

Oakland Strokes Shine at Regional Championships

By Jennifer Wake

The Oakland Strokes rowing team, which includes many high school athletes from the Lamorinda area, wrapped up their 2007 rowing season with medal results evenly balanced between all teams at the Southwest Regional Junior Championships May 19 and 20 at Lake Natoma.

The varsity and novice crews brought home four silver medals for the women's third Varsity-8, women's Frosh-8, women's Frosh-4 and the men's Novice-8. Four bronze medals went to the men's Varsity-8, women's JV-8, men's Lightweight-4 and the women's Novice-8 B crews.

Women's head coach Ian Simpson was proud of efforts he witnessed by the entire women's varsity crew. Despite a few disappointments, everyone worked extremely hard throughout the season, maintaining an intense desire for constant improvement. Simpson was especially pleased with the medal winning finishes of his 3V-8 and JV-8 boats.

The silver medal winning 3V-8 was coxed by a steely Celena Chan (St. Ignatius), who kept her crew on pace in a battle to the finish against Marin. Jennifer Zitterman of Miramonte played a key role in the stroke seat, helping the Strokes come in second with a time of 07:29:01.

Oakland Strokes women's Freshman-8 squad, which is filled with talented athletic women, dominated the competition throughout the season. Coxswain, Molly Fehr (Miramonte) skillfully commanded her crew for 2,000 meters, with Kelly Bauer (Miramonte) following her lead in the stroke seat. Dana Walsh (Miramonte) was next, followed by Gia Hallaman (Miramonte), Nikki Dahlberg-Seeth (Miramonte), Charlotte Horsey (Head Royce), Nicole Sung-Jereczek (Piedmont), Ann Hofinga (Miramonte), and Joanie Larsson (Bishop O'Dowd) at bow.

In their quest for the gold they were outpaced by an impressive crew from Pacific at 06:56:40. Oakland came in second at 07:00:50 with Marin only seconds behind at 07:02:90.

Oakland's men dug deep and pulled out an exciting medal-winning finish in a race that was neck-and-neck down to the final meters. With the no-nonsense Leila Pakawongse (Berkeley) in the coxswain seat, the team pulled long and strong to stay with the pack.

Miramonte High senior, TJ Laher, rowed to precision in the stroke



The Men's Lightweight-4 all smiles at the awards podium

seat followed by Joe Wainwright (Bishop O'Dowd), Nick Hoff (Berkeley), Cole Masse (El Cerrito), Monte Melnick (Orinda Academy), Michael Luecker (Campolindo), Richard Colby Foote (Encinal) and James Lenczowski (Miramonte) at bow.

Head Coach Dan Donoho was inspired by how the crew transcended their abilities out on the race course. Although the team never set a specific goal to win a medal or to get to the nationals, Donoho said they remained determined to do better than their last effort every time they entered a race.

The strategy worked and the team was thrilled to qualify for the nationals with men's Novice 8-A finishing second with a time of 06:47:80, and men's Varsity-8 finished third with 06:14:90.

By medaling at the regional championship, these eight teams have earned the right to compete at the National Championships to be held next month in Cincinnati.

Oakland Strokes in one of the premier junior rowing programs in the nation. For information about the Oakland Strokes upcoming summer camp program, visit the OS website at <http://www.oaklandstrokes.org>.

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