

Oakland Strokes Championships/Summer Camp

By Zack Farmer



In boat: front to back: Andrew Ramos (Alameda High), Will Provost (Albany High), Billy Deskin (Campo), Michael Schier (Miramonte) and Leslie Chou (Miramonte) in coxswain seat.



Standing: left to right: Michael Schier, Billy Deskin, Andrew Ramos, Will Provost, Coach Ivan Smiljanic and Leslie Chou in front.

Oakland Strokes Men's Novice Lightweight's Row like Champions

For the first time ever, a team of four novice rowers competed in a varsity event at the US Rowing Youth National Championships in Cincinnati, Ohio and came to within tenths of a second of bringing home a medal with a final time of 7:12:09.

The Oakland Strokes Men's Novice Lightweights, which is comprised of three Lamorinda rowers, stunned the competition on June 10 with their gutsy performance on the 2,000-meter course and realized after their first heat of competition, that they could dream for more that just getting into the finals, they were solid contenders for a medal.

In Sunday's final, the team raced what one parent described as "the most inspirational race" he had ever witnessed in three years at Nationals. Marina Aquatic Center had a decisive lead on the pack and secured a gold medal finish with a time of 7:02:11. After that it appeared to be anyone's race. Oakland Strokes came in fifth behind local Berkeley High and Mercer, but the times were so close that the crowd had to wait to hear the official scores to know for sure how they had all placed.

Leslie Chou (Miramonte HS junior) was in the coxswain seat as she commanded her crew through three remarkable races. Andrew Ramos (Alameda HS sophomore) was in the fourth seat followed by Will Provost (Albany HS sophomore), Billy Deskin (Campolindo HS freshman) and Michael Schier (Miramonte junior).

Men's Novice Head Coach Ivan Smiljanic admitted that the Strokes organization questioned the logic in sending a group of novice rowers into a competition against experienced varsity teams, but they

rowed with a fearlessness that amazed Smiljanic, himself a former team captain for the highly successful Cal Men's rowing team.

Smiljanic was a member of the Serbian National Rowing Team that competed in the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia. He received two gold medals in the World Championships in 2000 and 2001 as well as three silver medals in international competition.

To qualify for finals the Lightweight Four's had to compete in a preliminary heat on Friday afternoon where they placed second behind the team of Wayland Weston. On the morning of June 9, they astonished the crowd with a first place finish in the elimination round known as the Repechage. They finished with a time of 7:09:50, well ahead of the second place team from Cincinnati at 7:14:82.

The crew from Marina Aquatics, all seniors, let the Strokes novice men know how relieved they were to know they wouldn't be facing them again next year.

The Oakland Strokes Junior Rowing Club is a nationally recognized club that has serviced the Bay Area for 33 years and has had rowers earn scholarships to Harvard University, University of California Berkeley, Yale University, and many others. With close to 50 Lamorinda young men and women rowing on novice and varsity teams, the Strokes have a long and proud history. Both the men and women's teams have won gold, silver and bronze in competition and the women have won the Peabody Cup for two years running at the historic Henley regatta in England. Last year, five of the Strokes women's varsity team were selected for the U.S. national junior women's crew.

Final Results:

1. Marina Aquatics	7:02:11
2. Wayland Weston	7:08:94
3. Berkeley High	7:10:11
4. Mercer	7:11:99
5. Oakland	7:12:09
6. Cincinnati	7:23:57

Summer Rowing Camps

Held at the Jack London Aquatic center (JLAC) along the Oakland estuary just south of Jack London Square, the Oakland Strokes will be offering expanded summer camps this year. Two camps for beginners will be held July 9-13 and August 13-17, an intermediate rowers' camp will be held August 20-24, and a conditioning camp is offered for all levels August 27-31.

Morning and afternoon sessions are offered from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1 to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. (Campers must be able to swim and should not be afraid of deep water.)

The registration fee per session is \$250. For more information and a camp application, visit the Oakland Strokes website www.oaklandstrokes.org, e-mail summer-camp@oaklandstrokes.org, or call camp registrar Marilyn Weber at (510) 652-6445.

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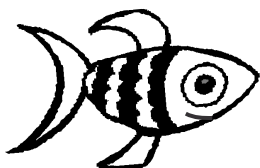
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