

B-CC Crew Questions and Answers for Families

What is Bethesda-Chevy Chase Crew?

B-CC Crew is Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School's rowing team. B-CC Crew is a "club sport" that was started in 1993 with a group of 26 students (13 boys and 13 girls). In 2017, B-CC Crew finished the year with 110 boys and girls, making it our high school's largest club and largest sport. B-CC Crew Boosters, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, parent-volunteer organization consisting of a board of parents with children on the team, runs the program. B-CC Crew is a member of the US Rowing Association.

What are the B-CC Crew values?

The B-CC Crew participation agreement states that our values are: 1) work hard to go fast; 2) stick together no matter what; and 3) care more about each other than we do about ourselves.

Why is B-CC Crew a club sport and how does that impact funding and fundraising requirements?

Despite its popularity at B-CC, rowing in the Montgomery County Public School system is a "club sport," meaning that the team receives no financial support or other assistance from the school or the county. To receive financial support from MCPS, a sport must have the participation of two-thirds of the high schools in the county. Currently, only 5 public high schools (out of 25) in Montgomery County have rowing teams: B-CC, Walt Whitman, Walter Johnson, Montgomery Blair and Winston Churchill.

Athletes pay dues to fund the B-CC program for which financial aid scholarships are available. All athletes are required to participate in two fundraisers, selling raffle tickets over a two week period in the fall or spring and selling holiday wreaths and Hanukkah candles over a 2-3 week period in November. Athletes continuing on the team but who are not registered for the season in which the fundraiser takes place will have to make up their required contribution at the next reasonable opportunity. The combined fundraisers, which the team has run for many years, typically raise a combined \$50,000-\$60,000 that is critical to team operations and scholarships. The fundraisers are designed to bring in revenue from donors in the community and lower the outlay by parents, but there is a buy-out option for parents that choose it instead of the sales. Athletes may also participate in car washes in the fall and spring. Parents are highly encouraged to participate in one spring social event hosted by the crew board and organized by parent volunteers that raises money for certain team expenses, including the purchase of necessary equipment.

What is rowing all about?

Crew is the sport of rowing a lightweight boat, called a shell, as fast as it will go. There are types of shells reflecting the two types of rowing: sculling boats (each rower uses two oars) and sweep boats (each rower uses one oar). In sweep boats, there can also be a coxswain (pronounced cox'n) who steers the shell and directs the pace of the rowers. B-CC Crew races sweep boats that have four rowers and a coxswain (Coxed Four), and eight rowers with a coxswain (Eight). Each rower uses both hands to pull a single oar to move the shell forward. Competitions are called regattas, and in high school the race course is generally 1,500 meters in length for sprint regattas in the Spring and much longer (5,000 meters) for Fall regattas. Fall regattas consist mostly of timed trials called head races where each boat is rowing against the clock and where boats are sent out in 15 to 20 second intervals. In most Spring regattas, the boats are racing against each other side by side to be the first to cross the finish line.

What makes a good rower?

Crew is a sport where teamwork is as valuable as individual brute strength. Thus, a rower's ability to work in unison with teammates in the boat is critical. A rower uses his or her legs, back, upper torso and arms to row. Each rower trains to increase stamina, balance, timing and power through a combination of strength and conditioning exercises and cardiovascular activities.

Why are coxswains important?

A coxswain is usually light in weight and small in height. He or she is in charge of the boat during practice and races. His or her job is to steer the boat straight and to motivate the rowers to row as fast as they can in unison. Excellent communication, organizational, and motivational skills, focus, self-confidence and assertiveness are vital for a good coxswain.

Who are the B-CC Crew coaches?

B-CC Crew has been extremely fortunate to have a dedicated and long-term coaching staff. The program typically runs the year with 9 coaches, who are contract employees of B-CC Crew Boosters. These men and women have excellent rowing experience, maintain certifications in first aid and safety requirements, and serve as role models and mentors for team members. All have committed to "guide and inspire the student athletes to value academic achievement, family, dedication, teamwork, rowing excellence and performance."

Does the crew team take part in community service?

The crew team takes seriously its role in the school and neighboring communities. It partners with the Montgomery County's Linkages to Learning initiative during the holidays to collect toys and holiday gifts for at-risk families enrolled in county public schools. The team collects donations to stock the food pantry at B-CC multiple times per year and donates time as a team to the PTSA book sale, held in March each year.

What is the team's budget and how is the money spent?

As a club sport, B-CC Crew receives no financial support from the school or the county. Thus, the responsibility to run a safe, well-supervised and competitive program rests with B-CC Crew Boosters. For most school years, our annual operating budget is approximately \$270,000, holding about \$30,000 in reserves throughout the year. Equipment expenses are significant: racing shells are \$45,000 each and launches are \$8,000-\$10,000 each. Expenses also include coaches' salaries, rack-space rental fees, rental of wintertime indoor training facilities, insurance, boat repairs, regatta entry fees and boat transportation, vehicle registration fees, and administrative expenses, including legal and accounting fees necessary to remain in compliance with all obligations, and general office expenses, which are kept to a minimum. Revenue comes from the participation fees and from various fundraising efforts.

How do parents help?

Coaches have full authority and discretion over the rowing experience. Parents volunteer to support the athletes and the program in all ways outside of coaching. At races, B-CC Crew sets up a large tent for parents and athletes to gather. On any given regatta weekend, there are approximately 50 volunteer spots from driving the tent/supplies trailer (called the "chuckwagon") to setting up, signing up to bringing food and water, keeping the tent stocked, and cleaning up. Our parents also sign up to lead important team functions including fundraisers, uniform distribution, spiritwear sales, organizing cookouts at spring regattas, managing Stotesbury and Nationals logistics, website manager, photographer, and many more.

How are rowing competitions organized?

B-CC Crew is a sweep program (each rower pulls with a single oar) as opposed to a sculling program (each rower pulls with two oars). B-CC Crew owns several four 4's (each boat has a coxswain and four rowers) and several 8's (each boat has a coxswain and eight rowers). There is a men's division and a women's division, although a female coxswain can steer a men's boat and vice versa. Each division is further separated into different boat classifications: 1st boats (the most experienced varsity rowers who are generally upperclassmen); 2nd boats (varsity rowers who are generally sophomores and juniors); 3rd boats (varsity rowers who are generally sophomores and juniors); and novice boats (first-year rowers regardless of their grade in school year, although they are mostly freshman). Upperclassmen with no experience may move to a varsity boat during their first year. Over the years, B- CC Crew has raced competitively in each of the above-mentioned classifications.

What happens if my son/daughter has to be absent from practice or a regatta?

Attendance is expected on all practice days and regattas. If an athlete cannot attend a practice or a regatta, he/she needs to let his coach know as soon as possible. Coaches will communicate with athletes when attendance problems become an issue. Crew is a sport that requires athletes to have the utmost commitment to regular attendance. A boat cannot go out on the water with a missing rower or without a coxswain. Even if an athlete can be "borrowed" from another boat to fill a spot, a single absence creates a disruptive domino effect that in turns affects other athletes and coaches. Please understand that coaches have complete discretion on the seating of the boats and whether an athlete is asked to sit out and stay on land on a particular day. Please note that attendance at daily practices during spring break, which takes place at the height of the racing season, is mandatory.

Against whom does B-CC Crew compete?

B-CC Crew competes against many local high school teams, both public and private, located in the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland and Northern Virginia. During the racing seasons, B-CC Crew competes almost every weekend in dual and triple meets/races against one or two teams or in larger racing venues against multiple teams. Local races take place on the Potomac River, the Anacostia River and the Occoquan Reservoir in Fairfax County, Virginia. B- CC Crew also travels to compete against high schools in Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. In mid-May, selected boats race at post-season championship regattas. The season's schedule and directions to all competitive events are posted at www.BCCcrew.org.

When are the racing events and how long do they last?

Dual meets (against one other team) and triple meets (against two other teams) are usually held in the spring on Saturdays or Sundays, beginning at 8 or 9am, and last two to three hours. Regattas, which involve multiple local teams, are also usually held on a Sunday in the fall and Saturday in the spring and run from morning to mid-afternoon—typically from 9 am to 3 pm. Coaches will always let team members know what time to arrive for a particular racing event, although generally it is two hours before the event. Coxswains generally must arrive earlier than the rowers to attend the coaches and coxswains meeting before the first race of the event.

Post-season away championship regattas (Stotesbury and Nationals), begin early morning on a Friday and conclude late afternoon on a Saturday. Athletes who attend these events will pay an additional fee to cover travel expenses. B-CC Crew arrives on a Thursday afternoon. The team works with B-CC school administration to secure excused absences for the students who are participating in these races. B-CC routinely grants such excused absences, but the athlete is responsible for working with his/her teachers to make up all missed work. Only selected boats

(i.e. selected students) travel to these post-season regattas and only if the coaches believe that the boats are competitive enough to justify the expense, time, and energy to attend.

When do freshman race?

Freshman train to learn the basics of safe and competitive rowing on the water in the fall and have the opportunity, based on coach discretion, to participate in one race or scrimmage against other schools in early November. Freshman do not participate in other fall races, which are for varsity boats. Freshman race in all regular season spring regattas. In May, the team typically brings one freshman boat to the Stotesbury regatta and does not bring freshman to Nationals.

How long is each spring race?

High school rowing in the spring racing season is typically run on a 1,500 meter course, generally divided into five or six lanes. At some racing venues (the Occoquan Reservoir in Fairfax County, VA, the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia), the course is visibly divided into lanes by buoys. The numbering of lanes generally starts from shoreline closest to the judges viewing stand. In regattas where boats are seeded based on past performance, the most competitive boats are in Lanes 3 and 4. For smaller regattas, there are a series of single races for each of the different boat classifications and a rower races only once to determine the outcome. The larger regattas have heats to determine which boats advance to a final race. In the course of a day, a rower could race twice to determine the outcome. At championship regattas, heats or time trials are used to determine which boats advance into the semi-final races. In time trials, boats are individually racing down a 1,500 meter course. The boats with the best times (typically the top 12 or 18) advance to the semi-final races. Over a two-day period, a rower could race three times to determine the outcome. An individual race varies, but can take anywhere from 4 ½ to 8 ½ minutes depending on the weather conditions, water current, experience of the rowers and skill of the coxswain.

What are the different seats in a boat?

Rowers row either port (left side of the boat) or starboard (right side of the boat) based on which side they prefer. Seats are numbered from 1 to 8, from bow (front of the boat) to stern (rear of the boat). Generally, the heaviest rowers are in the middle of a boat (seats 3, 4, 5, 6). The lighter rowers are in the bow (seats 1 and 2), and they must have strong technique. The rowers with the strongest and most consistent rowing techniques are in the stern (seats 7 and 8). The rower who sits directly in front of the coxswain in the 8 seat is also known as the "stroke". The stroke is the person who sets the pace from the coxswain's directions, the pace that all other rowers must follow in unison to propel the boat forward in the water. In 8's, the coxswain is always at the stern of the boat. In 4's, the coxswain sits at the stern or at the bow (referred to as a bow-loader boat).

How is it determined which boat/what seat my child is in?

Coaches make boat and seat assignments based on power, technique and teamwork. Creating a line-up for a particular boat is a combination of many factors, not just the fastest erg times. Rowers will be moved from boat to boat and from seat to seat during practices leading up to a race as the coach determines the best fit. Freshman/novice coaches try to rotate everyone through the boats so everyone gets a chance to gain race experience. All coaches inform team members who will race and in what seat before the race day. As mentioned above, this process makes it very important that athletes attend all practices.

Can my child leave the event after his or her race?

Generally, no, and a team member must, in all cases, notify his or her coach before leaving a race site. It is considered good sportsmanship to lend support and to cheer fellow teammates during their races. In addition, after races, team members are responsible for de-rigging the boats and loading them onto the trailer. After away regattas, team members are also expected to return to Thompson Boat Center later that day or the next day (as determined by the coaches) to unload the boats and other equipment, and to put the boats back on the racks at Thompson Boat Center, a process that generally takes about 45 minutes.

What should athletes bring to a race?

Always wear his or her uniform. Bring an extra pairs of socks (athletes do not wear regular shoes in the boat), a change of clothes and a variety of clothes (sweat shirt, wind breaker, rain gear, etc.) and sun screen. Label all clothing with the rower's name written in permanent marker on the inside of the clothing. One person's B-CC sweat shirt looks remarkably similar to another person's sweat shirt, and lost uniforms are costly and difficult to replace! For novice athletes, parent volunteers will measure each rower in January for size and provide information necessary for families to order the required uniform pieces to arrive in time for the spring racing season. Parents pay for the cost of uniforms separately from the registration fee. Athletes can generally wear the spandex uniforms for multiple years.

What should parents/guardians bring to a race?

Always wear B-CC gear! A hat! A sweatshirt! A t-shirt! And, wear layers. Weather conditions in March, April and May can change quickly. Heavy winds, thunder and lightning will postpone or cancel a race, but otherwise the team races in inclement weather. If it looks like rain, bring an umbrella. If it looks like sun, bring sun screen. Bring a folding chair, binoculars, water, snacks, sandwiches, etc. Water and healthy snacks are always available at the tent for the athletes, but parents, however, should count on bringing food and drink for themselves and any other family members attending. The team traditionally travels to Delaware and Chestertown, MD for races in the spring where parents will set up a tent cookout for all athletes and their families.

What do parents/guardians do on race day?

Everything but the rowing! If you have a volunteer job, make sure that you arrive promptly at the team tent. If your assignment involves food or drinks, make sure that you bring your full allotment. Ample food and water at the tent is of paramount importance for our athletes. When B-CC is racing, look for the oars. The color and design of the oars distinguish each team from another. B-CC oars are blue with a gold triangular tip at the end of each oar blade. Other B-CC parents will be at the river's edge to cheer and to point out our boats as they come down the water. B-CC Crew sets up our tent near the finish line or in another central location where parents hang out with other parents between races.

What should parents/guardians avoid on race day?

Once you drop off your son or daughter at the racing venue, proceed at your own risk to engage your child in conversation before or after a race. On race day, athletes are generally preoccupied with race matters: moving boats, checking equipment, warming up, conferring with their coaches, their coxswains or other teammates, focusing on the race itself and its results (positive or not). Under no circumstances should a parent engage a coach in conversation. Coaches are focused on preparing their athletes for the competition. Leashed dogs are allowed at some but not all race venues, check the BCCrew.org website for details on each regatta.