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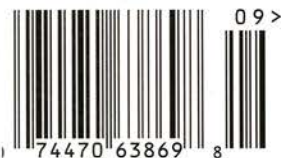
Where the Girls Are ³⁷

Liz Trond's junior juggernaut

America's Best Rowing Towns ²⁶

Did yours make the cut?

Leaders Wanted ⁴⁵



OCTOBER 2012
VOLUME 19
NUMBER 9
USA \$7.95
CAN \$9.95



MIDWEST, SOUTH, AND SOUTHEAST

TOP PICK: Richmond

While it may come as a surprise to some, Richmond is a southern rowing mecca. In addition to Virginia Rowing Club, the city boasts no fewer than four other major rowing organizations in the form of scholastic programs River City Crew and James River Rowers and college programs from Virginia Commonwealth University and the University of Richmond. The Occoquan Reservoir is located in nearby Fairfax and fall races include both the Head of the Occoquan and the Head of the James. Just over an hour west on I-64 is Charlottesville, home

to the 2012 NCAA champion Virginia women's rowing team, as well as the 2012 ACRA champion Virginia men's crew. Now do we have your attention?

"My favorite thing about coaching in Charlottesville is the body of water," says Virginia women's head coach Kevin Sauer. "I think it is the best rowing water in the world, with the high hills protection, no motorboats except for our coaching launches, freezing for just six to eight weeks maximum and sometimes not all. I could go on and on."

HOT AREAS

Around Virginia there are several other hotspots, including Alexandria, Arlington,

Woodbridge, and Falls Church, as well as Vienna, home to the James Madison High School program that took silver in the women's eight at the 2011 USRowing youth national championships. To the west, Chattanooga, Tenn., now hosts what has become one of the most popular races on the circuit in recent years, the Head of the Hooch.

Far to the north, Detroit, Mich., is another city worth a mention. Detroit Boat Club is the oldest rowing club in the United States, founded in 1839, and maintains a strong presence at the junior and club levels. Cincinnati, Ohio, must be on the list as well; the Cincinnati Juniors Rowing Club has consistently produced strong results on the



Chesapeake Boathouse, Oklahoma City
PHOTO: PETER SPURRIER

national stage, including four medals at the 2012 USRowing youth national championships in Oak Ridge.

TOP PICK **Oklahoma City**

OKC is more than just home to an elite training center. The rowing community has done its utmost to make rowing mainstream and it's starting to pay dividends. The Devon Boathouse, along with the Chesapeake Boathouse and Finish Line Tower, are the first of several distinctive, iconic structures that have set the tone for an era of growth and participation in our sport along the revitalized banks of the Oklahoma River. And that's just the first phase.

Oklahoma City Boathouse Foundation Executive Director Mike Knopp has done a tremendous job building momentum in the community as well as spearheaded a rowing program for the OCU Stars, which includes an uncommon emphasis on sculling at the college level. With an eye toward capturing more of the mainstream audience, Knopp and the OKC Boathouse Foundation have developed the OCU Head of the Oklahoma into a destination regatta, with the incorporation of 500-meter night sprints under the lights along the river's edge, as well as the USA Rowing World Challenge, which takes place every four years as part of the regatta festival and includes Olympic-caliber competition.

NEXT MECCA **Austin**

Austin, Texas, is primed and ready for its rowing coming out party. Hours before the racing began at the 2012 Heart of Texas Regatta last spring, host Austin Rowing Club signed the papers that will allow it to manage the new \$3.4-million city-built boathouse on Town Lake, signaling a new era for the club and for the sport of rowing in Texas. However, the sport was on the rise even before the official decision. "We were bursting at the seams already," says ARC president Camille Jobe. But even as facilities were in flux, ARC continued to grow. "In the last couple of years our membership increased by 20 percent," Jobe continues. "That says a lot for how much rowing is changing in this region." As of right now, the only eight-lane sprint course is 1,000 meters on Lady Bird Lake, though Henley-style, two-lane 2,000-meter racing can be conducted there. However, nearby Decker Lake would provide ample space to run a 2k course for future regattas.

HOT AREAS

Given the water and the weather, it's small wonder that the Southeast region has seen an explosive growth in rowing, with Florida leading the way. Orlando, in the heart of the peninsula, boasts a large number of clubs and scholastic programs, while Jacksonville University and Florida Institute of Technology have become increasingly competitive intercollegiate programs and perennial Dad Vail contenders.

NEXT MECCA **Sarasota**

Nathan Benderson Park is well on its way to becoming a premier rowing venue, thanks in no small part to the work of Paul Blacketter, project manager at Benderson Development Company. In addition to his role at Benderson, Blacketter was named chief operating officer of the SunCoast Aquatic Nature Association last April. The Florida World Aquatic Center at Benderson Park is scheduled to host the 2013 masters nationals, and will provide facilities for a number of aquatic sports, including dragon boat, triathlon, and canoe and kayak racing. Blacketter hopes to land the 2017 world championships, and has been working directly with FISA to ensure that the venue meets strict international regulations. Given the support of the community—last fall, Sarasota County approved a \$40-million plan to transform Benderson Park—and the success that rowing is already having in the area, Sarasota Crew has proven to be one of the most competitive clubs in the U.S. at the junior level.