



I'm more than just a: rower

Rigorous training does not define the lives of rowers

by Molly George

Numbing practices in October and March, anxiety-inducing erg tests, a 20 minute trek to practice, seven hour bus rides to regattas, limited free time. . . . These are common complaints that make people ask rowers why they participate in such a strenuous sport. If it takes up a student-athlete's entire life, how and why do they continue to show up at tryouts and strap into the boat?

Though these are regular challenges of the sport, every rower has an answer. It often has to do with the team, an irreplaceable group of people who, despite complaints, choose to commit to this intense extracurricular.

The image of a rower can be as extreme as an obsessed athlete who eats, sleeps, hydrates, and trains, only talking about rowing in between classes and their practice schedule.

Members of the rowing team are aware of this reputation; sophomore coxswain Chase Hetler said, "The stereotype [of a rower] is someone who's obsessed with rowing and whose world revolves around that sport."

To turn this reputation of complete commitment into a positive, captain Allison Elli said, "I think [the rower stereotype] shows how involved we all are and how much we care about the team, but we all also have lots of other interests and passions. For example, I'm really



Lily Feinerman, Hannah Lerner, Allison Elli, Janie Rudolph, and Rachel Rane in the fall of 2018 | Stuart Rodgers

passionate about environmental issues, and I'm also in IGSS and very involved in that. I think we're all very well rounded people. But in a group we typically talk only about rowing, which is where I think the stereotype comes from."

Though the team takes up a lot of time during regular practice hours and beyond, Hetler described herself as more than just a rower.

"I love any sport or activity that's outside, like hiking and skiing. I love to travel and that always comes before any sport for me."

To be fast takes physical strength, mental toughness, and hard work, but rowers have countless interests and friends outside of the team.

"Being a rower isn't the only thing that defines us. We're just like everyone else," said senior coxswain Rachel Rane, clarifying that although the team devotes a lot of time to rowing, the work is only one part of being on the team.

Just like any other NT sports team, crew is made up of individuals

who are proud to represent their team. At the same time, they wear more than NTRC logos, think about more than 2K times, and aspire to be more than athletes — though several team members represent NT crew at top college rowing programs.

Charlie Fargo, captain and World Rowing Junior Championship medalist, explained that just like in any other sport, it's impossible to limit rowers to one stereotype.

"Many of the people on the team are diverse and have many other talents and interests." For Fargo, some of these interests include skiing, biking, and slacklining.

Beyond other athletics, rowers participate in clubs such as VIP and Social Service Board. Several rowers have referenced their sport as the reason for their time management skills and hard working qualities. Working around a busy practice schedule makes rowers' time valuable, so where they choose to devote their free time matters. Every sports team has its requirements, but every team member finds interests

and expressions outside of that for a sense of individuality.

Fargo added, "The rowers, just like any other team who are with each other for an extended period of time, develop close relationships that last from freshman through senior year. I'd say that every athlete at New Trier has the same mindset of competitiveness and sportsmanship."

Compared to other sports, rowing is still just an optional extracurricular that's fun because of the bonds teammates build.

Captain Josh Pickard put it simply, "We are all just a bunch of dudes that like to move boats and work out with friends. There is really nothing more to being a rower than that. In that respect, I don't break from the stereotype because I don't see one."

While the workouts are challenging, training is rewarding because of the best part — the team. According to captain Marilyn Gao, non-rowers wonder why we continue to do something that makes us complain so much.

"The reason I do it is for the team. I love my teammates and I care about the team dynamic and that's why rowing is worth it." Gao also mentioned the teamwork and leadership she has gained as a team member and captain.

While it may seem like the majority of their time is spent in a boiler room or in a boat (or in Ohio), rowers can be found in the mountains, in the library, in groups of non-rowers, in clubs, on the newspaper, always fueled by the enthusiasm and dedication that come from being part of a team.

As several rowers from the broad team perceive it, the stereotype of a rower may be accurate in some of its positive qualities that define rowers as a dedicated, team-oriented, and focused group of unique, fun, and talented individuals.

Rowers support each other, and all it takes to be a rower is to love rowing enough to show up to a supportive environment and work hard to go fast. Whether it's the hype before a race, the accomplishment of finishing a workout, the thrill of winning, the constant support of teammates, or anything else, everyone has their own answer to what defines a rower.

I approach this topic with six seasons of rowing behind me, so I know the commitment it takes just to be on the team. The answer comes to me rowing on a crisp and sunny spring afternoon, gliding down the river in a boat full of the most hardworking and supportive people I know — rowers.

Rane explained, "We've invested four years into this physically, emotionally, and mentally enduring sport. We are dedicated to the sport and driven by passion."

NT alum's "The K of D" performed by frosh/soph

Playwright, graduate Laura Schellhardt returns to alma mater

by Matthew Murray

New Trier alum Laura Schellhardt's play, "The K of D", was first produced in 2008 and has been performed at many high schools in the Chicagoland area in the years following.

After being performed for over a decade at neighboring high schools, "The K of D" was finally produced at Schellhardt's alma mater.

"Other directors in the area have talked about how much they liked ['The K of D']," said director Nina Lynn, "I knew that [Laura] had written it, but I had never read it, and, the moment I read it, I was sold [on producing it]."

Although Schellhardt was introduced to fine arts at New Trier, her career ambitions did not shift towards playwriting until her time at Northwestern University, where she now works as a senior lecturer. During her time as a Northwestern student, Schellhardt had the opportunity to study under award-winning writer John Logan, an influence who ultimately led to her decision to pursue a career as a

playwright.

"[I took Logan's class] for three years in a row. I became his assistant as a senior because he was starting to move out to Hollywood, and, by that time, I knew that [playwriting] was what I wanted to do with my life," said Schellhardt.

After receiving her bachelor's degree at Northwestern, Schellhardt continued her playwriting education at Brown University, with Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Paula Vogel, where she received her master's degree in playwriting.

Schellhardt subsequently began working on her first professional play: a one-woman show about a 12 year-old girl who was believed to have obtained a lethal superpower from the tragic death of her brother.

That one-woman show became "The K of D." Schellhardt spent three years developing The K of D before it premiered in 2008, marking the beginning of her professional playwriting career.

"'K of D' definitely has a special place in my heart since it was my first professional piece," said Schellhardt. "I had written short plays that had professional intention and I had written a lot of plays in grad school, but this was the first play that I put out into the world."

Although Schellhardt was not officially involved with New Trier's production of the play, she paid a visit to the performing students two weeks



The cast of the play, featuring a girl who believes she has a lethal superpower, poses for a photo | Stuart Rodgers

prior to its premiere, providing the students a unique opportunity to meet the creator of the work that they were performing.

"When I knew that we were doing ['The K of D'], I contacted Laura and asked her to come and speak to our students," said Lynn. "Laura came and spent about an hour talking to the cast about what inspired her to write the play and also what she likes to see when we do the play."

Since many of the characters were based on people that Schellhardt knew, her meeting with the cast allowed each actor the opportunity to address individual questions about how to portray their specific character.

"None of the characters are

carbon copies of anybody. They are all variations on people that I know, and a lot of it is fictionalized," said Schellhardt. "Certainly the characters are fictionalized, but [their traits] are pulled from people I know."

Although Schellhardt was able to easily discern fact from embellishment in her characters in "The K of D", the characters that she created struggle with that very skill. The play focuses on how the community surrounding Charlotte McGraw, the main character of the play, confuses the facts surrounding the death of her brother with the myth of her obtaining a 'Kiss of Death.'

"At the time [I wrote the play], I was very interested in what it means to survive trauma at a young age. The

idea of a young girl grappling with a traumatic experience, seemed to make sense as an urban legend."

In addition to speaking to the students participating in the play, Schellhardt also saw a performance of the play, which ran from Mar. 13 to Mar. 16. In viewing the play, Schellhardt bore witness to the new fine arts facilities at Winnetka, for which she praised the school in upgrading.

"New Trier is a very different building than the building that I experienced, so it was really nice to see the new space," said Schellhardt. "It's encouraging to see a school where the arts seem to be taken as seriously as sports, and I think that the [new wing] is a testament to that."