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Local Rowers Begin Road to Junior National Team

By Annie Mudge



High Performance campers pictured from left to right: Dana Walsh (Miramonte); Claire Grover (Miramonte); Nikki Dahlberg-Seeth (Miramonte); Ali Mittelberger (Head Royce); Barbara Barnes (College Prep); Kelly Bauer (Miramonte) Photo provided

Six rowers from Oakland Strokes, Inc. have been identified as top junior female rowers in the nation. Four are Miramonte students: Danna Walsh, Nikki Dahlberg-Seeth, Claire Grover and Kelly Bauer.

"Six rowers being invited from one junior rowing team is fairly remarkable," said Strokes Women's Varsity Coach, Ian P. Simpson. "Oakland Strokes rowers will make up 21% of the 28 sweep rowers who have been identified and selected from across the United States to attend the 'invitation-only' High Performance Camp."

The High Performance camp, held at the Texas Rowing Club in Austin during the first weekend in December, is an opportunity for coaches from the Junior National Team to coach and observe an elite group of athletes before the formal February try-outs for US Rowing Selection Camp in June. This performance-based camp has become an integral part of the selection process to identify the athletes who will represent the United States on the 2009 US Junior Selection Team, which will ultimately compete in France at the Junior World Championships in August.

"Rowers invited to High Performance Camp have demonstrated the technical performance, endurance and strength to qualify for a close look for next summer's Selection Camp and the potential for perhaps rowing for the US Junior National Team," said Simpson. "Selection Camp can open the door to a wide range of international training and racing opportunities."

Communicating by text message with the Lamorinda Weekly on Day 2 of camp, Miramonte senior Claire Grover wrote: "The biggest surprise is how relaxed and supportive an environment (the camp) is. I came prepared for crazy intensity, and while it is physically demanding, the coaches are really looking out for you and mainly just trying to make you a better rower."

Asked about competitive energy among campers, Grover added that, since it wasn't a try-out, things were more low-key. "Everyone seems mainly focused on themselves and just trying to improve instead of focusing intensely on what everyone else is doing."

Oakland Strokes, Inc. is one of the premier junior rowing programs on the West Coast. With both Junior Men's and Junior Women's crews at varied levels, Strokes emphasizes the values of teamwork, leadership, initiative, dedication and fellowship, as well as rowing technique and fitness. Oakland Strokes rowers have also enjoyed successful academic achievement. Among those considering college-rowing prospects, Grover has already picked. She's headed to Stanford after graduation.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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