

## Oakland Strokes Push For Nationals

Submitted by Claire Grover



Varsity 8 racing

On June 13th, 13 Lamorinda athletes will head to Cincinnati, Ohio with the Oakland Strokes to compete for a national championship title at the USRowing Youth National Championship Regatta. The Oakland Strokes, a youth rowing club that rows out of the Oakland Estuary, qualified four crews for this prestigious event. The women's varsity 8+, women's lightweight 8+ (all rowers under 130 lbs.), men's varsity 4+, and men's lightweight 4+ (all rowers under 155 lbs.) qualified by placing in the top three in their events at the USRowing Southwest Junior Championship in May.

Competing in the women's varsity boat from Miramonte are seniors Leslie Chou and Piper Akol, junior Claire Grover, and sophomores Kelly Bauer, Nikki Dahlberg-Seeth, and Dana Walsh. Acalanes senior Dara Dickson rounds out the rest of the Lamorinda rowers in the varsity boat.

In the women's lightweight boat are Miramonte sophomores Molly Fehr and Anne Hofinga.

Lamorinda representatives in the lightweight 4+ are Bentley junior James Lenczowski and Miramonte junior Daniel Migdale. Campolindo junior Coleman Williams and Head Royce sophomore Jack Howerton both row in the varsity 4+.

To prepare for nationals, the

crews have been practicing six days a week, often at 5 am to avoid harsh afternoon winds. These practices, though often grueling, are a necessary and exciting of the nationals training regime.

"We want to come away from Cincinnati knowing that we did our very best and raced to the best of our abilities, and we're looking forward to having the opportunity to do so," said women's head coach Ian Simpson.

Last year, the men's lightweight 4+ placed 5th at this regatta, and look to improve on their finish with a more experienced and older crew. The women's side fields a less experienced group, with only two of the 18 athletes having competed at nationals before.

"This is a relatively young team, with very little big race experience," said Simpson. "Six of the eight rowers in the varsity boat were novices (new to the sport) just last year. But they are motivated, athletic girls who feed off of each other's energy."

The lightweight 8+ experienced some high level success earlier this year by winning their event at the San Diego Crew Classic in April, and hope to repeat this effort on the national stage.

"[The lightweights] have a great fighting spirit and never back down from a challenge," said

Simpson.

After nationals, many of the athletes plan to continue their rowing training over the summer. Chou, Dickson, Lenczowski, and Walsh were invited to attend the US Junior National Team Selection Camp, to compete for a chance to represent the US in July at the Junior World Championships in Austria. Bauer, Dahlberg-Seeth, Grover, and Fehr will all attend the US Junior National Team Development Camp.

All of the seniors have committed to rowing at the Division I level in college. Chou and Akol will further their crew careers at UCLA, while Dickson will pursue collegiate rowing at Yale.

To learn more about the Strokes, visit their website at [www.oaklandstrokes.org](http://www.oaklandstrokes.org).