

Rowing

Can a sports town become a powerhouse in the ivy-covered world of sculling?

By Greg Evans

Even during seasons when this city's baseball and football franchises play so poorly that the most die-hard fans would consider rooting for — if not moving to — Cleveland, Cincinnati is known across the nation as the Land of the Reds and the Home of the Bengals. A sports town, through and through, but sports of a certain stripe. Good ol' hot-dogs-and-beer-type sports. Especially beer-type sports, judging from recent Bengals games.

But a new ripple is being made in the Cincinnati sports scene, a ripple, to be exact, along the Ohio River and in Clermont County's East Fork State Park Lake. Cincinnati's "newest" sport is rowing, and its players are doing their best to earn this city a place among metropolitan rowing centers like Boston and Philadelphia. There is a costly and time-consuming effort, to be sure, an endeavor that begs the question: can a hot-dogs-and-beer-type sports town become a powerhouse in the ivy-covered, Harvard-versus-Yale world of sculling?

If the answer to that question is a resolute "maybe," a local group of dedicated rowers is doing its best to make it otherwise, and apparently its best isn't bad. With as many as twenty trustees representing an impressive roster of the Cincinnati business and corporate scene, the East Fork Water Sports Association has accomplished much. Within four years of the association's formation, Cincinnati became the site of a nationally recognized championship regatta, a competition that led the way to a second major development in the struggle to earn the Queen City a prominent place in the rowing community. Last January, the city was designated one of five official training centers for the United States Olympic Rowing Team, a designation that, in turn, prompted the third major development: The Boathouse, a proposed \$2 million restaurant/fitness center designed as a central attraction of the city's riverfront bicentennial project. The facility will feature a restaurant on one floor and, on another level, a training center for



Two Olympians—Wieslaw Kujda (in front) and John Terwilliger—at Coney Island boat launch on Kellogg Avenue: *Both are confident about the future of rowing in Cincinnati. "Within a year, Cincinnati will be known in all U.S.A. for rowing," says Kujda.*

both the Olympic contenders and the public.

It seems Cincinnati has everything it needs to become the Rowing Capital of the Midwest, everything, that is, except rowers. Or at least *Olympic* rowers, and at least in any great number. Will Cincinnati be able to fill its brand new Olympic training facility with Olympic trainees?

"We have two or three athletes interested in coming here to train," says John Terwilliger, a 1984 Olympic rower and a candidate for '88, "but basically athletes don't believe it will happen here in Cincinnati. We have to convince them, and I think we can do it even before the building goes up." Terwilliger himself was so convinced of Cincinnati's rowing future that he passed up job offers in

both Boston and Los Angeles to come here last spring. His arrival was something of a coup for the association, a signal of credibility sent out to other athletes considering the move. In a sense, Terwilliger was recruited to recruit other rowers, something of a gamble on his part since he'd be the first athlete to risk his crucial training in the fledgling rowing scene of Cincinnati. Surprisingly, the decision came somewhat easily for Terwilliger, a matter of the right move at the right time. Tired and bored with the high-brow cliquishness of Boston's rowing academia, he saw Cincinnati as a convenient compromise between his vocation and avocation. In addition to offering the prospect of a state-of-the-art facility and, in rowers' lingo, "good water," the

association enticed Terwilliger with a pledge to assist him in finding a job in his field — banking. In fact, the promise of local corporate support, attained through the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce, in helping athletes find jobs was a key factor in Cincinnati's designation as an Olympic training site. To compete with cities that virtually represent the Rowing Establishment, association founder William Engeman and a small group of others, including Harry Graves, president of the association's Cincinnati Rowing Club, sold Cincinnati on the merits of its "livability." To earn a place alongside rowing centers like Boston, Philadelphia and Seattle, Cincinnati needed an edge, something innovative, and the promise of job-hunting assistance proved just the thing. Many Olympic trainees are fresh out of school, with more dreams than experience. Combine this with the sometimes erratic training and competition schedules of athletes and the promise of career assistance is appealing, to say the least.

"I think some athletes have actually been scared off from coming here," Terwilliger says. "They think it all seems too good to be true, like it will never really happen." For Terwilliger, it's already begun to happen. After a job interview with the management of Fifth Third Bank, arranged by the Chamber of Commerce, Terwilliger was offered, and accepted, a position. "Rowing," Terwilliger says practically, "has never paid my bills," admitting that at 28-years-old, he'd choose his banking career over his sport if faced with an ultimatum. The Cincinnati offer postponed, if not prevented, a choice between the two. His career obviously is important to him, but when Terwilliger starts on the subject of rowing, his reluctance to forego the sport becomes every bit as obvious. He refers to it as his addiction, offering both physical (endomorphs) and emotional reasons for the high he gets while in a boat, but becomes frustrated in attempts to explain either.

"When a boat is going really well, you're really part of a group," he says. "It's hard work, but you get a return on everything you put in. I just can't put it into words, it's such a wonderful feeling. Even listening to the bubbles..."

The feeling, he says, was one he first experienced in college, Seattle Pacific University. Encouraged to join the rowing crew by a couple of friends, he soon was taken by the sheer beauty of the sport, the long sculls gliding with an apparent, although misleading, ease over a peaceful lake. Lake Washington proved a refuge to the small-town boy in the big city of Seattle, a type of refuge he still enjoys. Maybe he *would* choose banking if

a choice had to be made, if training proved incompatible with the demands of a career, but for now he'll do all he can to avoid a decision. "I just don't know if I'm ready to give it up yet," he says. "I want to give it up, I really do, but at the same time I want to be young the rest of my life and do what I like to do. I want to be the best, or at least one of the best, and when you give up that dream, you give up your identity."

Despite the seemingly perfect solution that the move to Cincinnati represented — a good job in a city designated as an Olympic training center — Terwilliger's relocation was not without some risk, a risk that echoes the larger chance taken by the association in its efforts to make Cincinnati a successful rowing center. With the small, temporary rowing facilities and docks on East Fork Lake

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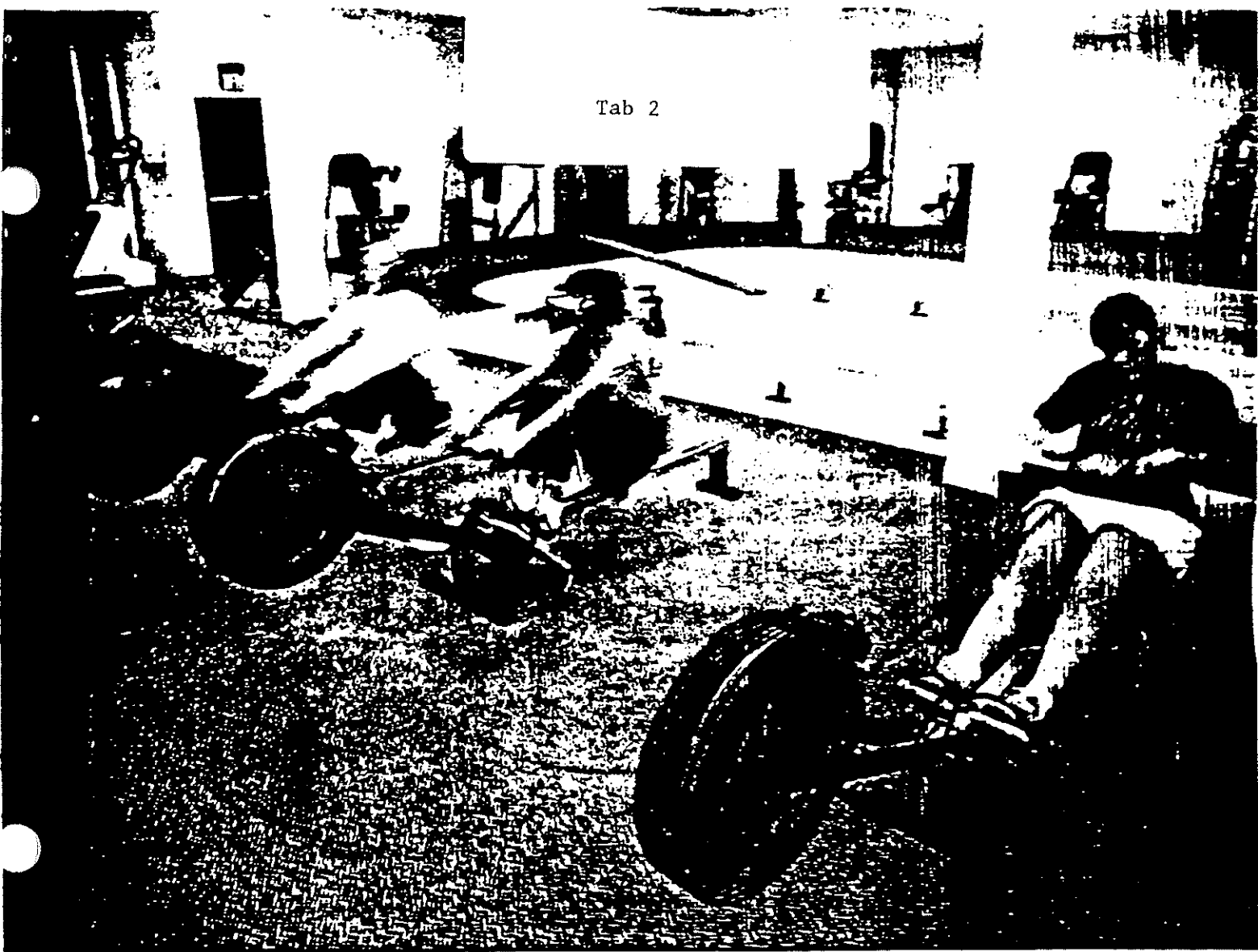
Even listening to the bubbles."

and at Coney Island being used until the Boathouse is completed, Cincinnati, at this point, simply can't compare with the established rowing cities of the East Coast. Terwilliger's move in particular meant foregoing the company of other Olympic contenders with whom he could train. At least for the time being, the only other Olympian in town is Wieslaw Kujda, a Polish refugee who rowed for his country's Olympic team in '80. Kujda came to Cincinnati last May, shortly after leaving Poland, at the invitation of an old friend from his hometown of Warsaw. That friend, Zenon Babraj, had been hired by the East Fork Water Sports Association to coach and oversee the rowing program at the University of Cincinnati. Babraj currently is coaching the freshman rowing crew at Brown University, his place at UC taken by his old teammate, Kujda.

The UC program is one of several programs initiated by the association since its founding in '81. Others include various high school programs; the Cincinnati Rowing Club, a group for post-collegiate recreational rowers; and the Cincinnati Regatta, recognized as the national inter-collegiate men's rowing championship. Other developments in the short history of the association also came swiftly. Last May, Ohio Governor Richard Celeste approved a \$40,000 state grant for the purchase of a 2,000-meter, Olympic-specification rowing course and dock system at the East Fork Lake, the site of the annual regatta. About 20,000 people attended the competition last June, countless others tuning in to watch the national coverage on the cable sports channel, ESPN.

Despite the quick pace of developments in Cincinnati's rowing scene during the last few years, Kujda, like Terwilliger, still finds himself growing impatient at times, impatient to train in a top-rate facility with top-rate athletes. But also like Terwilliger he seems confident about the future. "Within a year," he says, "Cincinnati will be known in all USA for rowing. This city has great possibilities, but we must take chances." Perhaps most frustrating is what Kujda describes as the "crazy circle" of enticing athletes to Cincinnati: most serious athletes are reluctant to move to a city without an established rowing facility, but without the credibility of Olympic athletes, local developers may be hesitant to invest in such a facility.

The "crazy circle," however, seems to have come to an end with the announcement of the \$2-million Boathouse Restaurant. Pending approval by the Cincinnati City Council, the Haverstick group, owner and operator of Jay's Restaurant, will construct the 250-seat riverfront restaurant at Sawyer Point. The developers have agreed to lease, for a nominal fee of \$1 a year, the basement level of the facility to the Cincinnati Rowing Club for use as the Olympic training center. To be called the Cincinnati Rowing Center, the facility will be open to the public but also cater to the Olympic athletes-in-training with top-of-the-line rowing machines, Nautilus equipment and a sports medicine clinic. Assuming easy passage through the city review process, the development could go under construction by next summer, with completion by the summer of 1987. With the certainty of a training center, Terwilliger hopes to bring at least eight more Olympic contenders to Cincinnati by next fall. "I know it's all going to happen," Terwilliger says with the confidence that has brought the local rowing scene so far, so fast. "It's just a matter of time." □



PATRICK REDDY/The Cincinnati

Kristen Gardner, Jenn Huffman and Holly Krapp, all members of the Cincinnati Rowing Club, work out on rowing machines Monday.

Rowing center on course for Olympics

By Ken Wilson
Post staff reporter

Athletes hoping to earn a spot on the 1992 Olympic team are working out at the new Cincinnati Rowing Center, part of a boathouse and restaurant at Bicentennial Commons at Sawyer Point that is expected to be the centerpiece for the city's Dec. 28 bicentennial bash.

The new, \$5 million rowing center at 925 Eastern Ave. is complete for the party in the park, while a Montgomery Inn restaurant on the top two floors is still under construction and scheduled to open in January.

The center's opening comes a month before the deadline it had to meet to retain its designation as an Olympic training center.

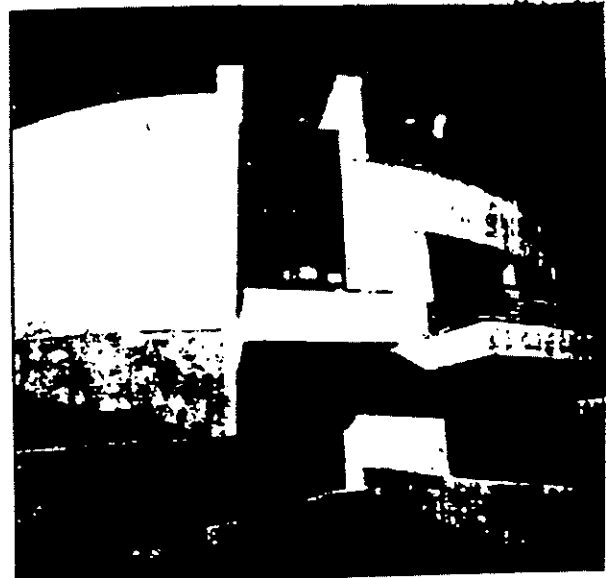
"We have the type of facility in which we hope to attract between 18 and 24 world-class athletes in the next 12 months," said Steve Baker,

director of the rowing center, the only such Olympic training center in the inland U.S. For example, officials at the center are courting an athlete who participated in the 1988 Summer Olympic trials, he said.

"We would like to develop a local year-round training program," said Chris Karssiens, president of the center. "We would also like to attract both the novice and the elite athlete."

Officials want to develop a strong high school rowing program, offer summer instructional camps and lure local college athletes to the facility, which includes a 14-person indoor rowing tank, 22 Nautilus weight-lifting stations, a free weight room, rowing ergometers and cross country ski machines.

"The tank enables us to actually simulate rowing conditions on the



PATRICK REDDY/The Cincinnati

The \$5 million Cincinnati Rowing Center sits on the River in Bicentennial Commons at Sawyer Point.

Please see ROWING, 8A

The Cincinnati Post

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1988

Rowing

From Page 1A

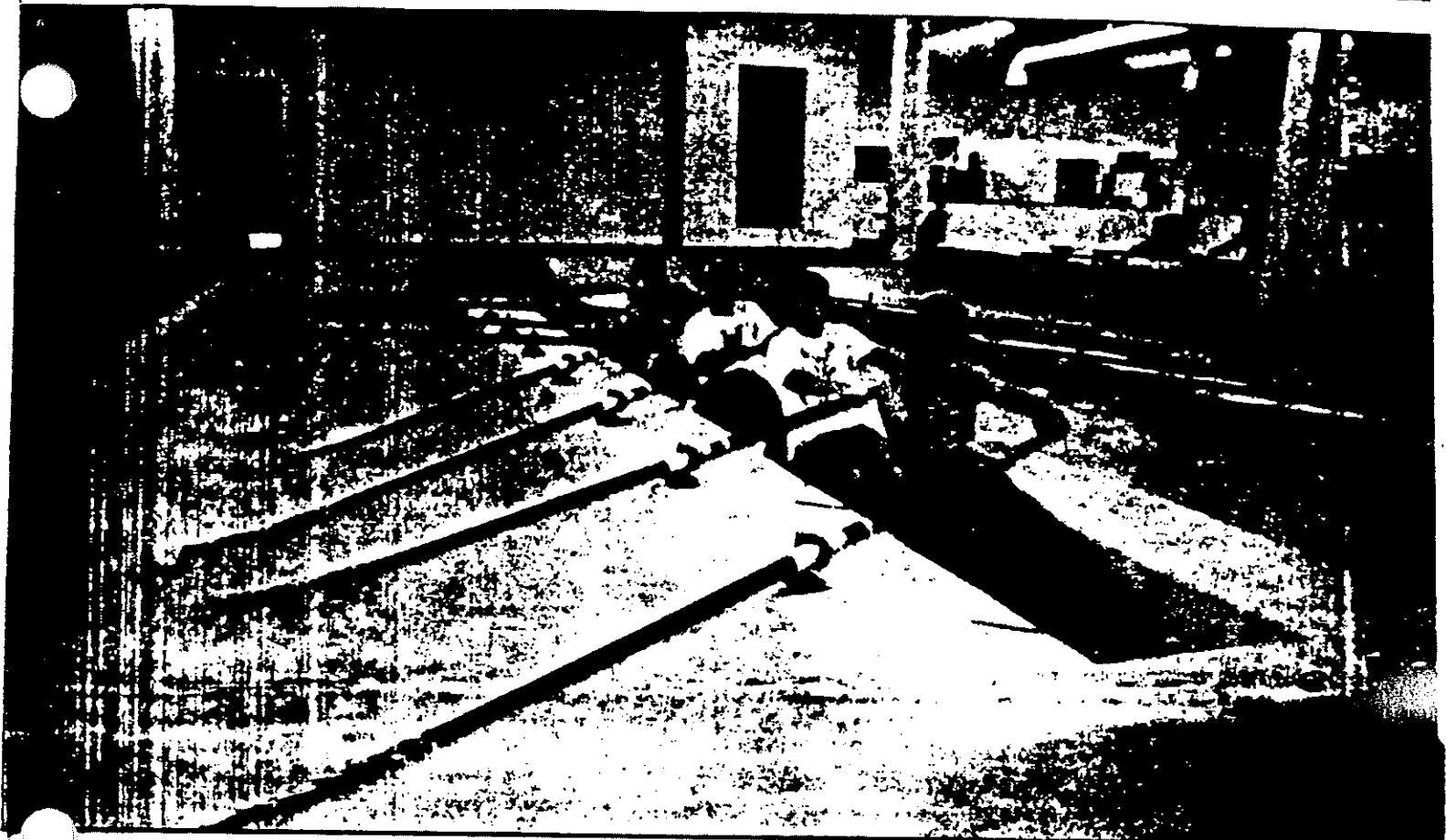
water," Baker said. "This is one of the few centers that has one, and we can use it during the winter, that's the special part."

The restaurant will have a main dining room seating 350 on the first floor and two dining areas and a large bar upstairs, Dean Gregory, an owner-operator of Montgomery Inn, said.

Outdoor dining will be available with balcony seating for 150, plus patio seating for 80-100 with a view of the river and the ice skating center, Gregory said.

The project started off on shaky ground when the city's Urban Design Review Board rejected original plans for the center. The two sides later reached a compromise.

"It's been one thing after another," Gregory said. "But we are over the hump and things are looking good."



The Cincinnati Enquirer/Gemma Clark

From right, John Ritter, Damian Bolton, Brian McDaniel and Joe Spahn practice in the rowing tank at the Boathouse Rowing and Fitness Center at Sawyer Point.

Boathouse Center is rowing hub

BY BRYAN K. MARQUARD
Squire Contributor

Bill Engeman remembers the approach his high school friends took to get him interested in rowing more than 30 years ago. "They sort of suckered me into it," he recalls. It was an inauspicious introduction to a sport that Engeman fell in love with in a big way, eventually rising to become captain of the Brown University team. Engeman, a lawyer who has been an integral part of Greater Cincinnati's rowing renaissance, thinks the area's would-be rowers have a better option than the coercion that brought him into the sport. "I would send them down to the rowing center to talk to Steve or Susan," he says. The Boathouse Rowing and Fitness Center at Sawyer Point has become the shell from

Inside

The *Enquirer's* Outdoors/Recreation page debuts today on page D-8 and continues each Thursday. On it you'll find:

- A feature on the popularity of wide-body tennis rackets.
- A list of things to do.
- A list of things to watch.
- Area fishing conditions.

which all oars emanate in Cincinnati's rowing scene. From fielding questions about repairing boats and home rowing machines to passing out information about the upcoming Cincinnati Regatta to providing programs for beginners to the best, the center is the hub

for area rowing enthusiasts. Steve Baker, facilities manager at the rowing center, is one of the people longtime rowers like Engeman think of when a newcomer is interested in the sport. When a beginner calls, Baker suggests one of the center's learn-to-row programs that are coordinated by Susan Saint Sing, programs director at the facility and a coach at Xavier University. The course sends beginners out to the state park at East Fork Lake where one of the rowing center's interns takes them through the paces. Baker says the learn-to-row program is a 10-hour course that can be completed in a weekend or spread over several weekends, as long as the center can get two or three (Please see ROW, Page D-8)

Row

CONTINUED FROM PAGE D-1

aspiring rowers together.

For those who have trouble at first coordinating technique and timing, Engeman provides a fine example of the payoff persistence can bring.

Engeman's early attempts at rowing were hindered by what he describes as the gawky or awkward phase he went through in high school. Determination paid off and he eventually helped lead his college team to the 1960 Olympic Trials.

"There's very little in the way of natural *anything* in this sport," he says. "Perspiration is everything."

A growing number of people in the area are willing to sweat it out in a rowing shell. Baker estimates that 500 people are either members of the rowing center or use the facility as a resource. That number includes the 200 rowers who are members of the center; the area's high school and college teams; and a couple hundred more people who row with some regularity.

Harry Graves, who was a member of the Trinity College crew that won the Henley Royal Regatta in England in the mid-1970s, says the growth of rowing in Greater Cincinnati "would have to be labeled as somewhat phenomenal."

Graves, the president of the Cincinnati alternative energy company Global Energy, has long been involved in the area's rowing scene; he helped develop the Cincinnati Rowing Club and the row-

At a glance

241-BOAT

It's the 911 for area rowing enthusiasts, and it rings at the Boathouse Rowing and Fitness Center at Sawyer Point. Rowers calling for information get an earful. (OK, a bad pun . . .)

- Information about the learn-to-row program
- Advice on boats or home rowing machines
- How to join the Juniors programs
- Contact people for programs at area high schools and colleges
- A rundown on what equipment is available at the center
- Information about facilities at East Fork Lake and Coney Island
- Programs available for those who want to volunteer their time
- Membership options for the center and prices
- Where to go if you already row

ing center at Sawyer Point.

For the would-be rower, says Graves, the decision to become involved in the sport for fitness has a simple but sound foundation: "If you only have fifteen minutes to do something, that's the way to spend it."

Engeman, who is president of the East Fort Water Sports Association, a nonprofit group that raises funds to support area rowing interests, says that most people come to rowing after reading about it and deciding to jump right in.

Unfortunately, many take a buy first, ask questions later approach.

"A surprising number of people end up with boats without the slightest idea of what to do with them," Engeman says.

He suggests that anyone interested in the sport pay a visit to the rowing center first to try out the

equipment.

"Just get on the machines," Engeman says. "If the machine feels right for you, the boat will feel three times as good."

And if everything clicks, opportunities in the area are limited only by how far a newcomer wants to go.

Baker says the center sponsors scholastic rowing programs at Country Day, Mariemont and Seven Hills high schools, and at the University of Cincinnati, Miami University and Xavier. He also coaches a team made up of students from other area high schools — mostly from Walnut Hills High School — that is open to any student up to the competition. Six of the team's 18 members are off to national team development camps this summer.

For those who haven't been high school or college age for a few

decades, Engeman says masters programs and races are active across the country for rowers that range in age up to the late 60s or early 70s.

The sport is hardly limited to those who want to become active in the local scene or races, however. Engeman says opportunities are virtually limitless for the aspiring rower who wants to go it alone after learning the tricks of the trade.

"You've basically got unlimited access if you're willing to do solo rowing and cartop your boat," he says.

Baker says the rowing center has various membership options for those who want to join the ranks of the local rowing corps. The center hopes to increase its membership to 500 from the current level of about 200, he says.

Growth of the sport has come through an increasing number of programs that provide area rowers an opportunity to progress through junior programs to college competition and on into the elite program run through the rowing center.

This long-term approach aims to produce what Baker refers to as "a homegrown boat" of elite rowers. "The ties are being made," he says.

If the phone at the rowing center is any indication, growth of the sport in the area is on the fast track.

"The phone rings off the hook," Baker says. Maybe it's because of the catchy number: 241-BOAT.

OUTDOORS/RECREATION

Best bet



Harsha Lake at the East Fork State Park in Clermont County is the site for this week's eighth annual Cincinnati Regatta. Practice continues through Friday with the finals set for Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The competition climaxes in the final event when six collegiate teams vie for the U.S. rowing championship, known as the Herschede Cup. Admission for the finals is \$6 for adults and children under 12 will be admitted free. There is no admission charge during the week. Parking is free at the park with shuttle buses taking spectators to the beach area.



The Cincinnati Enquirer/Sammie Ches

One way to determine your interest in rowing is to try out the equipment on a visit to the Boathouse rowing and Fitness Center at Sawyer Point. Damian Bolton (left) and John Ritter (with Bolton, right) recently worked out on the rowing machinery.

SPORTS

■ Football/C-7

■ Outdoors/C-8

Inside

Lawsuit looms over women's basketball

A Washington-based attorney says he'll go to court to force the University of Oklahoma to continue its women's basketball program. See Page C-2.

Rowers set lofty goals

Linda Schneider and Ingrid Klich have their eyes on the national rowing team, and maybe an Olympic berth. See Page C-8.

Tagged-fish tournaments survive

In the fall, the Ohio legislature considered closing down fishing tournaments, but the tagged-fish tournaments survived. See Page C-8.

Two rowers pulling toward lofty goals

A national team berth and the Olympic team could be within reach

BY SUZY ROUSH
Enquirer Contributor

Two area rowers have lofty goals for the future — the United States national team and, possibly, the 1992 Olympics.

Linda Schneider and Ingrid Klich train at the Cincinnati Rowing Center and are gearing up for their competitive racing season.

Schneider, 24, from Woodlawn, Ky., started rowing five years ago with the University of Cincinnati's rowing club, when she was a freshman.

"I was a real active athlete in high school, and my first year (in college) I really missed the competition," Schneider said. "I went out and started rowing."

At that time, the UC rowing club and the rowing community were experiencing a surge in interest and activity.

"I happened to get into it at the right time, it was really starting to get going," she said. "People were starting to get competitive. I started going out and I haven't stopped since."

Schneider is a member of the elite team at the rowing center and spends her days training and teaching novice rowers. But she is concentrating on the future and the national team.

"I'm pursuing making the lightweight women's team," she said. "Two years ago, I started getting real serious and went to development camp for the national team. Last year, I went as far as I could go without making the team and I got injured. Barring all injuries, I will make the team and go to Australia."

Klich became interested in rowing during a two-month cycling trip in New Zealand.

"Every morning I'd see these guys rowing on the river," she recalled. "It was kind of in the back of my mind that this would be a fun thing to do."

It was a couple of years and a couple of jobs later that Klich, 32, was able to take up the sport. It was in Texas three years ago that she got her start.

"I bought a single and had some water to row on," she said. "I started entering all these races and had some coaching here and there, pretty much fly-by-night. Because of my size (6-foot-2) and brute strength, not because of technique at all, I started doing well."

She caught the attention of people connected to the national teams.

"People started seeing my size, which was an indicator for the heavyweight team and said, 'Go try it,'" said Klich, who lives in Walnut Hills. "Little by little, I just progressed upward and eventually it became clear that I had to get a coach and come to a training center and get seen."

When she settled in Cincinnati, she joined the rowing center. The biggest obstacle she has to overcome is her age.

"I'm already 32 and that's kind of late to get started in this sport and be recognized," she said. "They want to train youngsters and have more than one Olympics with them. People told me, 'No, you're too old for this, no way.' But that just egged me on."

While the 1992 Olympics is her long-range goal, the immediate future is the Olympic Festival in Minneapolis in June.

"If I can get in there, that means at least that I've been recognized as a potential for the future," Klich said. "It's not easy to be recognized."

"At this point, I'm doing it for the sheer fun of it," she said. "The daily routine of the training and the exercise and being outdoors on the water is worth it for me."

All-Star rowing race prelude to Regatta

BY MATT SOLINSKY

The Cincinnati Enquirer

As a prelude to the eighth annual Cincinnati Regatta, the Ohio River will be the site at 12:30 p.m. today for the third annual college all-star rowing sprint race.

The race, featuring 32 of the top college rowers from throughout the country, begins at the L&N Bridge. Four all-star teams will compete in the 500-meter race, which will pass the Bicentennial Commons at Sawyer Point and finish at the Boat House.

Meanwhile, practice for the regatta continues through Friday on Harsha Lake at East Fork State Park.

Competition begins Friday at 2 p.m. with four finals in the Sculls and Sweeps Junior Team Championship.

Competing for the title are

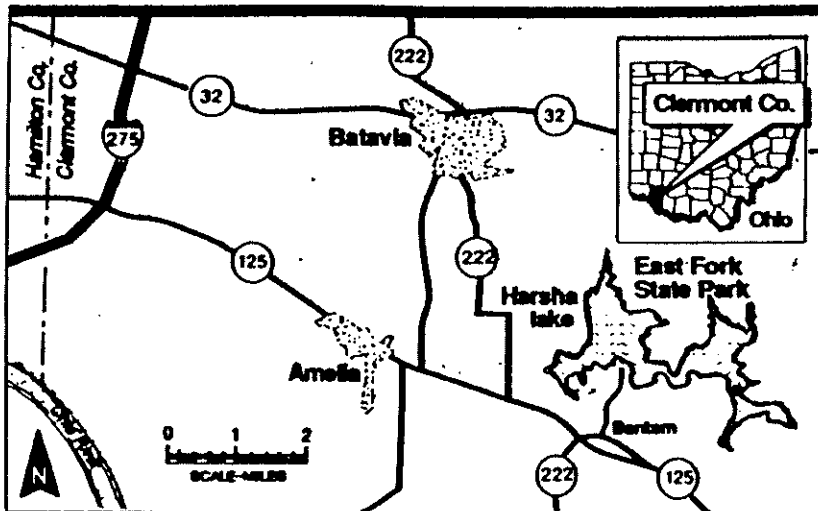
area high schools Mariemont, Cincinnati Country Day and Seven Hills. Also represented is the Cincinnati Rowing Center, with rowers from numerous local high schools and Oak Ridge High School in Tennessee.

CCD won the title last year.

"Generally, you will see more of a spread in the smaller boats than in the larger ones," said Mariemont coach Mike Engeman. "But all of the boats will be within five or six boat lengths of each other."

On Saturday, high school team event finals begin at 9 a.m.

Also Saturday at 3:30 p.m., Harvard, winner of the last two Herschede Cups, will compete against UCLA, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Washington and Northeastern for the U.S. collegiate rowing championship and a trip to the Henley Royal Regatta in London, England.



The Cincinnati Enquirer/Marty Eggerding

At a glance

WHAT: Eighth annual Cincinnati Regatta.

WHO: Top collegiate and high school rowing teams.

AT STAKE: For collegiate teams, the Herschede Cup and a chance to represent the United States in the Henley Royal Regatta in London, England.

WHERE: Harsha Lake, East Fork State Park, Clermont County, located 10 miles east of I-275 on Route 125 (Beechmont Avenue).

WHEN: Practice today and Friday, qualifying heats and finals Saturday at East Fork; also, college all-star rowing sprint today at 12:30 p.m. at Sawyer Point. High school finals begin at 2 p.m. Friday.

ADMISSION: Free today and Friday; \$6 for adults, children free on Saturday.