
Crew shines at URA Championships

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This past weekend, Washington University's club crew team competed in the University Rowing Association (URA) Championship Regatta, with the women placing second overall and the men placing third.

The Championship Regatta, one of the smaller meets of the season for the Bears, featuring club crew teams from schools in the University Athletic Association, is a 2-kilometer course. It has been held in Butler, Pa. for the past five years.

The University of Rochester took home the Chicago Alumni Cup, awarded to the women, with 142 points, while Emory won the Case Alumni Cup with 121.5 points, awarded to the men. The Bears had 83.5 and 105 points, respectively.

"We, in the past, have beaten [Rochester] pretty nicely. They're going to become a varsity sport next year, so they're starting to ramp up their practices, ramp up the amount of coaching they get...in preparation for getting funding and becoming a varsity sport," said junior Ruth Mandelbaum, a captain of the women's team. "Over the past couple of years, they've improved pretty exponentially, become a real contender and then actually started beating us."

Emory competed in the URA Championship Regatta for the first time.

"I knew coming into this that they [Emory] were going to be pretty tough. We had seen them at other races, but we've never competed head-to-head against them, so I knew they had put together some strong boats in the past," said Ricky Soukup, a senior and co-captain of the men's team. "This year, we got to see them up close, which is good. Having better competition is only going to make us better, so I'm glad that they were there."

Despite finishing third overall, the men enjoyed success at the regatta. The team won four of nine races, including both Men's Lightweight races.

"It was a very strong performance, probably one of the strongest performances I've seen from our team in my four years here," Soukup said. "The field we're competing against was deeper than it's ever been, so we finished third place in the team points...but I still think we performed pretty admirably."

The women took home the Liz Barry Cup, awarded to the winners of the Novice 8+ race and named in memory of Elizabeth Barry, their former freshman teammate who passed away in December.

"We went into it thinking we weren't going to win. It was a little demoralizing, but we completely destroyed

[Rochester], which was fantastic,” freshman Jill Smith said. “We had a giant...crying hug afterward because we won and that race was for Liz. That’s what we had been working for all winter.”

Despite a poor week of practices before the URAs, the Bears’ novice team finished the race with a time of 7:47.9, beating Rochester by 13 seconds, three or four boat-lengths ahead.

“Just going into [the race] was kind of like, ‘we’re going to give it our all because that’s what Liz would have done, win or lose,’ and we destroyed,” Smith said.

With strong gusts, temperatures in the 40s and 50s and overcast skies, Sunday’s conditions were undesirable for racing, to say the least.

“One thing that we try to stress with the team was the fact that everyone is dealing with [the weather]...if you can focus through it, it can be an advantage for you,” Soukup said.

The crew team will travel to Oak Ridge, Tenn. for its next meet, the Southern Intercollegiate Rowing Association Championships, on April 18 and 19.