

# ROCCS rowing more with less

Inverness-based club sees success at state level

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ROCCS' latest regatta was on March 17 at the Tampa Mayor's Cup. The Inverness-based rowing club is open to all school-age kids of both genders.

Correspondent

INVERNESS — If you happen upon Wallace Brooks Park in Inverness around 7:30 in the morning any weekend or between 3 to 10 p.m. almost every day of the week, you will see them. You will see the rowers swiftly traversing Lake Henderson before and well after the sun touches the treetops at the start of a new day and at its conclusion when the sun goes back down.

Cutting the water so subtly, their slender boats give off the impression of sliding on glass.

When the boats really get going, it's as if a magic trick were being performed before your very eyes.

It's no magic trick: you are seeing a group of incredibly talented student-athletes putting in their training sessions before and after school.

The Rowing Organization of Citrus County Students (ROCCS) is a rowing club established for school-age kids of both genders to get involved in the sport of rowing and participate on either a competitive level, which the club encourages, or just be part of a family of rowing enthusiasts, gaining numerous fitness and health benefits. The club is currently at approximately 40 members and looking for many more applicants.

When asked about the early morning training sessions, Terry Davison, the club's coach and trainer and also the owner of Inverness Rowing and Fitness, puts it simply.

"Winning is not luck. Winning comes from hard work and commitment," Davison said. "And that's what we teach throughout the club. I (hope) they take that (lesson) into adult life and not (necessarily have to) row or do anything like that but learn something from the sport.

"It may be seen as setting the bar very high," Davison continued. "But we also say 'if you aim for the moon and you miss it, you may still land in the stars'.

"So that's what we do. We set a very high standard of commitment and sometimes that's tested in these early morning sessions because it's not just about the physical but also mental (strength)."

This concept strikes close to home for Davison; two of his sons, Ben and Joe Davison, participate in the club with lots of success, winning regattas all over Florida.

The double clocked up a convincing win at the Tampa Mayors cup on March 17.

Ben, a Citrus High School student, is unbeaten in five events in single and double rowing this season so far and is in the final stages of selection for the U.S. Junior National team. If selected, he would train for three weeks in New Jersey before heading to Canada to compete against some of the best teams in the world. Both of Davison's sons are on the fast track towards collegiate and national team berths and may one day see the Olympics.

It's not just the Davison brothers who are making a name for themselves around Florida but R.O.C.C.S. itself has been slowly making an impression in the blossoming sport of rowing at regattas as far away as Orlando, Miami and Sarasota.

"We need to raise the profile of rowing," Terry Davison said, "make people realize that it is a very competitive sport and you can achieve some really good results statewide."

One of Terry Davison's many goals for the club is to expand its membership and see more kids involved in a sport that he loves. The best way he feels the club can achieve this starts with greater community awareness.

"We have the facilities and some fantastic lakes (in Inverness)," Terry Davison said. "(It would be great) to attract some of the colleges down here for the winter (to see our rowers) but we have to put Inverness on the rowing map. The best way to do that is through competition and more recruitment and more support from the wider community."

Known affectionately as the "duct tape" club at regattas statewide, due to the club's ability to throw together the best collection of boats they can get their hands on to compete, ROCCS has pulled off several upset victories in competitions this season. Placing rowing

crews in the top three (if not outright winning most competitions they enter), ROCCS is beating much better-funded clubs from more populated areas.

“We always are well-welcomed at the regattas,” ROCCS club secretary Angela Howard said. “They’ll announce ‘it’s the rowing club that never quits’ because we’re so much smaller than the others. They respect us (because) we’re there every time.”

The club has grown significantly from its early years, seeing itself on the cusp of true prominence amongst rowing circles. Terry Davison wishes to see ROCCS become more closely associated with Inverness, making the city a known capital of fine rowers and hopefully hosting a regatta of its own in the future.

“We have made great strides forward this year in an effort to be more competitive in all areas of the sport including equipment, fitness and technical skill in order to match the bigger clubs,” Davison said. “In April, we will attend the State Sculling Championships in Sarasota with five boats that will all do very well, if not win, putting ROCCS and the city of Inverness on the rowing radar.”

The club was founded by Dave Brown in 2003 upon meeting a fellow rower while teaching at Lecanto High School. The two teachers mutually agreed to start up a rowing club for high school students, giving kids a chance to try something different than the typically offered varsity sports offered by high schools.

Rowing teams are broken into middle school groups (novice) and high school groups (more advanced). Being a middle school student does not preclude a member from rowing in the high school group; if the member showed a proclivity for hard work, they could work their way up to the more advanced group.

An obvious prejudice about the sport is that it is only available to Ivy League schools and the super-rich, which Howard is hoping to dispel.

“I want people to understand they we are trying to make it affordable (to everyone),” Howard said. “I don’t want a kid to feel, ‘I can’t do that because we can’t afford it.’ ”

“We’re out here almost seven days a week (at Wallace Brown Park),” said Lisa Grotjahn, whose 15-year-old son Matthew, an eighth grader at Lecanto Middle school, is a member. “There (are) a lot of elderly people who use this park to walk and specifically come to watch the kids launch the boats.”

Terry Davison and his fellow ROCCS members are looking to grow larger and more prominent within the local community; to hopefully establish a new tradition of fine Citrus County rowers from here on out towards a promising future.

If interested in the club, please visit the ROCCS website at [www.crewroccs.com](http://www.crewroccs.com) for more information.