

Twin Cities Youth Rowers to Compete in Midwest Championship

The rowing club has 122 participants during its year-round season, and its athletes are learning the value of dedication and teamwork.

By [Mark Remme](#) SOUTHWEST MINNEAPOLIS PATCH | May 11, 2011



A group of rowers head out on Bryant Lake while a boat holding Twin Cities Youth Rowing girls coach Tina Cho looks on. Credit: [Mark Remme](#)

Rowing isn't a mainstream sport in the midwest, but the principles surrounding the activity intrigued Patrick Kelliher.

The 16-year-old Minneapolis Southwest student joined the Twin Cities Youth Rowing club last fall, and in the months since he's witnessed the dedication, discipline and commitment the sport preaches to its athletes.

"It's about being a hard worker," Kelliher said. "Pretty much everyone here is a complete athlete. You have to be athletic and you have to be willing to work hard."

Kelliher is one of 122 rowers that make up the Edina-based Twin Cities Youth Rowing club's year-round roster. TCYR attracts male and female athletes from 25 high schools in the west metro area, and each of the athletes commit time, effort and dedication to one another in hopes of achieving one goal together.

TCYR will compete at the Midwest Jr. Championships in Cincinnati, OH, on May 20-22. The club hopes to earn a spot at nationals in June, but win or lose the athletes are learning the invaluable lessons on the water together, girls coach Tina Cho said.

Cho said character is what TCYR preaches every day.

"For a lot of kids that we have here, it's not just another sports team, another sports club," Cho said. "This very much is family."

TCYR's calendar breaks up into specific seasons—time trials in the fall, indoor training in the winter and the championship season in the spring.

Throughout the year, the club's athletes trust one another to put in the maximum training effort during countless practice hours on Bryant Lake. If one rower slacks, the entire boat suffers.

Cho, a former University of Minnesota rower, said her college practice-to-competition ration was 47 hours of practice per minute of racing. Practice time and training is crucial toward team building on the water, she said.

"It's really a lot about relying on each other and knowing that your commitment is the same as everyone else's in the boat," said Erik Sathe of Hopkins. "You almost become like a family."

That level of commitment is noticeable both on and off the water.

Al Kupka is this year's TCYR president. His daughter, Alex Kupka, is in her third year with the program and plans to attend Kansas State University to row next year.

Al Kupka said the sport of rowing is like a vehicle for these kids toward learning the values of hard work, dedication and commitment.

"It's something that is new, unique, to the southwest metro area," he said. "But it fills a void where it develops citizenship, character. It brings it all together in a program where, we're going to row today. We've got nine people on board. It's just driven by a sequence of steps."

Cho said if an athlete puts in the time commitment, his or her teammates will show that commitment in return.

"You have to enjoy the process," she said. "It's the process of getting faster. It's the process of skill development: I can get through these workouts. I can be put in these types of pressure situations and get through it and survive it."

That's the type of bond Edina native Addy Zvosec, 16, said she feels every time she's rowing with her teammates. It's not just about the wins and losses—it's about growing together and relying on each other.

"It's a greater responsibility to your teammates and not so much to yourself," Zvosec said. "You can't be a star on this team. ... You can't just work hard to be a great rower, you want to work hard so your team can be a great crew."

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