indoor Rowing Championships...Finished fifth in the youth four with coxswain at the 2007 Head of the Charles Regatta.

Personal: Blake was born on 12/17/1990 and attended Upper Arlington High School. He chose rowing in high school when his friends and family really wanted him to give it a try. He gave in a was hooked within a few weeks. He lists making the U.S. National Team as his most memorable achievement. Blake lists his older brother, Anderson, as the most influential person in his life.

Charley Nordin
PR3 Mixed Four with Coxswain

Hometown: Alameda, Calif.

Date of Birth: 8/16/1997

Height: 6'8"

Weight: 205

Undergraduate Education: Gonzaga University

Training Location: Spokane, Wash.

Years on National Team: Three – Senior, 2018-19, Paralympic, 2020



International Results: Finished second in the the PR3 mixed four with coxswain at the 2019 World Rowing Championships...Won gold in PR3 mixed four with coxswain at the 2019 World Rowing Cup II...Won silver in the PR3 mixed four with coxswain at the 2018 World Rowing Championships.

National Results: Finished third in the second varsity eight at the 2018 Husky Open...Won the second varsity eight at the 2018 Western Sprints Challenge.

Personal: Charley was born on 8/16/1997. He loves making new friends, listening to music and exploring big cities. He started rowing his freshman year at Gonzaga as a walk-on.

Karen Petrik
PR3 Mixed Four with Coxswain

Hometown: Glastonbury, Conn.
Date of Birth: 11/18/1997
Height: 5'1"
Weight: 110
Undergraduate Education: University of Rhode Island
Training Location: Boston, Mass.
Years on National Team: Two – Senior, 2019; Paralympic, 2020



International Results: Finished second in the the PR3 mixed four with coxswain at the 2019 World Rowing Championships...Won gold in the PR3 four with coxswain at the 2019 World Rowing Cup II.

National Results: Finished 21st in the varsity eight at the 2019 NCAA Women's Rowing Championships...Won the varsity eight at the 2019 Atlantic 10 Conference Championships...Finished 20th in the second varsity eight at the 2018 NCAA Women's Rowing Championships...Won the second varsity eight at the 2018 Atlantic 10 Conference Championships.

Personal: Karen was born on 11/18/1997. She enjoys spending time with friends and family and is an elementary school teacher. She was a coxswain for four years in high school and was a Division 1 coxswain for four years in college. She was a CRCA Athlete Scholar Award Winner in 2018 and 2019.

Allie Reilly
PR3 Mixed Four with Coxswain

Hometown: North Kingstown, R.I.
Date of Birth: 8/30/1997
Height: 5'10"
Weight: 150
Undergraduate Education: University of Rhode Island
Years on National Team: Three – Senior, 2018-19; Paralympic, 2020



International Results: Finished second in the the PR3 mixed four with coxswain at the 2019 World Rowing Championships...Won gold in the PR3 open division at the 2019 World Rowing Indoor Championships, setting a world record...Finished second in the PR3 four with coxswain at the 2018 World Rowing Championships.

National Results: Finished 21st in the varsity eight at the 2019 NCAA Women's Rowing Championships...Won the varsity eight at the 2019 Atlantic 10 Conference Championships...Finished 21st in the varsity eight at the 2018 NCAA Women's Rowing Championships...Won the varsity eight at the 2018 Atlantic 10 Conference Championships.

Personal: Allie was born on 8/30/1997 and likes skiing and going to the beach. She has one sister and one brother. She loves the Boston Red Sox and New England Patriots. Allie was a USRowing Fan's Choice Award nominee in 2018 and was a NCAA Sportswoman of the Year Award nominee in 2019. She received the Winifred Kearney Award for most outstanding female athlete at the University of Rhode Island in 2019. Allie was first-team all-conference in 2019 and was a CRCA Scholar Athlete Award recipient in 2018-19.

Hallie Smith
PR1 Women's Single Sculls

Hometown: Washington, D.C.

Date of Birth: 4/18/1993

Height: 5'5"

Weight: 160

Undergraduate Education: Smith College

Years on National Team: Four – Senior,
2017-19, 2021



International Results: Finished sixth in the the PR1 single at the 2019 World Rowing Championships...Finished third in the PR1 single sculls at the 2018 World Rowing Championships...Won gold in the PR1 event at the 2018 World Rowing Indoor Championships....Placed sixth in the PR1 single sculls at the 2017 World Rowing Championships.

National Results: Won the PR1 women's single sculls at the 2020 U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Team Trials - Rowing.

Personal: Hallie was born on 4/18/1993 and attended St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School. She is the PR1 women's 2,000-meter indoor world record holder. She enjoys comic books, baking, NHL and NWHL hockey. Hallie likes to fix things and do her own wheelchair adjustments and repairs. She once built an Ikea shelf in less than 30 minutes. Hallie became paralyzed in May of 2014 due to hereditary spastic paraplegia. In January of 2016, she was at a workout class at MedStar National Rehabilitation Hospital in Washington, D.C., and the rowing coach approached her and asked if she wanted to try the erg. Two weeks later, she won her category at the Mid-Atlantic Erg Sprints, and a month-and-a-half after that, she hit the USRowing elite standard time for a 1k (the Paralympic distance at the time). She's been hooked ever since. Hallie is the daughter of Joe and Vicky Smith and sister of Naval flight officer Tom Smith

John Tanguay
PR3 Mixed Four with Coxswain

Hometown: Pennington, N.J.

Date of Birth: 4/3/1998

Height: 6'3"

Weight: 195

Undergraduate Education: Columbia University

Training Location: Boston, Mass.

Years on National Team: Two – Senior, 2019; Paralympic, 2020



International Results: Finished second in the the PR3 mixed four with coxswain at the 2019 World Rowing Championships.

National Results: Finished 14th in the second varsity eight at the 2019 Intercollegiate Rowing Association (IRA) Championships...Finished 13th in the second varsity eight at the 2019 EARC Sprints...Finished 14th in the varsity eight at the 2018 EARC Sprints...Finished 16th in the second varsity eight at the 2017 Intercollegiate Rowing Association (IRA) Championships...Finished 11th in the second varsity eight at the 2017 EARC Sprints...Finished seventh in the youth eight at the 2015 Head of the Charles...Finished 10th in the youth four with coxswain at the 2014 Head of the Charles.

Personal: John was born on 4/3/1998 and attended Hopewell Valley Central High School. He enjoys reading, eating, and playing with his dog.

United States Finishes: 2002-2020

Para-Rowing

Year	PR1Mix1x	PR1W1x	PR1M1x	PR2Mix2x	PR3Mix4+	PR3ID4+	PR3Mix2x
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2020 – No events due to COVID-19

2019 (w)	/	6	7	8	2	/	3
2018 (w)	/	3	4	6	2	/	5
2017 (w)	/	6	6	5	2	/	5
2016 (p/w)	/	7	4	10	2	/	-
2015 (w)	/	8	5	10	2	/	/
2014 (w)	/	8	4	-	2	/	-
2013 (w)	/	9	12	4	4	/	3
2012 (p/w)	/	-	8	3	6	/	/
2011 (w)	/	10	4	9	6	-	/
2010 (w)	/	-	9	-	6	-	/
2009 (w)	/	-	4	-	8	-	/
2008 (p/w)	/	3	5	7	2	/	/
2007 (w)	/	6	5	5	5	/	/
2006 (w)	/	2	2	1	5	/	/
2005 (w)	/	/	3	1	-	/	/
2004 (w)	/	/	3	1	7	/	/
2003 (w)	/	/	/	1	4	/	/
2002 (w)	1, 2	/	/	/	3	/	/

Year	PR2W1x	PR2M1x	PR3W2-	PR3M2-
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2020 – No events due to COVID-19

2019 (w)	4	5	1	6
2018 (w)	6	-	1	-
2017 (w)	/	/	/	/
2016 (p/w)	/	/	/	/
2015 (w)	/	/	/	/
2014 (w)	/	/	/	/
2013 (w)	/	/	/	/
2012 (p/w)	/	/	/	/
2011 (w)	/	/	/	/
2010 (w)	/	/	/	/
2009 (w)	/	/	/	/
2008 (p/w)	/	/	/	/
2007 (w)	/	/	/	/
2006 (w)	/	/	/	/

2005 (w)	/	/	/	/
2004 (w)	/	/	/	/
2003 (w)	/	/	/	/
2002 (w)	/	/	/	/

(-) USA did not enter boats in this event

(dnq) USA crews did not qualify for placement

(dq) USA crew disqualified for two false starts

(/) Event not included in schedule

(o) Olympic Games

(p) Paralympic Games

(w) World Rowing Championships

(ec) European Rowing Championships

(o/w) Non-Olympic events held at world championships

(p/w) Non-Paralympic events held at world championships

About USRowing

USRowing is a nonprofit membership organization recognized by the United States Olympic Committee as the national governing body for the sport of rowing in the United States.

USRowing selects, trains and manages the teams that represent the U.S. in international competition, including the World Championships, Pan American Games, Olympic Games and Paralympic Games.

More than 85,000 individuals and 1,350 member organizations strong, USRowing serves and promotes the sport on all levels of competition. USRowing membership reflects the spectrum of American rowers – juniors, collegians, masters and those who row for recreation, competition or fitness.

In 1982, the United States Rowing Association was formed by the merger of the National Association of Amateur Oarsmen, founded in 1872, and the National Women's Rowing Association, established in the early 1960s. USRowing brought these two organizations together with a name incorporating both men and women and reflecting the broader interests of rowing. In 1985, the organization moved from Philadelphia, Pa., to Indianapolis, Ind., home of several other Olympic sport governing bodies; and in 1994, Indianapolis became the only U.S. city to host a world rowing championship. In February 2006, USRowing moved its corporate headquarters to Princeton, N.J.

USRowing registers hundreds of regattas across the country each year, ensuring they are run under specific safety guidelines. The association also provides programs to educate referees and coaches. USRowing stages national championship regattas annually and conducts regional championships and national team selection events.

USRowing is a member of the United States Olympic Committee and Federation Internationale des Societes D'Aviron (FISA), the international rowing federation.

Media Services Directory

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Viewer's Guide & Frequently Asked Questions

The Race

All events at the Olympic Games are 2,000 meters, or approximately 1.25 miles. The racecourse is divided into six lanes and each 500-meter section is marked with buoys.

The race begins with all boats aligned at the start in the lanes they've been assigned. Individuals in each lane hold the stern of each boat steady while an official, known as the aligner, ensures that each boat is even with the others and squarely facing the course.

Each crew is allowed one false start; two means disqualification. If within the first 100 meters there is legitimate equipment breakage (*e.g.*, an oar snaps in two), the race will be stopped and restarted with repaired equipment.

The *stroke rate* (the number of rowing strokes per minute that a crew is taking) is high at the start – maybe 45 to even 50 for an eight, 38 to 42 for a single scull. Then, the crew will “settle” into the body of the race and drop the rating back – 38 to 40 for an eight, 32 to 36 for a single. The coach and the way the race is going determine when the crew will sprint, but finishing stroke rates of 46+ in the last 200 meters aren't unheard of. However, higher stroke rates are not always indicative of speed. A strong, technically talented crew may be able to cover more water faster than a less capable crew rowing a high stroke rate.

Unlike canoe/kayak competitions, rowers are allowed to leave their lanes without penalty, so long as they do not interfere with anyone else's opportunity to win. An official follows the crews to ensure safety and fairness.

Despite the exhaustion that follows each race, the crew will row for five to 10 minutes afterwards in order to cool down. In rowing, the medal ceremonies include the shells. The three medal-winning crews row to the awards dock, climb out of their shells and receive their medals before rowing away.

The Stroke

The whole body is involved in moving a shell through the water. Although rowing tends to look like an upper body sport, the strength of the rowing stroke comes from the legs.

The stroke is made up of four parts: *catch, drive, finish and recovery*. As the stroke begins, the rower is coiled forward on the sliding seat, with knees bent and arms outstretched. At the *catch*, the athlete drops the oar blade vertically into the water.

At the beginning of the *drive*, the body position doesn't change – all the work is done by the legs. As the upper body begins to uncoil, the arms begin their work, drawing the oar blades through the water. Continuing the drive, the rowers move their hands quickly into the body, which by this time is in a slight “layback” position, requiring strong abdominal muscles.

During the *finish*, the oar handle is moved down, drawing the oar blade out of the water. At the same time, the rower “feathers” the oar – turning the oar handle – so that the oar blade changes from a vertical position to a horizontal one. The oar remains out of the water as the rower begins *recovery*, moving the hands away from the body and past the knees. The body follows the hands and the sliding seat moves forward until, knees bent, the rower is ready for the next catch.

The Equipment

Oars

Oars move the boat through the water and act as balancers. Sweep oars are longer than sculling oars and may have wooden handles instead of rubber grips. The shaft of the oar is made of extremely lightweight carbon fiber instead of the heavier wood used years ago. The popular “hatchet” blade – named because of its cleaver-like shape – is about 20 percent larger than previous blades. Its larger surface area has made it the almost-universal choice among elite-level rowers.

The Boats – Sculls and Shells

All rowing boats can be called shells. Rowing boats with scullers in them (each person having two oars) are called sculls, *e.g. single scull, double scull, quadruple scull*. So, all sculls are shells but not vice versa. Originally made of wood, today's boats – especially those used in competition – are made of honeycombed carbon fiber. They are light and appear fragile but are crafted to be strong and stiff in the water.

The smallest boat – the single scull – is approximately 27 feet long and as narrow as 10 inches across. At 58 feet, the eight is the longest boat on the water. The oars are attached to the boat with riggers, which provide a fulcrum for the levering action of rowing. Generally, sweep rowers sit in configurations that have the oars alternating from side to side along the boat. But sometimes, the coach will rig the boat so that two consecutive rowers have their oars on the same side in order to equalize individual athlete power.

Rowing Quick Facts

- Rowing is one of the original sports in the modern Olympic Games. Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics, was a rower.
- Rowing was added to the Paralympic Games in 2008.
- Eight-oared shells are about 60-feet long, about 20 yards on a football field.
- Rowing was the first intercollegiate sport contested in the United States. Yale College founded the first collegiate boat club in the U.S. in 1843.
- Physiologically, rowers are superb examples of physical conditioning. Cross-country skiers and long distance speed skaters are comparable in terms of the physical demands the sport places on the athletes.
- An eight, which carries more than three-quarters of a ton (1,750 pounds), may weigh as little as 200 pounds. The boats are made of fiberglass composite material.
- Singles may be as narrow as 10 inches across, weigh only 30.86 pounds, and stretch nearly 27-feet long.
- FISA, the international governing body of the sport, requires all eights used in international competition to be sectional, so that crews who must disassemble and ship their boats overseas in standard shipping containers will not be at a disadvantage.
- The first amateur sport organization was a rowing club, Philadelphia's Schuylkill Navy, founded in 1858.
- From 1920 through 1956, the United States won the gold medal in the men's eight at every Olympic Games.
- The U.S. has won three consecutive gold medals in the women's eight (2008, 2012, 2016)
- The first national governing body for a sport in the United States was for rowing. Founded as the National Association for Amateur Oarsmen in 1872, it was changed in 1982 to the United States Rowing Association.
- FISA, the first international sports federation, was founded in 1892.
- Dr. Benjamin Spock, the famous doctor, was an Olympic rower in 1924 and won a gold medal in the eight. Gregory Peck rowed at the University of California in 1937.
- Physiologists claim that rowing a 2,000-meter race – equivalent to 1.25 miles – is equal to playing back-to-back basketball games.
- All Olympic events are contested over a 2,000-meter course with six lanes. In the 1976, 1980, and 1984 Olympics, women raced 1,000 meters.
- All Paralympic events are contested over a 2,000 meter course with six lanes. This is the first year Paralympians will be racing the 2,000-meter distance. Previous Paralympics have been contested across 1,000-meters.

Glossary of Rowing Terms

Bow: The forward section of the boat. The first part of the boat to cross the finish line. Also, the person in the seat closest to the bow, who crosses the finish line first.

Button: A wide collar on the oar that keeps it from slipping through the oarlock.

Coxswain: The person who steers the shell and is the on-the-water coach for the crew.

Deck: The part of the shell at the bow and stern that is covered with fiberglass cloth or a thin plastic.

Ergometer: Rowers call it an “erg.” It’s a rowing machine that closely approximates the actual rowing motion. The rowers’ choice is the Concept2, which utilizes a flywheel and a digital readout so that the rower can measure their “strokes per minute” and the distance covered.

Gate: The bar across the oarlock that keeps the oar in place.

Lightweight: Refers to the rowers, not the boats; there is a maximum weight for each rower in a lightweight event as well as a boat average.

Oar: Used to drive the boat forward; rowers do not use paddles.

PR1: formerly AS (functional use of arms and shoulders, but minimal or no trunk function)

PR2: formerly TA (functional use of trunk and arms, but cannot use sliding seat to move boat)

PR3: formerly LTA (functional use of legs, trunk and arms and can use sliding seat to move boat)

Port: The left side of the boat, while facing forward, in the direction of the movement.

Power 10: A call for rowers to do 10 of their best, most powerful strokes. It’s a strategy used to pull ahead of a competitor.

Repechage: The second-chance race, which ensures that everyone has two chances to advance from preliminary races since there is no seeding in the heats.

Rigger: The triangular shaped metal device that is bolted onto the side of the boat and holds the oars.

Run: The run is the distance the shell moves during one stroke. You can figure it by looking for the distance between the puddles made by the same oar.

Sculls: One of the two disciplines of rowing, where scullers use two oars or sculls.

Shell: Can be used interchangeably with boat.

Slide: The set of runners for the wheels of each seat in the boat.

Starboard: The right side of the boat, while facing forward, in the direction of movement.

Stern: The rear of the boat; the direction the rowers are facing.

Straight: Refers to a shell without a coxswain, i.e. a straight four or straight pair.

Stretcher or Foot stretcher: Where the rower’s feet go. The stretcher consists of two inclined footrests, which hold the rower’s shoes. The rower’s shoes are bolted into the footrests.

Stroke: The rower who sits closest to the stern. The stroke sets the rhythm for the boat; others behind him must follow his cadence.

Sweep: One of the two disciplines of rowing, where rowers use only one oar. Pairs (for two people), fours (for four people) and the eight are sweep boats. Pairs and fours may or may not have a coxswain. Eights always have a coxswain.

Swing: The hard-to-define feeling when near-perfect synchronization of motion occurs in the shell, enhancing the performance and speed.