

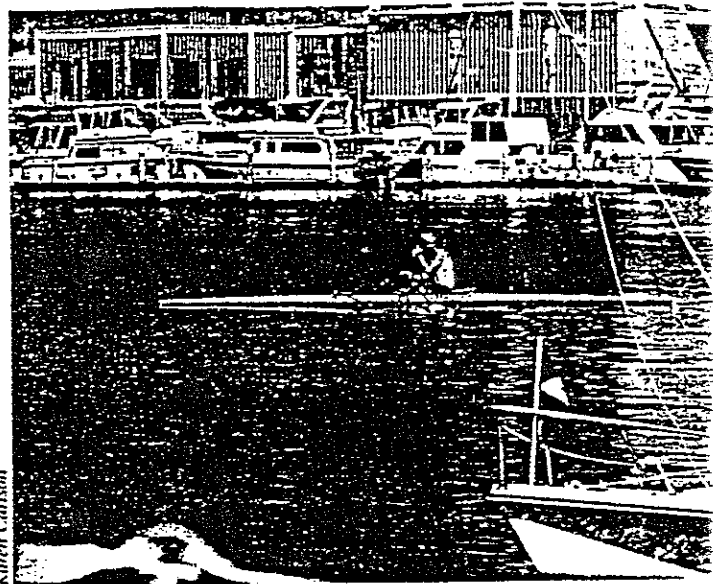
TRAINING TO RACE ON OPEN WATER

by Steve Hathaway

Whether it be on a large lake or in the ocean, open water rowing is perhaps the facet of rowing that has been experienced by the fewest. The freedom of rowing a light, yet stable shell in choppy water away from the protection of shorelines, can only be likened to the difference between downhill skiing and cross-country skiing. In open water rowing, you experience the environment as it presents itself and learn to adapt to it.

Most open water rowers enjoy the sport for recreation and fitness. However, there are increasing numbers of competitions for those who enjoy racing. Though open water rowers can be found in several states on both coasts, California is the center for open water racing. Its popularity there can probably be attributed to the fact that, in comparison to the availability of the ocean, there are relatively few good protected bodies of water where flat-water rowing can be developed.

MALE WINNER CRAIG ROGERS AFTER THE CATALINA
TO MARINA DEL REY ROWING DERBY.



Karen Carlson

Imagine rowing against a four-to-five knot flood tide in 15-to-18 knots of wind in the San Francisco Bay. The annual Bridge to Bridge Race, sponsored by the Southland Rowing Club, follows along the scenic San Francisco waterfront up to the Golden Gate Bridge. There racers round the South Bridge Tower and double back (usually with the tide) past Alcatraz Island to the Bay Bridge. From that point they hug the shoreline along Fisherman's Wharf to the finish. In all, the course offers a challenging 10-mile course and some of the most spectacular scenery in open water racing.

Another very popular race, organized by the California Yacht Club, is the Great Catalina to Marina Del Rey Rowing and Paddling Derby, started 13 years ago. The race starts at Catalina Island, off the Southern California coast. Participants row 32 miles across the open Catalina Channel to Marina Del Rey, and finish at the California Yacht Club. For safety reasons, each rower must have an accompanying escort vessel. This is known as the marathon event of rowing and takes from five to seven hours to complete. Because of the distance involved, this event is by invitation only. Applicants must have had prior open water experience or have demonstrated an ability to row the distance based on training or distance rowed.

Races like these have resulted in the development of shells that are more and more sophisticated. For many years, the best shell built for open water was the Alden Ocean Shell. These stable boats with flat bottoms and self-bailers are quite seaworthy. However, in rough conditions, the openness of the Alden cockpit and the lack of built-in buoyancy tanks fore and aft resulted in the development of open water shells more suited for racing

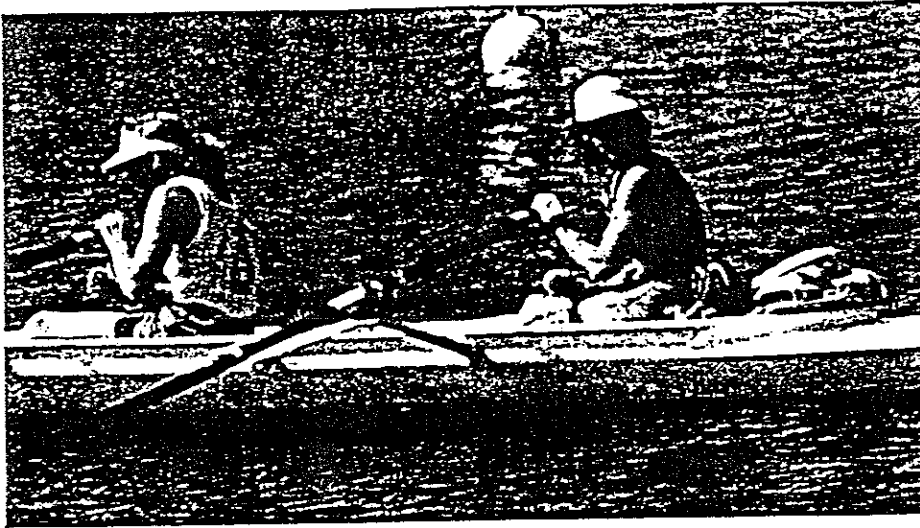
and rough water. Gordon Nash of Sausalito was one of the early pioneers in building this type of shell. At the Catalina Race one year, he and Kevin Strain rowed his Nash-30 double and set a new course record of four hours, 32 minutes. Chris Maas is building the Aero shell in San Francisco. His single weighs about 40 pounds and is 22-feet long. These boats have fixed riggers, as opposed to the removable Alden Oarmaster, and small cockpits with self-bailers. The Aero has plenty of enclosed flotation for good buoyancy, so with the exception of a rough following sea (when the waves are moving in the same direction as the boat), these boats can handle surprisingly difficult water.

Whether rowing for recreation or in a race, boat preparation is important, and safety is of prime importance. Open water boats must be self-supportive since rowers often find themselves far from the shoreline or assistance from other boats. When the luxury of an escort is not available, the rower should give somebody on shore a rowing itinerary - where he's going and approximately how long he'll be out. Then it's important to stick to that plan. As already mentioned, the boat should be equipped with a self-bailer. The alternative is having to stop and hand-bail with a bucket in rough water. One year this unpleasant experience caused me to have to drop out of the Catalina Race after rowing 20 miles. Another absolute must is a personal flotation device. Though it's not generally worn while rowing, it can be easily secured to the deck by a bungee cord. In the event of a



Karen Carlson

ANN DONALDSON, FIRST PLACE
WOMAN, AT THE FINISH LINE OF THE
1989 CATALINA TO MARINA DEL
REY ROWING DERBY.



DURING LONG DISTANCE RACES, ROWERS CARRY FOOD, WATER AND EXTRA SAFETY EQUIPMENT.

capsize, the rower should put it on and stay with the boat.

Night or early morning practices are also common. Because of the obvious increased dangers, proper lighting needs to be installed. Small battery-operated running lights are the best solution. However, because the boat is low in the water, additional lights are advisable to improve visibility to other craft. Particularly when being escorted by another vessel the rower would want to be highly visible without being blinded. Many of us use light sticks which come in green and red colors. These are convenient because they don't require a power source and can easily be taped to the deck or riggers.

Because training or competing may keep rowers on the water for one or more hours, they must take along adequate water and nutrition. For long distance races, it is advisable to add a carbo supplement to the water bottle. During the Catalina Race, for example, I force myself to stop every 20-30 minutes to drink

liquids. Usually this means consuming six to eight ounces per stop. I carry almost four liters of liquid for the Catalina Race. For this race, I don't find eating to be too practical because the food just sits in my stomach. However, for shorter recreational rowing or training, I take along a soft fruit like peaches or melon slices - things that digest quickly and are a good source of nutrients and energy. Fruit will also help hydrate the body, since it is composed of roughly 90% water.

Another important consideration is proper clothing. Since the body heats up quickly while rowing, wear clothing that is not too bulky and hot. If rowing in rough, cold water, wear a long-sleeved shirt, preferably of a synthetic breathable fabric polypropylene or Gortex[®]. Many people ask me if I wear gloves for long distance rowing. I have tried just about every imaginable kind and have found that there really is not a glove that works well for rowing and solves the blister problem. The best solution is to condition hands and forget gloves. If the rower feels the need to wear them, I have found that handball gloves work the best because they are very thin and don't bulk up when gripping the oar. I would suggest cutting off the fingertips at the first knuckle. A good pair of rowing shorts is adequate unless it's very cold - in that case, running tights work well. When it's cold, I would suggest a good wool cap to reduce heat loss.

Training for a long-distance race is really no different than a runner training for a marathon. Using the Catalina Race again as an example, it is important to carefully plan distance work to be ready to row the 32-mile race in early October.

My training in the winter is generally devoted to endurance building. Although I don't go out and row more than ten miles in a workout, I keep the stroke rate low and do a lot of steady state pieces. In early spring, I start to bring up the rate and do a lot of 2,000-meter pieces at a medium stroke rate. In late spring and early summer, I enjoy competing in some local races, so I add some speed work. I start doing longer offshore training in mid-July. I find that if I start doing longer rows earlier, I can easily burn out. One long row of approximately 12-14 miles a week is sufficient training if some speed-intensive rowing is added during the rest of the week. After mid-August, I add in another medium distance offshore row of 10 miles during the week. Three weeks before the race, I do a long 20-25 mile row. For this workout, I set my boat up just as I will have it for the race - including lights and extra water. After that row, I begin to taper my workouts for two weeks prior to the race.

While I enjoy both flat water and open water racing, I am a firm believer in cross training. After October, I reduce my rowing and substitute running, cycling and swimming. A good mixture of other sporting activities will greatly reduce the risk of muscle injury. It will also help lessen boredom or burnout.

Open water rowing can add a new dimension to the sport that can benefit either the recreational rower or the serious racer. Much of the beautiful coastline and inland lakes cannot be rowed in typical shells but can be easily explored in a seaworthy open water shell. If you have not experienced this side of rowing, give it a try. —

TRAINING FOR A LONG-DISTANCE

RACE IS REALLY NO DIFFERENT

THAN A RUNNER TRAINING FOR A

MARATHON.

TRY OPEN WATER ROWING

Following is a list of several

clubs that offer opportunities

for open water rowing:

Alden Ocean Shell Association
Box 251-A
Kittery Point, ME 03905
(207) 439-1507
Doug Martin

Alden Rowing West
P.O. Box 6655
Tahoe City, CA
(916) 581-1838

California Yacht Club
4469 Admiralty Way
Marina del Rey, CA 90292
(213) 625-2211
Steve Hathaway

Cape Ann Rowing Club
POB 1715
Gloucester, MA 01930
(617) 546-9022

Dolphin Club
502 Jefferson Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
(415) 386-0994
Michael Weissenberger

Eco Marine
1310 Rosecrans Street
San Diego, CA 92106
(619) 222-3616
Katie Kampe

Humboldt Bay Rowing Assn.
P.O. Box 908
Arcada, CA 95521
(707) 677-3214

North Bay Rowing Club
2390 I Street
Petaluma, CA 94952
(707) 762-6297
Greg Sabourin

Open Water Rowing
85 Liberty Ship Way #102
Sausalito, CA 94965
(415) 332-1091
Shirwin Smith

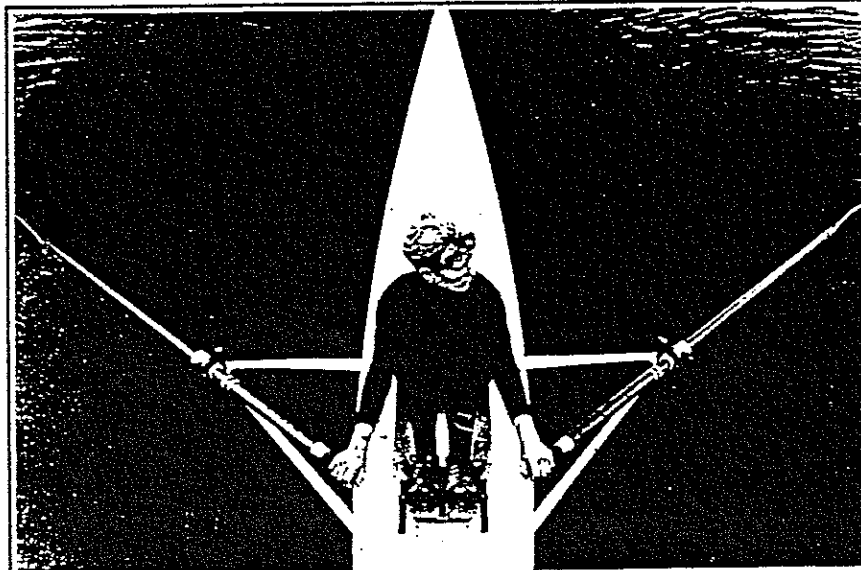
Rowing Northwest
3304 Fuhrman Avenue E.
Seattle, WA 98102
(206) 324-5800
Tom Bush

Santa Cruz Rowing Club
P.O. Box 2544
Santa Cruz, CA 95063
(408) 662-8433
K.C. Carlson

Sippican Ocean Rowing Regatta
125 Cross Neck Road
Marion, MA 02738
(508) 748-1464
Richmond Viall

South End Rowing Club
Jefferson Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
(415) 441-9523
Dan Marshall

Tahoe Rowing Club
P.O. Box 1716
Crystal Bay, NV 89402
(916) 546-5415
C'Anne Cook



OPEN WATER ROWING

- ◆ INSTRUCTION
NOVICE TO ADVANCED
- ◆ ROUGH-WATER CLINICS
- ◆ MAAS SHELL DEALER
- ◆ USED SHELL SALES
- ◆ CLOTHING/ACCESSORIES

85 LIBERTYSHIP WAY #102
SAUSALITO, CA 94965 415-332-1091