

How Rowing Steered my Life

Always involved in youth sports: swimming and soccer. Entering teenage years, maybe not being the fastest runner, or swimmer, I waffled about not doing much other than skiing during the winter. Perhaps because I wasn't busy enough I found myself visiting the principals office a couple times, summer school once, and a handful mandated after school "meetings". In the fall of my sophomore year, two rowers from the girls team sat across from me in math class. It was like they were experienced in sales, in trying to convince me to join "crew" they played to my ego and suggested I would be good at it and probably like it. I went to the after-school interest meeting, this time it wasn't mandatory, talked with my parents, and recalled that my older brother Matt was part of the ECAC, and I remembered going to the Head the Fish. SO I decided to sign up and go to practice with the novices. This was the first pull on the rudder towards rowing. For those that don't know, it used to be simply novice or varsity, occasionally with enough to field "freshman" boats in the spring. I definitely remember getting to "the field" and then changing in an old dark Army tent. Always growing up around water, swimming, spending time at the lakes, I felt at home. I loved being on the water and trying to learn the stroke, timing, and all the lingo. It felt good to compete again, and I recall my first head of the Mohawk, I rowed in a coxed four, it felt like forever but I pushed as hard as I could, and we survived. I found myself a couple occasions filling in on the varsity when a rower wasn't there, which I relished. I struggled with being a 10th grader with the novices a bit, and found other going through the same, Donica being one of them. When the end of the season came around I was hooked and decided to do winter training at the gym, which used to be the Starburst skating arena, with the goal of making varsity. I started working out with my fellow novice, but then asked to work with the varsity and luckily coach Todd had agreed. From there the rest is history as they say, I made vast improvements, and we went on to win states the next 3 years, have some good races on the national stage, including appearances in finals, and a couple medals during summer in a quad of exclusive sweep rowers and 500M sprint events. I remember helping to clear the land and help build this boathouse. I loved the sport, but more I loved to think about how and why we were training: doing the rowing machine, but also strength, plyometrics, and whatever "cross training" activity that we could turn into a full contact sport such as "handball", ultimate frisbee, or soccer, but sometimes just piled on each other for sport. I knew I wanted to learn more, and had a dream of coaching. The second pull on the rudder was applying to schools that offered rowing and might offer "exercise science". Luckily with rowing my grades had turned around, not quite enough to get into Yale, but I ended up enrolling at Jacksonville University in FL with some money to row as a division 2 athlete. I got some amazing new experiences, including seeing dolphins surfacing next to the 8 while on the St Johns river, but I realized I didn't quite like FL as much as I thought, and wanted to try and row elsewhere, Annnnndddd get back to my HS girlfriend who I met through summer rowing, Becky who was a rower for Scotia- Glenville. So, I decided to try and transfer to Syracuse and row at a higher level, perhaps another pull on the rudder. Through a comedy of errors that didn't pan out and I ended up at SCCC, and coaching for Scotia for a year, I was living the dream! However, academically I needed to move on, so I applied to Ithaca College, they had a great DIII team and great exercise science program, another pull on the rudder. On the plus side Becky was at Syracuse, a reasonable bus or car ride away. I rowed at Ithaca Spring sophomore year in the Varsity 8, every season with some solid finishes in the finals at ECACs in the spring and even an appearance in the prestigious IRA rowing in the men's second varsity 8 category against bona fide huge dudes, I think I even met a coxswain there that was nearly my height. After graduating I focused more on academics, I had applied to Smith College co-ed master's program which would've allowed me to coach and get paid to do a masters, but I ended up going to Springfield College with Becky, and was a better program anyhow. I "coached" for the local YMCA rowing program while at Springfield, which was funny after being here in this amazing facility, we rowed out of farm land next to

the river, with rec shells and no coaching launch, but rowers could reserve all the shells leaving me on the river bank at 5am doing no coaching, which was most of the time. I then moved on to do my PhD at University of Utah, and looked for rowing opportunities. I found a youth club and coached for a year on the Great Salt Lake, which was quite the experience, beautiful snowcapped mountains in the background, but higher than normal buoyancy meant getting the boat to set was always a challenge. I got too busy in my studies to continue on. I finished up PhD and post doc and moved back to the area to work at Skidmore College. Donica reached out to see if I was interested to serve on the board of directors for BHRA, which I have done since ~2014, another pull on the rudder. I have since completed several research studies on rowing with SRA, and their ARION program and the college athletes. Looking back, I can confidently say, I don't think I would be where I am today without those foundational experiences with BH and the sport of rowing which has steered my life for the good over the years. Thank you.