



GREAT BRIDGE CREW

2024 - 2025

PARENT HANDBOOK



About Our Club

Great Bridge Crew Club, also known as GBC or GBCC, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 1999. We are a year round rowing club open to all area students grade 7th-12th. From our beginnings, our club grew from 20 Rowers, and only 2 wooden boats and 3 ergs to a team of an average of 40 rowers and a fleet of 20 boats as well as 20 Ergs for off season training. We are an inclusive club that is now able to welcome junior rowers from any school. We are committed to building leaders through the sport of rowing, both on and off the water.

OUR MISSION

To promote confidence and excellence in the sport of rowing through teamwork, discipline and physical fitness.

OUR VISION

To develop a welcoming and competitive rowing club that promotes integrity, good sportsmanship and support amongst our rowers and within the community.

OUR VALUES

We continue to uphold our commitment to excellence with our rowers, coaches, parents and volunteers propelling us forward. Our guiding principles set us apart and enable us to continue our mission by educating and training those that come after us. Our club's core values are emphasized and embodied by coaches and rowers every day: Respect, Unity, Integrity, Stamina and Commitment



Our Parent Board

Great Bridge Crew is led by an elected group of volunteer parents, who each hold a position on the parent board and run the administrative side of the club. Board meetings are held once a month, typically on the first Thursday. Nominations for the following year's board positions are held in the spring and are voted on at the following General Membership Meeting.

The 2024-2025 Parent Board is:

President – Erica Brown – president@greatbridgecrew.org

Vice President – Adam Sharrits – vicepresident@greatbridgecrew.org

Secretary – Gaby Alderman – secretary@greatbridgecrew.org

Treasurer – Heath Blanton – treasurer@greatbridgecrew.org

Member at Large – Kelly Blanton – memberatlarge@greatbridgecrew.org

To communicate with the board as a whole, please send a message to boardgbc@greatbridgecrew.org

Roles of the Board can be found in a copy of the Great Bridge Crew Club By-Laws. If you need a copy of the By-Laws, please refer to the documents section of Team Snap, or you can find a copy on the team website.



Our Coaches

Great Bridge Crew has a coaching staff that boasts over 70 combined years of rowing and coaching experience. The coaches are experienced and trained in rowing and, most of all, safety. Our Coaches guide the workouts from jon boats (called launches) that follow the shells and direct the rowers on the water. Often, former rowers come back to the club to give back to the program that gave so much to them.

HEAD COACH

DEBORAH SODERLUND

coachdebbie@greatbridgecrew.org

Coach Debbie began her long relationship with rowing at West Potomac High School in 1997 when a swim teammate encouraged her to try "crew". This blossomed into a passion for a sport that would include undefeated seasons, medaling at multiple National regattas, winning Mid-Atlantic Erg Sprints and placing fourth at the CRASH-B/World Indoor Rowing Championships. She attended the University of Virginia and stroked the women's Freshman 8+ to an ACC Championship and the Eastern Sprints finals. When an injury cut her rowing career short, Coach Debbie returned to her alma mater to coach the West Potomac boys to a state championship.

Coach Debbie joined Great Bridge Crew as an assistant coach in January 2023 and took on the Head Coach position in June 2023 after many years away from the sport while raising her young family and 7 Navy moves with her husband. She is excited to return to Great Bridge Crew for a second year as head coach. She believes in the power of the community and unity that is built through rowing and particularly credits the sport with the development of her character. She hopes to share that love and support with the Great Bridge Crew family!

ASSISTANT COACHES

MADISON BRUNETT

coachmadi@greatbridgecrew.org

Coach Madi began her rowing career at Great Bridge High School in 2011 at the behest of a neighbor. Initially she did not love the sport, but by the end of her novice year she had fallen in love with everything about rowing. Her high school rowing career included many accolades such as winning Mid-Atlantic Erg Sprints her junior and senior years. Coach Madi's lightweight four is the only boat from Great Bridge Crew to complete the "Triple Crown": winning States, placing second at Stotesbury and second at SRAA Nationals. She attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison and was the first women's novice 8+. This boat had an undefeated season which culminated with winning their Big Ten Championship race.

Coach Madi's rowing career was also cut short and she stepped away from the sport for a few years. Even throughout this time, Coach Madi was always coming back to Great Bridge Crew to "guest" coach and help with summer sculling. She is happy to return to Great Bridge Crew as the Head Novice Coach where she hopes to share her love and passion for the sport with new rowers.

Our Coaches

DON HUGHES

coachdon@greatbridgecrew.org

Coach Don hails from Lawrenceville, GA but first learned to row his freshman year at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and continued through all four years. He competed in several large regattas including the Head of the Charles and Dad Vail Regattas. Following graduation in 1999, he continued to workout and row indoors with the erg. In 2012, Don joined Juniper Rowing Club and has been rowing with the Masters Club since then. He joined Great Bridge Crew as an assistant coach when his son joined the team in 2019 but has stayed on following his graduation!

JEB HUTSON

Coach JEB started rowing when he was in 7th grade for Gloucester High School. He rowed for all four years of high school winning several state championships and placing at The Stotesbury Cup. After graduating high school he attended a year of prep school at Georgia Military College before attending the US Coast Guard Academy, New London CT. While at the CGA he majored in Marine and Environmental Sciences. Coach JEB joined Great Bridge Crew as an assistant coach in the Summer of 2024 following his orders to the area. He is excited to work with the team and grow the program in the future.

DAN BECKER

Coach Daniel "Dan" Becker is the Great Bridge Crew Strength and Conditioning Coach. Coach Dan is an Active Duty Sailor and Hospital Corpsman in the United States Navy, where he specializes in mental healthcare. He is a Certified Personal Trainer and Strength and Conditioning Trainer by the International Sports Science Association (ISSA). Coach Dan was a competitive swimmer for over 14 years, and was a 4-year collegiate swimmer for Ursinus College. He was a 2-year varsity rower in high school for Lake Braddock Secondary School. Since graduating from Ursinus College with his Bachelors of Science in psychology and philosophy in 2019, Coach Dan has pursued competition in marathon and ultra-marathon distances. This is his second year working with Great Bridge Crew. He is a native of Fairfax, Virginia.



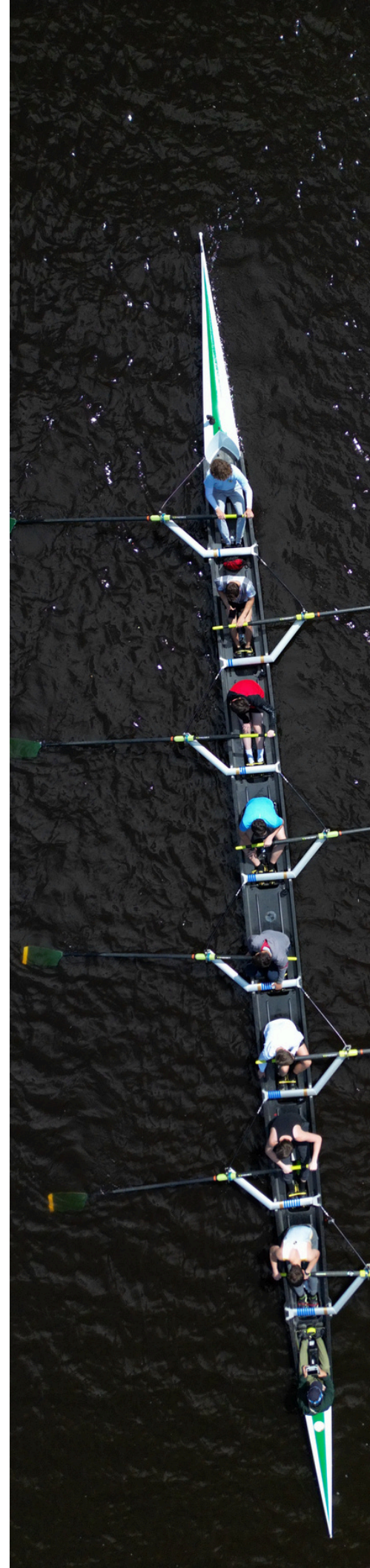
Rules & Principles

GBC BOATHOUSE RULES

- (1) Attendance is expected and absences will adversely affect boat placements.
- (2) Rowers will follow the directions and guidance provided by the coaching staff. Failure to do so will result in consequences given by the coaching staff. We are concerned with safety of crews at any given time and listening is key.
- (3) Coxswains and captains run practice on behalf of the coaches. Rowers must therefore submit to captain's and coxswain's orders.
- (4) Boathouse and equipment must be kept in good working order. Rowers shall report maintenance issues to coxswains, coxswains will add concerns to maintenance log and bring it to the student maintenance chair's attention.
- (5) ~~No one~~ other than practice parents or coaches may EVER drive to the boathouse.
- (6) Bullying, harassment or abuse on the team, during or outside of practice time, will result in punishment, suspension or removal from the team.
- (7) Phones shall not be present at practice and will not be brought on boats without specific permission from coaches.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- To create a welcoming, inclusive and supportive environment for any athlete who wishes to improve themselves, both on and off the water.
- To encourage and reward rowers' dedication and commitment to themselves, their teammates, their boatmates and the team as a whole to encourage team unity.
- To foster a culture of safety and care for teammates, equipment, opponents and host sites, where applicable.
- To instill the habit and value of personal responsibility for one's own words and actions to embody our core value of integrity.
- To ensure that rowers are adequately mentally and physically prepared for competition while exhibiting good sportsmanship and self-reflection before, during and after racing.





WATER PRACTICES

Crew is a competitive sport and GBCC is a competitive team. No one is cut from the team and everyone rows, but the competitive boats are selective. Technical ability, attitude, response to coaching on the water, attendance and fitness all play a part in determining the makeup of a boat. Illness or injury can be a factor from week to week. Coaches aim for fast boats that can perform well on a given day. Lineups are determined by the Coaches based on all of these factors particularly focusing on attendance at practice.

Practice Times and Location

Drop Off and Pick Up of Rower – All rowers are required to run if going to practice or allowed to walk when leaving practice from the AYB to or from the Boathouse. Parents/Coaches are not permitted to drive onto the property without prior permission.

Morning Practices

In the fall, most practices will be in the mornings. Due to safety reasons, we ask that all rowers and parents park their cars or drop off and pick up at Wells Fargo bank parking lot for morning practices. Rowers will meet there and run down to the boathouse together in order to ensure safety.

Afternoon Practices

Rowers meet at the barrier wall at the end of Basin Road at the start time of practice. If there is no one standing there waiting, just hang out in your car for a few minutes until a coach or teammates show up. Coaches typically park along the side road there and are hanging out until rowers arrive. We will provide you a board members phone number beforehand, in case you need to get in touch with us.

Parents or rowers that drive themselves: Please drive to the barriers at the end of Basin road, make a U-Turn and park or drop off to keep your rower of traffic to the Atlantic Yacht Basin. We try to be respectful to the staff and the guests of AYB who may be arriving or leaving for the day.



CHANGES TO PRACTICES

Because we are training in a water sport and the rowers and coach's commitment to dedicating as much time as possible to rowing on the water, practices maybe canceled or moved at the last possible moment. This is due to the fact that conditions maybe different at the water than they are at your house, such as fog, higher winds, chop, tidal surge, etc. The main priority of the coaching staff is safety first. That means there may be times where you have dropped your rower off only to get a call to turn around and come back. We understand this can be frustrating, but it all comes down to safety concerns. Weather is very temperamental in this area and we do our best to keep the rowers on the water for as long as we can safely do so.

Cancellations or changes will be provided via team app.

LAND PRACTICES

The team moves to Land Practices in the winter season. They will begin the week of Thanksgiving and run to the middle of February. This is driven by the low combined air and water temperature. The team competes in indoor rowing competitions during the months of January and February. The land practices serve as a training tool for these competitions and as preparation for the spring season.





Dues for the 2024-2025 Season:

\$2600

- Dues are paid Monthly by the 5th.
- Dues will be paid via Zelle or check.
- Fundraising opportunities to offset the cost of dues are available throughout the year.
- Need-based Scholarship Assistance is available to offset the cost of dues to those who qualify.

Send an email to treasurer@greatbridgecrew.org to request an application.

Membership Dues

As a 501© non-profit, all of the funding for GBCC comes from membership dues or through external fundraising. As such, dues are paid to cover operational costs of the club during the respective Regular Season, which coincides with the school calendar year.

Parents of rowers from 7th-11th grades have the opportunity to use a 12-month payment plan. Please refer to the Financial Agreement for more information. Parents of seniors must be paid in full or have arrangements with the treasurer before invitational regattas.

We distinguish ourselves from other local clubs in that dues will cover ALL required expenses for the team. We encourage fundraising throughout the year but there will not be an additional cost required to participate.

What Dues Cover

Rower dues are calculated by the operational budget set by the board at the beginning of the year. The treasurer and president are responsible for compiling the information from previous years financial statements. Your dues go toward:

- Annual rent of the GBC Boathouse
- Insurance for the club as well as our fleet our trailers and launches
- State vehicle registration and taxes
- Fall Practices
- Spring Practices 5 Days a week for two hours a day
- 4 to 5 Person Coaching Staff
- Entry Fees for Regattas
- Rower Hotel Paid at Team Travel Events
- Team Travel, where applicable
- Spring Break Training Camp (Required for all rowers)
- Team Uni-Suit
- Rental Vehicle to Transport Boats to and from regattas
- Boats
- All Necessary Support Equipment
- Maintenance of all Support Equipment
- MUCH, MUCH MORE!

For any questions regarding the budget please email treasurer@greatbridgecrew.org

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

When a student joins GBCC, his/her Parents also become part of the club as non-rowing members. Both Rowers and Parents are expected to participate in fundraising activities for the Club. In addition to dues, members will participate in a combination of fundraising and volunteer hours to support GBCC. There are several volunteer opportunities. Serving on one of our volunteer positions or on a committee is a major way to Support our Crew.

Parents are encouraged to become actively involved with club and attend our monthly meetings. Rowers and Parents provide the manpower and financial resources necessary to sustain the club. GBCC does not receive funds from the school system but relies on dues, donations, and fundraising to maintain our operating budget and build capital for projects, equipment, maintenance, competitions, as well as scholarships for those who need assistance with dues.

JOIN A COMMITTEE

Committees are the key to keeping our club functioning. Novice parents are encouraged to take up an alternate position their first year, to take over as the varsity parents leave the club.

OVERVIEW OF COMMITTEES

The Vice President is the committee chairs conduit to the board and establishes the duties and responsibilities, expectations, guidance and budgets for each committee.

As outlined in the GBCC Bylaws, standing committees shall be appointed within 30 days of the start of the season. The standing committees are Maintenance and Fundraising.

Committees chairs are responsible for organizing any additional volunteers needed for their committee, as well as reporting the progress to the Vice President/Board and the membership if required.



Important Committees

Hospitality Committee

Provides sustenance for rowers and families at regattas & team events

Fundraising Committee

Plans and executes various campaigns to raise funds for GBCC

Publicity/Recruitment Committee

Works to spread the word about GBCC in the community through digital and analog means

Maintenance Committee

Responsible for the continued upkeep of our fleet and equipment

Concert Committee

Coordinate volunteers for our ongoing fundraiser at Veteran's United Amphitheater.

Get Involved!

PRACTICE PARENTS

Our most important parent volunteer

Overview

The main roles a practice parent play are to observe the waterway for incoming boat traffic, and in the rare case of an emergency, assist the coaching staff as well as call parents or emergency personnel if necessary.

Before/During Practice

The Practice Parent is granted permission to drive down to the boathouse AFTER dropping their rower off at the drop-off. Once down at the BH the practice parent *assists* the coaches by:

- Opening up the Boathouse
- Pulling two laundry baskets from inside and walking them to the dock
- Removing duck gate and sweeping any excess bird droppings
- Opening the coaches shed
- Turning on the main bridge to bridge radio
- Pulling the launch safety equipment (10 items per launch)
 - fuel can
 - lifejacket
 - paddle
 - soft bag (filled with life jackets)
 - Pelican box (filled with safety gear)
 - (2) square life preservers
 - towel
 - handheld walkie-talkie (set to channel 63)
 - bullhorn (batteries are charged next to the walkie-talkies)
- Have a radio for yourself and other Parents on shore
- Observe the waterway during the kids practice ensuring transiting vessels know we have Rowers on the water.
- Communicate with coaches as needed
- Pull GB boat slings out from the BH for the first few rowers that come off the water
- Be on the dock when the first few boats return to the dock to ensure they do not crash.
- Assist the coaches in returning safety gear to the coaches shed
- Ensure the main bridge to bridge radio and the lights are turned off (except the main switch)
- Depart BH to wait for rowers at the turnaround.

Towards the end of the regular competition season as the coach informs your Rower if they have been selected to participate at States, Nationals, etc, a signup sheet will be provided, and Practice Parent duties are split between those families participating.

Not only is it easy, but it's also a GREAT way to see your child out on the water, and get an up close look at how the team works together. It's awesome to watch as they progress throughout the season.

****If you are unable to participate due to health related or other various reasons, please contact the Member At Large.**





Transportation to and from Regattas

The location of the Regatta will be posted in the TeamSnap app in the Schedule section on the appropriate date.

Rowers are NOT allowed to drive to and from Regattas.

In the event you are unable to drive your Rower to the event please coordinate with other Parents or please contact the board in advance and arrangements will be made to support your Rower.

Regattas

Regular Season Regattas begin in September and proceed through June of the next year. Only a few of the Regattas take place within the immediate local area. They can occur at various locations in Southeastern Virginia, North Carolina and Northern Virginia.

Typical Regatta Season

Traditionally, GBCC participates in the following Regattas but this can change from year to year.

- Head of the James
- Head of the Layette
- Head of the Chickahominy
- Head of the Occoquan
- Great Bridge Erg Pull
- *Mid Atlantic Erg Sprints
- Hampton Roads Erg Pull
- Buggy Beach
- Matthews
- Regional Championships
- *Mid-Atlantic Youth Championships
- *Nationals - Varies

*All Rowers have the opportunity to be selected to participate in each of these events. The Coaches select Rowers and boat crews based on performance, attendance, and drive. Each of these events will allow any boat crew to be entered into the event, however, GBCC enters only boat crews and Rowers that the coaching staff feels are able to compete at these higher levels.

*Additionally, Hotel rooms will be provided at cost to the club for rowers selected to participate in these events. Rowers are required to share a room with other Rowers selected to participate in these events (boys with boys, girls with girls). Chaperones will be designated by the club (another awesome volunteer opportunity). Parents/families are permitted to attend the events but room accommodations will be at their own expense.

REGATTA TIPS

The first time you ever experience a regatta is like no other experience. Be sure to attend the regattas, and allow yourself plenty of time to get to the race site. A report will be provided to your rower by the coach and will be posted on TeamSnap. In most some cases, you may have to walk quite some ways from the parking area, and race schedules can change unexpectedly. Don't miss the race you came to see! Additionally, your Rower must be on time to begin offloading the trailer and preparing for the race day.

DIRECTIONS

Directions to the event will be shared via email and the team app. If you are having difficulties pulling up the location, please reach out to the Member at Large. Please remember the exact team area will not be known until the trailer is parked at the venue. This is also true of the food trailer and tent.

LOOK FOR THE GREAT BRIDGE TENT

Once you have arrived at the Regatta site look for the Great Bridge Tent. Usually set up on the race course, it's a place where Rowers get something to eat and drink, and hang out in between races. The Parents tent is usually nearby where we can all congregate and watch the events on the water.

Once you've found the team trailer, wish your rower well and stay away from the trailer. The trailer is a strictly rower and coach area. It may seem throughout the day things run slowly, but, for the Rowers it is not. They will be prepping their boats and helping their team where needed, and working with the coaching staff throughout the day. They help other Rowers launch and recover their boats, and it's important they focus on their Team and stay with their boat lineup. If you need to speak to your rower, please get with a member of the board first.



PLAN FOR ALL DAY EVENTS

Even though the Rowers may not be on the water for more than a half hour, they have to prepare the boats and load them on the trailers, unload them at the race site and set them up, and then stow them back at the Boathouse at the end of the day. The Coach will provide your Rower a time to meet back at the boathouse to offload the trailer. The time will also be announced via various electronic means and as updates become available they will be posted. Additionally, plan on departing the Regatta and proceeding directly to the Boathouse for trailer offload.

PACK A BAG

The weather can become unpredictable and standing all day beside a river or lake can get pretty miserable if it's cold and wet. Additionally, at most all locations there are no permanent structures you will be exposed to the elements throughout the day. Some mornings it may begin chilly and as the day wears on become hotter with a monsoon somewhere in the middle.

Our Rowers race rain or shine. The following items are highly encouraged and will help to make your regatta experience much more bearable.

- Clothing should be able to cover a full spectrum of weather.
- Jackets, sweats, hats and gloves are necessary at most regattas at one point of the day or another
- Keep a change of dry clothes in the car.
- Mud Boots (it does get very muddy at the various locations)
- Lawn Chairs (no seating is provided at most of the sites)
- Sunscreen
- Bug Spray
- Canopy if desired
- A wagon to transport your belongings
- Often, cash for parking

If there is anything specific you may want please bring it with you. Food is coordinated for the Rowers and often available for a moderate donation to the club from our food tent to family members if supplies allow.



****Remember you may have to walk a considerable way to the Regatta location from where you parked.****

ROWER PACKING LIST

Please make sure your rower brings the following to every race

- Any medications needed for the day
- Extra change of clothes
- Change of shoes (they may get muddy)
- Change of socks
- Team Gortex or Rain Jacket
- Sunscreen
- Hat or visor
- A one-liter, non-disposable water bottle

UNIFORMS

Team uniforms will be provided by the club. Novice rowers will receive tank and trou from the club. Varsity rowers will receive a unisuit to wear for competitions. The expectation is that these will ONLY be worn for competitions and rowers will arrive at the competition with a clean uniform. Any replacement or additional requests will be at the rower's expense.

The team will provide a polo shirt for rowers to wear on Fridays prior to competitions and, where applicable, to wear on the way to races when traveling as a team.

Additional team wear will be available for purchase at various times through the year, either as fundraisers or through team stores. These efforts will be lead by the Uniform Coordinator and shared team-wide.

