

WBHS Rowing Parent's 101



Welcome to Westlake rowing! The season may come as a bit of a shock to non-rowing parents, but the older boys' parents are there to help answer questions.

This document will get updated as things change and people come in and out, but it should help with the first round of things you should know.

Where will my son row?

If you've made it this far you'll know about Lake Pupuke. Weekly training during the season will be at Hobsonville. The first 2 regattas (race events) are at Lake Pupuke. This is convenient as it's local and you can drop in to see how he's getting on through the day while doing all the other weekend stuff families do. Note that parking is tight! Later regattas are mostly at Lake Karapiro. In even years, the National Secondary Schools Championships (known as Maadi Cup after the U18 8s trophy) are held at Lake Ruataniwha in Twizel. Where possible, all boys will row at all regattas, but sometimes some crews not likely to make the A or B finals are not taken to Maadi. Coaches make selections based on how fast the boats are, as well as crew combinations that work best.

Where will my son stay for the Karapiro regattas?

For Karapiro regattas, we stay at Leamington Rugby Club and Squash Club, which are adjacent buildings. The boys sleep in their year-groups in the various rooms. There are facilities there for parents to prepare & serve breakfast & lunch, but the boys' dinner is usually at Cambridge Golf Club. 2nd Breakfast & Lunch are eaten at the regatta course between races.

And Twizel?

We normally take over a motel in Twizel for the week. The boys fly down to Christchurch and drive to Twizel via a stop in Geraldine/Tekapo. Parents would be better to stop at the pie shop in Farlie, or fly into Queenstown and take the scenic route through the Pass. Parent helpers are needed there to drive vans, feed the boys and wash rowsuits.

Can I come?

For Karapiro regattas, parents are encouraged to attend and volunteer. Parents can camp & self-cater outside on the field at no cost. The Leamington Rugby Club shed is adjacent to our camping area & parents use the area for socialising as it has some rain cover and a fridge (which we use for storing overflow catering provisions & a small amount of camper produce). There are a few mains sockets in the clubrooms for phone charging, but only if you get there before the boys! Leamington has a pub, Fresh Choice supermarket & several takeaway options. For every regatta, Logistics will request volunteers to help with food preparation, laundry, van driving, boat park support, etc. Many hands make light work! At Twizel, you may get a space at the motel if you are helping with care & feeding; otherwise it's Airbnb for you!

How do I know what event he's in?

The boys will know. And the coaches normally post it on WhatsApp groups. A week before the regatta, rowit.nz will have a schedule of races up, but the actual draw won't go up until a day or two before. A rule of thumb is that he'll row in whatever crews he's trained in that week. Year 9s will compete in the Under-15 or Novice events. Sometimes there will be "row-downs" from Year 10 who will fill out some of the U15 crews.

If you have put your hand up to volunteer, and you are helping with food preparation back at Leamington and your son has an early race, we guarantee that you won't miss your sons race as we make sure you get to the lake in time to watch him.

What's a Novice?

In NZ rowing, a Novice is anyone in their first season of rowing. They may be any age (sometimes clarified in the race category) but new to rowing this season. The season starts with us rowing as North Shore Rowing Club (NSRC) in navy blue (singlets for U15s). The usual race categories are U15, U16, U17 & U18.

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During some regattas we may enter club events, which are ability-based, not age-based; these categories are Novice, Intermediate, Club and Senior, and possibly a few Premier events where you might see the NZ international squad competing. The age and ability categories align neatly, and if the new U15s race as club Novices, the U16s will race as Intermediates and so on. Given the greater stability and training hours put in by school crews this arrangement is not as unfair as it might look. Many U18s will finish school as Senior club rowers. The qualification details can be found on the RowingNZ website, if you want to dig into it. After North Island & NZ Club Champs (early Feb) we row as WBHS in the white rowsuits.

Where are the rowing camps held?

On the upstream end of Lake Karapiro. There are a lot of camps (and schools rowing) down there, we use Epworth for Spring & Summer camps. Finishing Camp (before Maadi) can be at away at Karapiro or home at Hobsonville; the boys normally have Friday off school and do double-rows Fri/Sat/Sun.

Will we ever get a long summer holiday again?

Not really, but there is a formal rowing break after Christmas Regatta until the end of 1st week of Jan. Your son will be encouraged to continue family related fitness in this period. You can spend a week at Summer Camp though! There are activities for younger siblings, day trips to take and it's like ~~std~~ standard camping but with rowing going on!

What's the routine for morning training?

Typically 3 mornings during the week, the boys will be required to be at Hobsonville by 5:30am. The time may vary slightly according to crews, or even the time of year (a bit later in Oct and March, cos it's really dark and the coaches can't see much). Buses are provided from Hobsonville to WBHS following these rows – these are covered by your Rowing Fees.

Weekends, it's usually 6:00am or 6:30am at Hobbie. Late in the season (Feb/Mar) the weekend practice can be double-rows, so the boys need to bring a few extra snacks for before the 2nd row. Pickup times can vary due to crew composition for the outings. Often this is determined by who shows up, or has to leave early, so be prepared to pick up any time from 9:30 am to 11:30am. Fortunately the Farmers Market runs until 2:00pm, so be prepared for a mooch around down there, or to go for a walk around the paths.

How do I find out what's going on?

Parent communications are via email, WhatsApp, WBHS Rowing Parents Facebook page (Westlake Boys Rowing – Parents Communication Channel) & the WBHS Sporty Rowing page. There is a liaison person for each squad/year group who sends out info from the coaches. They will email you if you let them know that you don't do Facebook. The boys have their own squad WhatsApp/Teams with their coach and some comms may come direct through this, especially if it's last-minute. All else fails, find someone from the Committee.

Approximately 2-3 weeks prior to each regatta you will get an email with regatta specific information including the Rowit link for that regatta, areas we need parents to assist, boat loading and unloading information and packing lists.

Is there any training after school?

Yes, 2-3 afternoons after school. These will usually be at the rowing gym by the artificial turf and can be ergs (ergometers/rowing machines), home exercises (circuit training), a run, or some combination of these. These finish at about 4:30/5pm. Mornings are preferred for actual rowing because the water is usually flatter and less busy.

What can I do to help?

Pay your subs and drive, tow, cook, clean, launder, encourage, fetch and carry. The boys do a lot of work at the camps and will be tired – their priorities are row, eat and sleep. Anything else is a bonus!

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At regattas we need people to drive the vans to get the boys there, tow the boat trailers and luggage/food trailers. Once there we need help with food prep, cooking, & clean-up, people to put up the tents at the lake, drive the boys to/from according to the race schedule, keep those at home informed, taking photos, making sure the coaches are fed and stuff like that. There are also a few openings for boat-park maintenance work.

Parents are absolutely essential to the running of the programme the coaches set. This programme has been very successful over many years, and has been fine-tuned with the WBHS Rowing Society to make it as simple and straightforward for parents to implement as possible. But no parent support means nothing will happen. By helping you get an amazing insight into the world of rowing yourself, you stay connected with your son through his teenage years, and you will have a greater understanding when he talks about his role within the crews.

How do the rowing boats get to regattas?

WBHS has 2 trailers specifically for rowing skiffs. The boats are loaded & unloaded at Hobsonville, usually the day before we leave and the day after we come back from a regatta. This is usually a job for everyone, but sometimes it's done by 1-2 squads only as it's actually faster with fewer people as there's less standing around watching one person rig a whole boat. The boys must de-rig/re-rig boats for travel and use the 10mm spanners to do this. Frequently spanners are lent out, dropped or left behind – so painting, engraving or taping what is theirs is important if they want it back!

Can I come and watch?

Yes, but if anyone sees you, they may give you a job to do! There is a big WBHS Rowing tent that goes up at most regattas, where you can shelter from the elements, hang out with other parents and possibly talk to your son (if he's there). There will be a big board with the day's races on and results as they happen. With the really close races, sometimes the results come out on Rowit before anywhere else. If the judges have to go over video of the finish, the course-commentator may be into the next race.

What's Rowit?

Rowit.nz is the source of all regatta information and results. Each regatta has a site where the entries are put in by the coaches and once entries close the regatta organisers try to work out how to run the event. A link to the information for each regatta will be sent out in the regatta specific comms that comes from Logistics. Races are usually run in the same order, although conditions, entries, etc can alter this a bit. Results as they come out, usually within a few minutes. Tight races sometimes take longer. You can also sort through info about athletes, clubs, etc.

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How about the off-season?

Rowing season finishes end Mar/beginning April with Maadi. The Rowing offseason gently kick starts at the beginning of June with a few sessions on Lake Pupuke and in the gym. Returning rowers have sessions available to help maintain their fitness around their winter sport. If there are any clashes with a winter sport, that will take priority. Rowing season will be round again before you know it at the beginning of September!

Is there any feedback about how my son is doing?

Not really. Regatta results are one measure, but conditions change, crews may be different (ours and the opposition's) and times are not often comparable between consecutive races, let alone different events. If your son is enjoying the sport, that is probably enough feedback. If he's happy that he's in about the right place in the squad, that his fitness and technique are improving, that his erg scores are getting better, then there isn't much else to be done. If his coach has anything to communicate, they will! There is a lot to learn, and not everyone picks it up at the same rate. Physically the boys are all different and growing at different rates, so things do change. The first couple of years are about learning, the successes usually come later. If you have any concerns, raise them with his coach or Jo.

Is rowing ever cancelled?

Training outings sometimes, but at Hobsonville there are enough places to go that some useable water can often be found. The boys will normally get a WhatsApp message the night before or on the morning to advise what boat they are in & crews as this allows them to get on water quickly. If you think it's too windy, don't just drop your boys and run, stick around, just in case. And check all comms before you leave home! Normally the boys may go for a run and do their home exercises. Take running shoes EVERY day. Running 5km on roads in bare feet or jandals is not fun.

Regattas sometimes are cancelled. The Lake Pupuke Regattas are at the ends of the season and the weather is very changeable. Novice rowers and bad conditions are not a good mix, and all coaches and organisers know this. Sometimes the regatta organisers suspend racing until either the weather improves, or they run out of time to get in enough of the programme to make it worthwhile.

What do we all get out of this?

The boys get very fit, learn about their physical and mental limits, how to get up early and generate a lot of laundry. They learn a lot self-discipline/responsibility. Parents learn the fast routes to Hobsonville, how busy the motorway gets at specific times, how to pre-order coffee on the way to/from Hobbie, etc. Time management is important for the boys, as relaxing time should probably be spent doing something more like homework. The good news is that the end of season crescendo is in March/April, not at exam time. Parents can get a sense of satisfaction from seeing 80+ boys fed and happy, the ending of a 2-hour minibus drive to the accompaniment of the latest gangsta rap, a broken boat made useable, or taking a bunch of photos of the boys. It depends on you.

This sounds hard. Is there an easy way?

To rowing success? No. To parental sleep-patterns and well-being, we recommend a good car-pool to share the load of the early mornings. More people means having to do fewer early drives yourself, but how big are your cars? Also more people to consult with and families to juggle. If you already get up at 4:30am to cross the bridge, you'll hardly notice a difference. It's usually best to stick to one rowing age group or school year group as training days & times can vary. Geography makes a difference, especially for those living out-of-zone. If you get stuck, ask your squad liaison for help, or maybe try another year group if you know some who lives local to you. There are no shortcuts to the care & feeding, laundry, or logistical aspects either. We need parents to get involved and see all the sides of the boys time.

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How do I join a carpool?

As the squads can train at different times, the best way is via the WhatsApp or Morning Carpool tab on the Parent- Rowing Calendar (found under the WBHS Sporty Rowing tab). If you know some people who live nearby already, things are simple. Most people live in-zone, which helps; out-of-zone folk may have to drive a lot. If you find yourself in a tight spot, shout out - we've all been there.

Creating Responsible Rowers

Getting up for Rowing - if you still wake your rower up for school, now is the time to get them to do it for themselves. Provide a decent alarm clock with at least 2 alarms, batteries, etc & tell them the time you or the carpool ride will leave. If they are not ready or awake, then go get the rest of the carpool without them or go back to bed/work. And if you're feeling nice, allow 1 muck up occasion before you move to the 1st option.

Gear for Rowing #1 – your rower needs to label everything he takes to rowing & school! This includes clothes, shoes, water bottles, lunch boxes, bags, etc. The boys change from rowing gear to school gear at Hobbie, so if it is not named it will go missing or be picked up by another boy thinking it's his jumper!

Gear for Rowing #2 – your rower needs to sort his rowing & school stuff THE NIGHT BEFORE! If they do not, it is not your job to provide what they have forgotten. Sometimes the weather isn't great for rowing, so gently suggest they have their running shoes, as running in slides or Birks ain't great!

Food for Rowing #1 - if you still make lunches for your rower, now is the time to get them doing it for themselves. Provide all the supplies they need at home, but they are the ones who need to make sure they have all the right food packed for 2nd breakfast, lunch, & after school snack THE NIGHT BEFORE!

Food for Rowing #2 – same as #1, but your rower needs to make sure they have organised 1st breakfast for themselves THE NIGHT BEFORE. They should consider foods that they could take in carpool if they are running late, but better to have it ready to go at 4:30am-4:45am!

Being tired from Rowing – the first 3-4 weeks of 5:00am starts in Term 4 are hard for all boys. If your rower is tired, just suggest going to bed a bit earlier for a few nights. If that fails, explain that they have actually lost the equivalent of 1 night's sleep across the whole week from the early starts!

The 10 Golden Rowing Rules

1. Name everything
2. Always take running shoes
3. Always take your 10mm spanner. Have a couple. Have a spare for the glovebox! Label your spanner!!
4. Don't leave your stuff at rowing
5. Have a water bottle or two (a plastic one is better than metal for having in the boat)
6. Always set your alarm. Or maybe two!
7. Go to bed early.
8. Buy lots of food. Decent food for athletes. By the time your boy hits morning tea, he'll have been up for 6 hours and will want lunch, and he'll want it again at lunchtime. And a snack before he hits the gym in the afternoon. Then the snack he'll want as he's waiting to be picked up, which he ate on the bus to school after rowing. Plus another snack before your dinner!
9. Rowing minutes are longer than normal minutes – if the coach says the session is 7-10am, always add an extra 20-30 mins on top of this as rowing stuff takes time with 20-25 boys! Grab a coffee & find a friend to chat with.
10. Remember camp chairs, binoculars, blankets, rain jackets/umbrellas, sunscreen, sunglasses & shorts when watching regattas

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And finally, from a 7 year rowing parent...

- Be engaged – support your son's high school & rowing journey, support your mates/other parents through the good/bad times, think about the whole squad, not just yourself.
- Do what you can – drive a van (your ears won't bleed from gangsta rap!), share your skills/enthusiasm (it will rub off on others), have fun at camp/regatta, help when you can't row, look after stuff like it's your own phone(!)
- Be part of a great whānau – you'll make lots of new friends, see a great bunch of lads/mates grow from skinny teens to handsome young men, and make a lifetime of memories. All before 7am!
- Leave a legacy – look for ways for others to follow in your footsteps, aim to leave the club better than you found it, be a role model for others.