

College Rowing Report for NRC AGM November 2020 – David Squirrell

It has been a relatively quiet year for college rowing. A long period of poor weather combined with the pandemic has put a series of halts on rowing. Recruitment is looking to be down 1/3 (roughly 250 fewer members). Combining this with the inexperience of last years beginners is leaving college rowing in a concerning position for the next few years. A grant from the NRC has gone some way to helping colleges get back on the water safely, going towards the central purchasing of safety equipment, most of which will be of use in years to come. Hopefully, this will alleviate some of the recruitment and financial concerns, helping everyone get back on the water as soon as possible.

Racing

Thankfully, it is not all doom and gloom. We were massively oversubscribed for Novice Cup last year and saw huge numbers taking part at DSBH including 43 4+s. There were four wins for Collingwood, and one each for Hatfield and John Snow. BUCS Head also saw some of the best results ever for colleges, with a 5th and 10th place in MInt4+ and WInt4+ respectively. While it was a frustrating time for racing across the country, it is clear the colleges are eager to enter as much as possible.

Safety

One of the small upsides to the lack of water time has been the reduced incidents. As ever there were a serious of issues at the start of the year involving Vllls, however, these seem to have improved. There has been a lot of focus on correct spotter positioning and boat lighting this year, while undoubtedly there will always be some crews ignoring this, it seems to have had a positive impact so far.

There is concern with the return of clubs after such a long break. There were two incidents within the first few outings and most likely more that were not reported. As such a compulsory safety and general briefing was held of all club and squad captains which will hopefully become a yearly occurrence. DCR are also looking at organising a more detailed briefing on the changes due to COVID-19 once we recommence again as several clubs seem not to be aware of some of these changes.

Retention & Recruitment

As mentioned earlier, this year was always going to be a struggle. Despite the lack of water time and communication issues with Durham University the college boat clubs have done a fantastic job this year keeping numbers up and getting freshers involved. Zoom circuits, cross-training sessions and a variety of online events have helped with this. Many thanks must go to the rest of the DCR Exec who have put on a huge variety of events and talks over the past few months to keep people thinking about rowing and interacting within their clubs. Some highlights have been the online Admirals Regatta, a coxing education series and an interview with Aleks Radovic, Junior coach at RowAmerica Rye. We have met with British Rowing to try and put together a guide to clubs in major graduate destinations, however, that is looking more like a project for 2021.

All in all, it has been another strong year for college rowing, however, we must be cautious looking forward. Focussing on coaching and coxing education to bridge the experience gap will be crucial this year and working with other Northern Rowing Clubs will go some way to achieving this.