

# DOWN BY THE RIVER

This weekend, thousands of fans from across the United States will converge on the Charles River for the annual Head of the Charles regatta.





ON THE COVERS



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# PREVIEW HEAD OF THE CHARLES 2016



SPREAD  
HISTORY OF HOCR

Now in its 52nd rendition, the Head of the Charles Regatta has evolved from humble origins to one of the most popular regattas in the world, attracting over 400,000 people to Cambridge every year.

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Radcliffe heavyweight co-captain Abba Parker's connections to rowing run deep. The daughter of two Olympic rowers, Parker has established herself as a pivotal figure for RVHL

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Harvard junior heavyweight rower Vincent Breet is back in Cambridge after taking time off to compete with his native South Africa at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

FROM THE EDITORS

With hundreds of thousands of fans making their ways to the banks of the Charles for the 52nd edition of the Head of the Charles Regatta, the Harvard and Radcliffe crew programs continue their pursuit of excellence at the world famous event.

New men's lightweight coach Jesse Foglia looks to lead his team to new heights while implementing his system, Radcliffe heavyweight co-captain Abba Parker aims to excel in her last HOCR donning the Black and White, dozens of Harvard alums will return to compete in the familiar waters of the Charles, and men's heavyweight rower Vincent Breet will use his Olympic experience as he attempts to lead his team to victory.

With the eyes of the rowing world honed in on Cambridge this weekend, the Crimson and Black and White squads look to make an early impression in their most important competition of the fall.

— PJA, JC, JF, ASV



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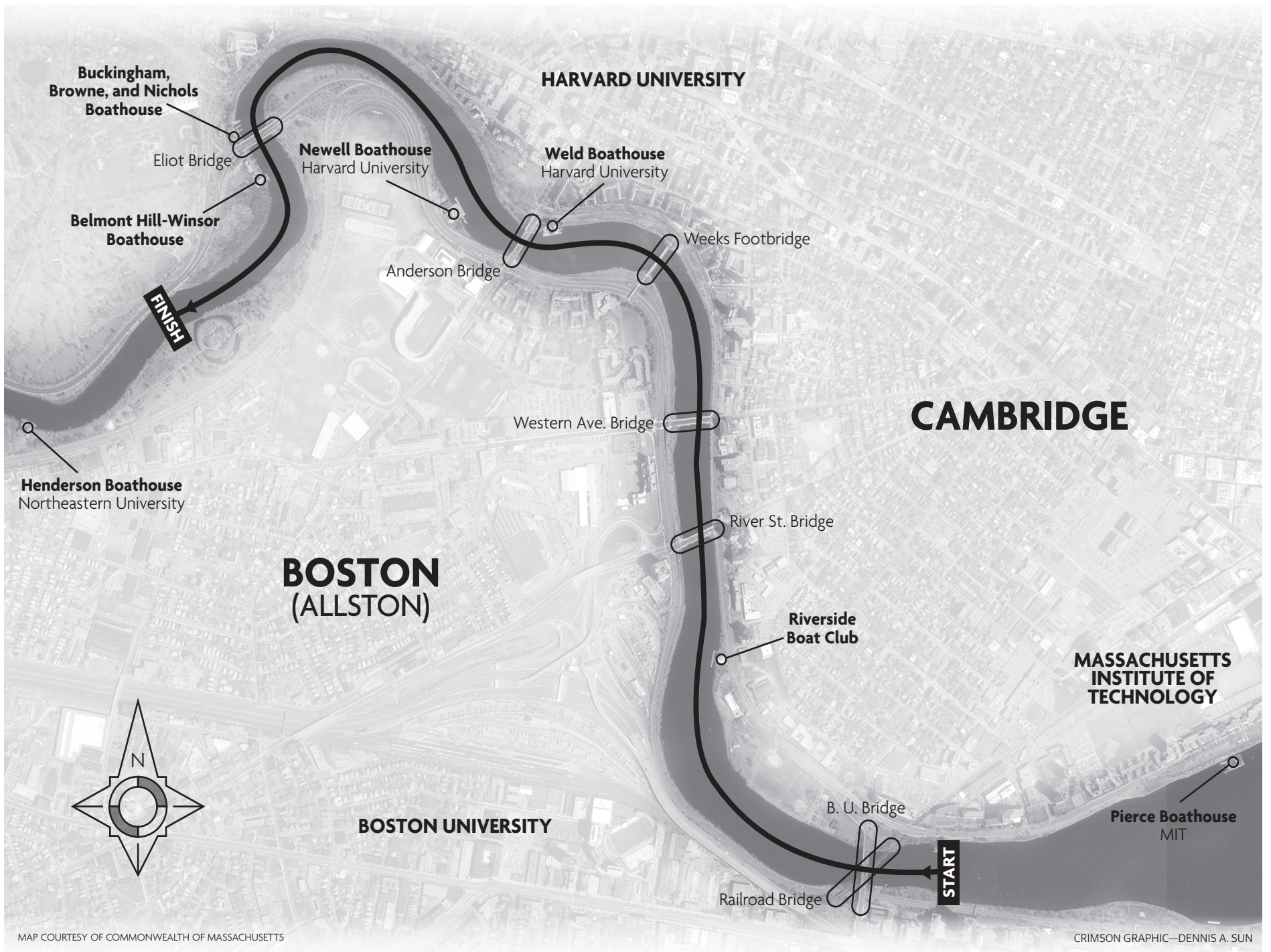


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# EVENT MAP





# RACE SCHEDULE

## MEN'S LIGHTWEIGHT

### SATURDAY, OCT. 22

**Club fours** | bow No. 23 | 1:18 p.m.

**LW eights** | bow No. 2 | 3:44 p.m.

**LW eights** | bow No. 5 | 3:44 p.m.

## MEN'S HEAVYWEIGHT

### SATURDAY, OCT. 22

**Club fours** | bow No. 50 | 1:18 p.m.

**Club eights** | bow No. 4 | 2:07 p.m.

**Club eights** | bow No. 12 | 2:07 p.m.

**Club eights** | bow No. 20 | 2:07 p.m.

**Champ. fours** | bow No. 9 | 1:43 p.m.

**Champ. eights** | bow No. 2 | 2:03 p.m.

**Champ. eights** | bow No. 1 | 2:03 p.m.

## WOMEN'S LIGHTWEIGHT

### SUNDAY, OCT. 23

**LW fours** | bow No. 2 | 3:31 p.m.

**LW eights** | bow No. 2 | 3:51 p.m.

**Lightweight eights** | bow No. 6  
| 3:51 p.m.

### SUNDAY, OCT. 23

## WOMEN'S HEAVYWEIGHT

### SATURDAY, OCT. 23

**Club eights** | bow No. 1  
| 2:23 p.m.

**Champ. eights** | bow No. 2 | 2:03 p.m.

**Champ. eights** | bow No. 1 | 2:03 p.m.

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# A NEW TEACHER

After a three year stint at Columbia, Jesse Foglia begins his first year as an assistant coach of men's heavyweight

By **JAMIE CHEN**  
CRIMSON STAFF WRITER

Coaching was never the plan for Jesse Foglia. Initially the job was just a step towards his ultimate goal: becoming an educator.

"I knew pretty young that I wanted to get into education—I was very determined that I wanted to be a teacher," Foglia said. "Originally, I thought of coaching as a great way to get a teaching job, showing that I'd worked with that age group of people."

But all that barking out orders, correcting form, and setting training schedules had an allure of its own. Over 10 years after starting as a coach, Foglia has found his classroom in the boathouse.

He has spent eight years coaching the US Men's Junior National team, coordinated recruiting for Bates College, and led Columbia's lightweight men's team to some of its most successful seasons. Now, in 2016, Foglia brings a fresh perspective and a deep understanding of rowing to Harvard as the new assistant coach for the men's heavyweight team.

"The longer I coached, the more I realized that I was teaching, but in a different classroom than the traditional setting," Foglia continued. "And that's what drew coaching to me. I really loved this opportunity to actually teach people something they wanted to do."

Foglia's passion for education, as seen in his early ambition to become a teacher, has played a critical role in his transition into Harvard rowing. In just the month since the start of the season, Foglia has helped the team implement an individualized training program that pinpoints the strengths and weaknesses of each rower.

Foglia used a similar method at Columbia. Like every other college program, the Lions employed a smattering of exercises, including minute intervals, 5K races,

and the maximum watt test.

Foglia's innovation was to design a method that compared each rower's performance to what would be a gold standard. In this way the coach could identify specific areas of improvement and allow athletes to focus on areas of weakness in practice. And the same philosophy has carried over to Harvard.

"We were talking about how to make our training plan more individualized," heavyweight captain Chase Buchholz said. "Using data to gain insight into individual performance was a novel approach for us, and Jesse was able to create a program that reflects the individual needs of a rower."

Foglia's methods have been effective, even so early on in the season. The team performed well at the Head of the Housatonic earlier this month, with boats earning top finishes in all events.

But Foglia attributes the ease of his transition to the receptiveness of his fellow coaches.

"It's been absolutely phenomenal," Foglia said. "Head Coach Charley Butt and assistant coach Patrick Lapange—almost from day one they were willing to pass off roles and responsibilities pretty openly and freely."

Foglia has earned the right to responsibility thanks to an impressive track record. Before coming to Harvard, Foglia spent the past three years turning the Columbia Lions from the unnoticed underdogs, never having won a national championship, to a major player in college rowing. Under his leadership, the Lions earned the IRA National Championship and team points championship in 2014.

Foglia's coaching career began even before he had graduated from college. In 2015 he spent some time at Fox Chapel High School as the men's varsity coach.

Four years after that, he graduated from Duquesne University. His major? Education.

"Jesse's trained as a teacher," Bu-

chholz said. "He's a very clear teacher, and that really complements the strengths of our other coaches. We've done more work as a team at this point in the fall than I have seen before."

One of the central challenges of coaching crew is familiar to any teacher—balancing collective success with individual improvement. Just as it's inappropriate to focus on one person alone, it's inappropriate to ignore individual differences.

Yet the most public challenge is still to come. Every year the Head of the Charles draws masses of strangers—each excited to watch solid competition and, presumably, each ready to judge any shortcomings.

Already Foglia feels a sense of gravity.

"When you walk into the boathouse here, you realize that you're a very small piece of something that is incredibly large and historic," Foglia said. "You feel privileged

to just be a small part of it. From my standpoint, coming here there's definitely a much clearer expectation of excellence."

Off the water, this fact translates to a high level of team bonding. And as Buchholz made clear, Foglia has become an appreciated part of the program.

"We absolutely love Jesse," Buchholz said. "We were really pleasantly surprised how seamless Jesse has slotted into our program and adopted our culture."

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MEGAN M. ROSS—CRIMSON  
PHOTOGRAPHER





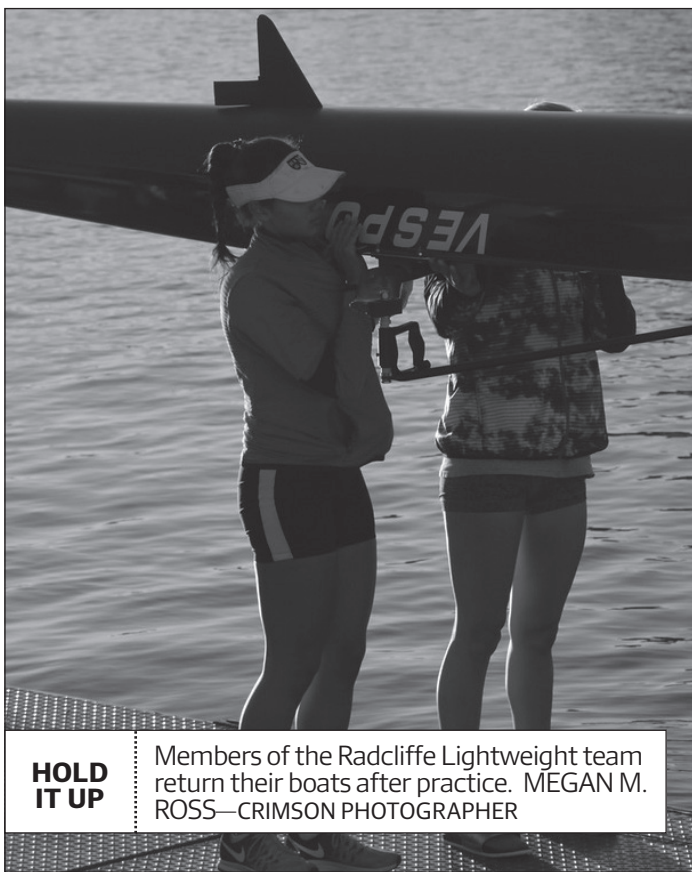
# STROKE OF A GENIUS

From early morning wake ups to late afternoon sunset rows, the men's and women's crew programs know the Charles River like the back of their oars.



**MAKING WAY**

There are six bridges on the length of the course, including the Anderson Bridge, pictured in the background. MEGAN M. ROSS—CRIMSON PHOTOGRAPHER



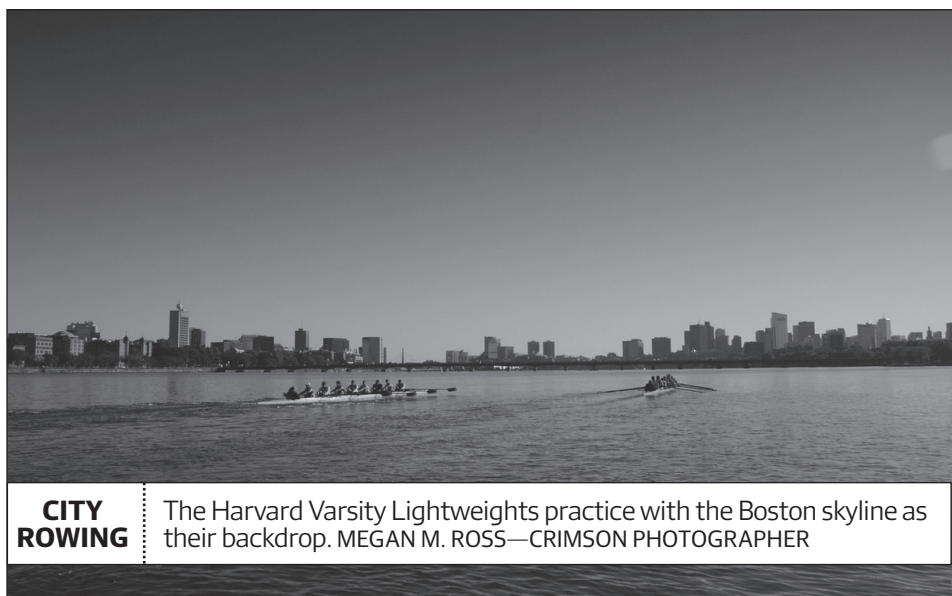
**HOLD IT UP**

Members of the Radcliffe Lightweight team return their boats after practice. MEGAN M. ROSS—CRIMSON PHOTOGRAPHER



**COMPLETE CONTROL**

The Radcliffe Heavyweight team takes the water during practice. JASON K. THONG—CRIMSON PHOTOGRAPHER



**CITY ROWING**

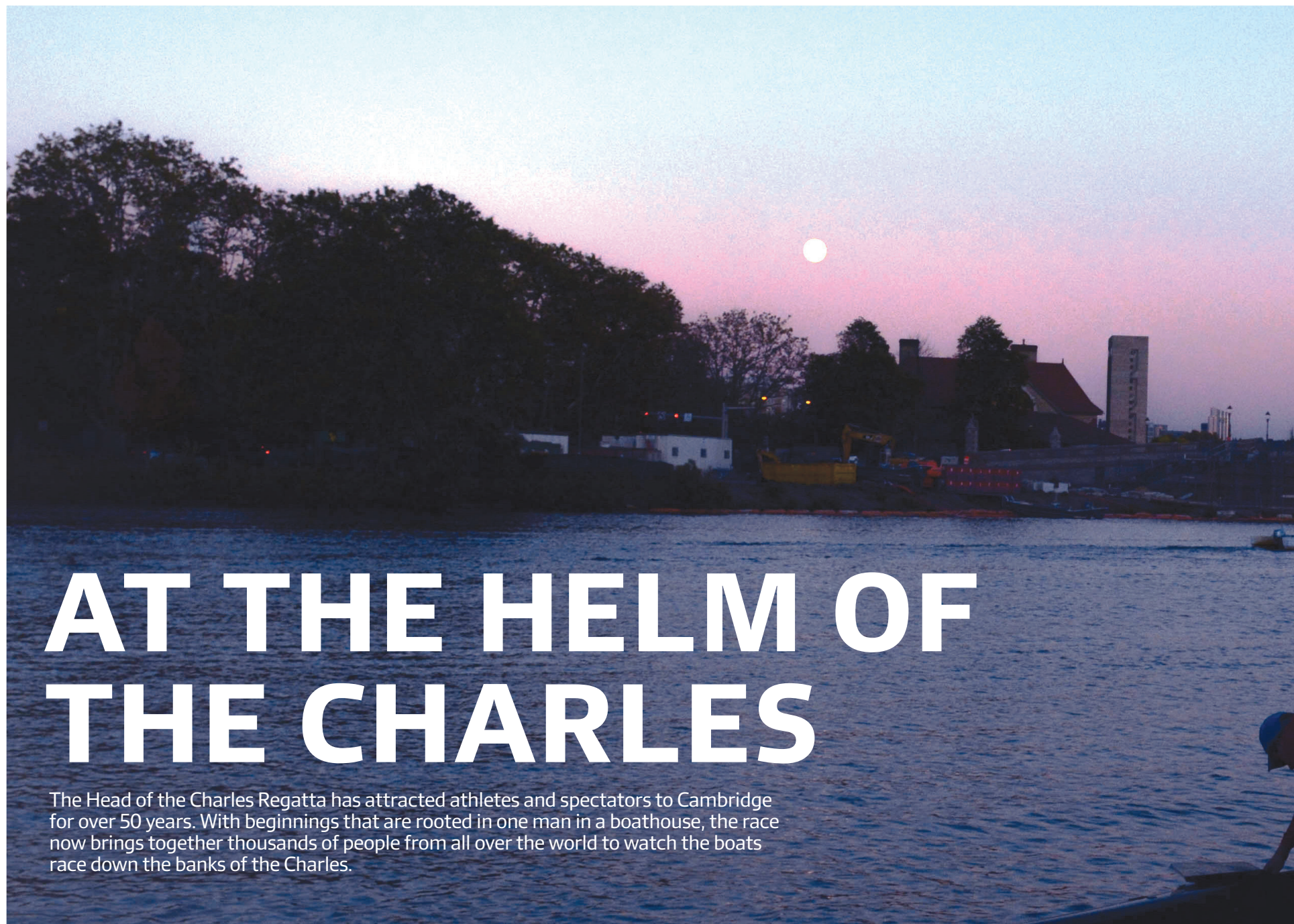
The Harvard Varsity Lightweights practice with the Boston skyline as their backdrop. MEGAN M. ROSS—CRIMSON PHOTOGRAPHER



**STRAIGHT AHEAD**

Members of the Harvard Lightweight team prepare for their races this weekend. MEGAN M. ROSS—CRIMSON PHOTOGRAPHER





# AT THE HELM OF THE CHARLES

The Head of the Charles Regatta has attracted athletes and spectators to Cambridge for over 50 years. With beginnings that are rooted in one man in a boathouse, the race now brings together thousands of people from all over the world to watch the boats race down the banks of the Charles.

By **WILLIAM QUAN**  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The Head of the Charles got its start because George Ernest Arlett wasn't a gentleman.

Arlett was born in England and practically grew up in a boathouse. He was a promising young talent, and his career could have taken off if he wasn't considered a commoner. English boat clubs only extended membership to "gentlemen" who did not have to work to sustain themselves. Instead Arlett settled as the club's boatman, sitting tantalizingly close to the boats he could never row while his career wasted away, unfounded.

Arlett then transitioned to coaching, which brought him

to Boston where he was tasked with starting a rowing program at Northeastern. Before his time there, he was the boatman at the Cambridge Boat Club. He came up with the idea for the regatta on the Charles River and consulted co-founders D'Arcy MacMahon, Howard McIntyre, and Jack Vincent. The regatta was seen by these members as an opportunity to provide a break from fall training and spring season preparation.

Whether by direct motivation or by incredible circumstance, the Head of the Charles perfectly befits Arlett's misgivings about English rowing culture that he escaped. The Head of the Charles has become a monster.

Annually, it attracts near-

ly 400,000 spectators to the Charles to take in the event, which happens to be the largest two-day regatta in the world. The Boston Marathon is the only event draws more people into Boston. The Head of the Charles now attracts fans and rowers from around the world. This year's race will also include a slew of athletes who competed in the Rio Olympics this past summer.

"It's really exciting to have all these people who might not be familiar with rowing, watching and cheering," junior heavyweight rower Kelsey Barolak said. "It's super exciting to row down the course for 15 minutes and have someone there every single step of the way, cheering you on."

The Head of the Charles regatta, like most others, had humble beginnings. When the regatta started in 1965, most of the teams that participated were based in the Boston area. The inaugural regatta featured 268 rowers in 80 boats participating in 12 different events. Now, 51 years later, 2,257 boats, 821 teams, and 10,600 rowers are scheduled to race on the Charles this coming weekend. It is easy to be impressed at the numbers, but harder to understand their meaning.

Other world-class regattas, particularly in Europe, dwarf the Head of the Charles when it comes to history. The Chester Regatta first broke water in 1733, making it the oldest rowing regatta in the world. Compar-

tively, the quick growth of both its reputation and racing lineup is unprecedented in the world of rowing.

The regatta's participation numbers have grown almost every single year, along with the inclusion of new rowers from around the world. The Head of the Charles is unique in its wide-ranging participation. Divisions of racing extend from the high school to Olympic club level. A complete novice can be rowing in his or her first regatta just before a world champion rows in their wake.

"It's really sort of a cross-section of the sport, as well as a huge celebration," senior heavyweight rower Abigail Parker said.

Other major regattas are



The moon greets members of the Harvard Lightweight team as it docks its boat. MEGAN M. ROSS—CRIMSON PHOTOGRAPHER

**A HARD DAY'S  
ROW**



smaller because they focus on a specific competition level, such as college teams. The Head of the Charles has a special spirit—one of inclusion. Even the first regatta in 1965 included junior and “veterans” races, along with the typical college racing. Since then, the racing has opened up to divisions of youth, masters, and even competitors with disabilities who will row out of boat-houses along the length of the Charles.

“For [Harvard rowing], the Head of the Charles is exciting and important, but not our main competition,” Barolak said. “For me, what I find most exciting about the Head of the Charles is the opportunity to race these crews we might not have the opportunity to in the spring.”

The most significant change came in 1997, when the regatta expanded to a weekend-long affair. The primary motivation was not more racing, but increased logistical and financial security after the 1996 race was cancelled because of a ‘100-Year Storm.’ Nevertheless, the two-day regatta allows for a better spectator experience. There are more events over a longer timespan, incentivizing fans to fly into Boston in order to enjoy a weekend worth of festivities.

The Head of the Charles is as much of a regatta for rowers as it is a celebration of rowing. Many classes of rowers hold reunions and different rowing clubs network in order to bring as many members and alumni to Cambridge over the course of the

weekend.

The allure of the banks and bridges of the Charles River combined with rowers of all ages and origins draw in even the most casual of spectators. The people and scenery aren’t the only things that pull people to the regatta. The racing is exciting.

“There are a lot of turns... and it can get pretty fun as somebody can come up from behind and pass a boat,” Parker said. “There will be three boats across trying to go through and a bridge and you end up getting crashes”

The weekend begins with master races and youth races. They look to navigate the windy rivers, and cheer their rowing heroes later in the afternoon. In recent years, there have

been elite racers that combine to form Great Eights in championship events. Combining multiple Olympic medalists, world champions, and rowing legends into one boat can be quite exciting as they gracefully glide through the glistening water. But perhaps more exciting is watching the fight of elite collegiate programs such as Harvard’s men heavyweights, just six seconds behind a Great Eight team in 2014, as they try to pull off historic upsets.

For the Head of the Charles, it seems that bigger is, in fact, better. Despite financial challenges in the regatta’s resulting from rapid growth, strong leadership from organizers such as Treasurer and Race Organizer Ed Smith have allowed the re-

gatta to flourish. Sponsors such as IBM, who Smith secured, and BNY Mellon have allowed for a larger operation than would just entry fees. As the years have passed, the banks of the river have become more populated with company tents. Every October, rowers have a chance to love the sport of rowing and the Cambridge community has the opportunity to experience the traditional act of enjoying a regatta by the river.

As spectators and participants pile into Cambridge and Boston this weekend, the future of the Head of the Charles looks bright. To George Arlett, it must look even brighter. Rowing is not a gentlemen’s sport anymore—now everybody has the chance to row that dirty water.



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# Harvard Alums at HOCR



The Radcliffe boat house.  
MEGAN M. ROSS—CRIMSON PHOTOGRAPHER

WELLD  
WELCOME

By **JAMIE CHEN**  
CRIMSON STAFF WRITER

In 1984, Alvaro Rodriguez Arregui rowed in the Head of the Charles regatta for the first time. At that point, he was an international student from Mexico rowing for the Berkshire School.

Thirty-two years later, Rodriguez Arregui is now the successful managing partner of Mexico-based venture capitalist firm Ignia, which invests exclusively in products that help the emerging middle class. And this Saturday's men's senior masters singles race will mark his sixth consecutive Head of the Charles race and the 12th of his career.

"It's been on and off," Rodriguez Arregui said. "I'm less prepared than I should be, and the conditions will be horrible, but I'm excited."

Rodriguez Arregui's rowing career began at Berkshire, and he continued to row for a club team when he attended college in Mexico, before also rowing for the Mexican national team. When he attended Harvard Business School from 1993 to 1995, he rowed for the HBS team and competed in an eight boat in the Head of the Charles.

He only recently returned to rowing, however, and the Head of the Charles became a concrete goal that he could work towards.

"I missed it, and I needed something to be in shape," Rodriguez Arregui said. "I loved the Head of the Charles, so I said look, why don't I take that as my objective of my year. That'll get me back into training, and it's something that I love doing."

To train, Rodriguez Arregui fits a consistent training schedule into his busy week. While running his socially minded venture capitalist firm, he aims at training six days a week—three days on the water and three days in the gym.

Although his hometown of Mexico City lacks natural rivers for him to train in, he has been able to get his river training in by using the rowing course that was built for the 1968 Mexico City Olympics.

"It's always hard to make time, but it depends on how you make it a priority," Rodriguez Arregui said.

As race day approaches, Rodriguez Arregui has spent the past week here in Cambridge, getting out on the water as early as 6 a.m. and rowing in the dark.

"I'm feeling good," Rodriguez Arregui said. "If you're a master, you go by age bracket. So this is the last year in my age bracket. I'm one of the old folks."

"Next year, I'll be one of the youngsters."

Staff writer **Jamie Chen** can be reached at [jchen@college.harvard.edu](mailto:jchen@college.harvard.edu).

## Crimson on the Course

### Radcliffe Heavyweight Eight Alumni Boat

Nicole Gavel  
Jenna Anglin  
Laura Larsen-Strecker  
Laura Nicholson  
Tara Larson  
Katie Wilcox  
Mary Carmack  
Lauren Tracy

### Radcliffe Lightweight Eight Alumni Boat

Samantha Guhan  
Naa Lang  
Katherine Mallet  
Emma Lukasiewicz  
Elizabeth Hamilton  
Elizabeth MacEachern  
Taylor Garden  
Ronit Malka  
Ericka McCormick

### Men's Senior Veteran Singles I and II

A. Holcombe

### Men's Veteran Singles I and II

J. Stock  
H. Fulweiler

### Men's Senior Master Singles

### Men's Senior Master Eights

G. Goulet  
B. Endicott  
B. Baker  
R. Cheever  
S. Steeketee  
P. Tonks  
G. Vincent  
G. Olmsted  
H. Crane

### Men's Alumni Eights

W. Reuter  
H. Beekman  
C. Johnson  
J. Canning  
M. Webb  
T. Schreck  
T. Fleming  
P. Lapage  
T. Rude

### Men's Senior Master Doubles

B. Braun  
J. Bracewell

### Men's Senior Master Soubles

K. McGrath  
J. Kermond



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## DAUGHTER OF "GOD"

Co-captain Abigail Parker is the daughter of long-time Harvard coach Harry Parker, often referred to as "God." ROBERT F. WORLEY—CRIMSON PHOTOGRAPHER

# ABBA TAKES THE STAGE

By **PATRICK J. ANDERSON**  
CRIMSON STAFF WRITER

Rowing is a characteristically tight-knit sport. Many outsiders would likely describe its participants as individuals who enjoy waking up before the sun rises and subjugating themselves to excruciatingly painful workouts.

However, there is something more to rowing that makes its athletes tick and keeps them coming back to the sport. Rowing is a sport that cultivates values that are inherently linked to its nature, such as diligence, patience, and camaraderie. Additionally, within the confines of this unique culture, there are certain figures that stick out above the others, truly embodying these values.

Entering her fourth year at Harvard with the Radcliffe varsity heavyweight team, co-captain Abigail Parker has distinguished herself as an exceptional athlete and person. With distinction both on and off the water, Parker stands as a unique person who will be a great leader for her team in the coming season and will undoubtedly be remembered fondly after she graduates.

"Coming in freshman year it was obvious that Abba [Parker] was passionate and determined when it came to rowing," said fellow co-captain Isabella Benduski. "As the years have passed, I have seen her bring out that passion and determination in her teammates."

While rowing is a sport to which athletes often have a late introduction, Parker had a unique and perhaps unparalleled exposure to it from an early age. Her father, Harry Parker, often referred to devoutly as the "God" of rowing, coached the Harvard heavyweight men's team from 1963 until 2013. During his time

at the helm, the heavyweights achieved an unprecedented winning record that trumps that of almost any successful college coach across all sports.

By nurturing his athletes to perform at their very best, Harry Parker fostered a culture of determination in his Crimson crews that resulted in nine official national championships, 22 undefeated seasons and a whopping 44-7 record at the Harvard-Yale regatta. Parker also had rowed in the single sculls event at the 1960 Olympics in Rome and coached six men's and women's Olympic crews, three of which ended up in the medals.

In addition to her Olympic father, Parker's mom, Kathy Keeler, is an Olympic champion herself. Keeler was a member of the 1984 gold medal-winning women's eights event.

Needless to say, Parker was destined to grow up with rowing as an important part of her everyday life.

In June 2013, the summer before Abigail would take up her oar at Harvard, her father tragically succumbed to myelodysplastic disorder, a blood cancer stemming from the bone marrow. His departure left a massive void in the Harvard program and left the rowing community at large at a loss.

Nevertheless, Abigail Parker arrived on campus in the fall determined to honor her father's legacy by working optimally both on and off the water.

"Abba has always been a committed and reliable teammate. From day one of freshman year she has given rowing everything she has," senior teammate Victoria Basedow said. "As she has become a senior member of the team this attitude has set a high standard for underclassmen to aspire to."

In her freshman year rowing for Rad-

cliffe, Parker earned a spot in the second varsity eight as well as the varsity four. She helped the team to a 12-4 regular season record in her respective boats and assisted the Black and White to a fourth place finish in the Varsity Four event at the Ivy League Championships.

During her sophomore year, Parker stepped up her game on the water even more, competing again in the second varsity eight and eventually earning a spot in the varsity eight. While the season had its share of highs and lows for the Radcliffe rowers, Parker's eight boat still managed to pull off a fourth place finish in the grand final at the Ivy League Championships.

Most recently, in the 2015-2016 season, her junior year, Parker maintained her spot in the varsity eight, sitting bow and four-seat in the boat throughout the regular season. At the Eastern Association of Rowing Colleges (EARC) Sprints, Parker successfully led her boat to a first place finish.

"Abba was one of my first friends on the team. I'll always remember her being there for me during freshman fall when I needed a friend in Annenberg," said Basedow. "In addition, Abba's pure love for the sport will not be forgotten by younger rowers on the team. This unique and pure dedication will be her legacy."

Parker's passion for the sport has led her to compete separately from the team as well, both in single and doubles sculling with the Charles River Scullers. Parker finished second in the 2016 U23 World Trials doubles race after finishing third in the 2015 rendition of the U23 World singles. Parker also won the Collegiate Small Challenge in the singles event last fall while representing the Black and White.

While her rowing accomplishments

are indicative of her athletic ability, Parker's academic achievements are equally noteworthy.

Following her freshman year at Harvard, Parker was awarded the Detur Book Prize. From the Latin phrase—*detur digniori*—meaning, "to the more worthy, let it be given," this historic accolade is reserved for students at Harvard who maintain a perfect GPA during their first year of college. By keeping up such a remarkable academic track record, Parker displayed that she does not leave her work ethic at the boathouse.

In her sophomore year, Parker declared her concentration in Integrative Biology, an area in which she would continue to excel. She thrived academically throughout the year and into her junior year. In the spring of junior year, she was inducted as one of only 24 juniors into the venerable Phi Beta Kappa honors society.

"As much passion as Abba has for rowing she also has for everything else she does," said Benduski. "I believe all of the young rowers on our team look up to her and admire her commitment to all of her endeavors."

Now, in the midst of her senior year, Abigail Parker looks to keep improving in the spheres of rowing and academia, where she has already attained such widespread success. With preparations for the 52nd Head of the Charles already underway, the Radcliffe rowers look to put up a fast time on its very own whirlwind 5 km home course.

For Parker, in what will be her ultimate Head of the Charles donning the Black and White as an undergrad, this race will be especially meaningful.

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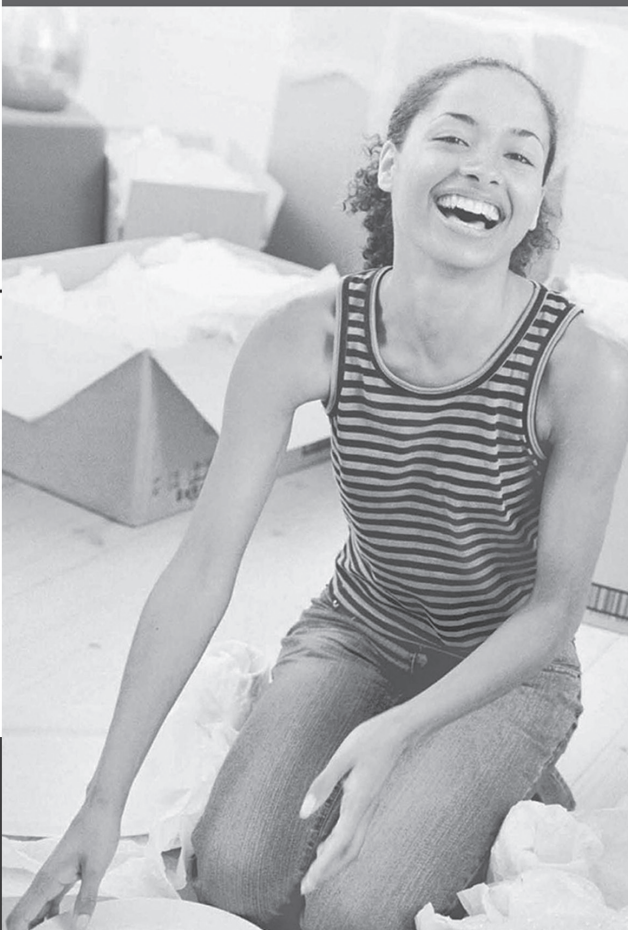
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# Breet is Back: Return of an Olympian

Junior heavyweight Vincent Breet returns to Harvard, bringing with him a wealth of knowledge that can be parlayed into a dominant men's heavyweight team.



Vincent Breet once again suits up for the Crimson heavyweights.  
MEGAN M. ROSS—CRIMSON PHOTOGRAPHER

**ROW, ROW,  
ROW YOUR  
BOAT**

By **SPENCER MORRIS**  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Growing up, every sports fanatic has undoubtedly fantasized about his fair share of glorious moments: hitting a walk-off home run in the World Series, running through the finish tape at a marathon, or netting the game-winning shot at the buzzer. Among those victorious images, competing in the Olympic Games almost always stands out as the pinnacle of international athletics.

Flash forward to Rio de Janeiro, summer 2016. Harvard junior Vincent Breet found himself living that dream, powering through the Lagoa Rodrigo de Freitas alongside three fellow South Africans and vying for a medal in the most prestigious competition in all of sports. The opportunity to live out his dream—representing his country doing something he loves—did not come easy. Vince's path to the Olympics began in 8th grade, when he picked up the sport of rowing to satisfy his school's athletic requirement. Despite his family history in water sports, in particular swimming and water polo, Breet decided his abilities were best suited for an on-the-surface activity.

"I wasn't very good for the first two or three years," Breet was quick to admit, "but [I] just put in the work."

As Breet's crew career took off, he began rowing for his high school, St. Benedict's College, and found great success there. In 2010, he wet his feet in international racing, representing his homeland at the World Junior Championships in the Czech Republic. After falling victim to some startling competition and placing 10th, Vince transitioned to a smaller boat class by 2011 and subsequently was accepted into Harvard later that year.

"I had eight months to kill before my freshman year started, so I decided to try out for the under-23 team... as an 18-year old,"

Breet remembered fondly.

Rowing for the U23 team in 2012, the summer before his freshman year, Breet established a familiar pattern: wherever he rowed, he always seemed to precociously over-perform for his age. Breet grew accustomed to overcoming adversity, whether rooted in age or lack of experience in the limelight, and this underdog mentality has seemingly followed him everywhere in the sport of rowing.

"Even in Rio, we were by far the youngest boat on average," Breet acknowledged. "And I'm always one of the youngest on the start line."

By the end of 2014, qualifying for Rio became a serious possibility for Breet, and in order to focus purely on rowing, he decided to temporarily pause his Harvard life for three semesters while he pursued his dream of representing his country in the Olympic Games.

"Probably after my sophomore year when we came in third at the World [Championships], Rio became a very realistic goal," Breet said, "We had beat previous Olympic medalists and had set ourselves up to do well."

Breet's Harvard teammates were not particularly shocked at his decision to step away from school and focus on rowing.

"[Breet] is obviously a very top talent. I think everyone assumed the Olympics was on his mind," said Harvard heavyweight crew captain Chase Buchholz. "It wasn't a big surprise to people when he decided to take time off to train for it."

After roughly a dozen Rio hopefuls were narrowed down, Breet remained as a member of South Africa's fastest foursome and secured his spot on the final boat that would attempt to qualify for the Games. While this feat alone is a massive achievement, it was only the beginning of a long and winding road for Breet as summer approached. Long

stretches of intensive training presented the challenges of injury, fatigue, and monotony:

"For [Breet, training] definitely was not an easy process, and he worked through a lot," Buchholz recognized.

Breet's boat actually missed qualifications in the traditional Olympic sense, whereby the top 12 finishers in the previous year's World Championship race gain automatic bids to the Games. With its Olympic future in the balance, the South African rowing team made some modifications to the boat: two rowers from the previous year were replaced by fresh faces, and Breet's team luckily managed to late-qualify in the spring of 2016—just mere weeks before the athletic festivities were set to begin in Brazil.

"Our run-up to Rio was pretty turbulent," Breet conceded. "[Our team] subbed in two new guys, so we had an entirely new boat.... We were very much the dark horses on the scene.... I'd argue that the Games were very much our first proper race."

The late scramble to qualify, not to mention the last-minute roster changes, presented unique and unforeseen challenges, especially psychologically, for Breet's South African team. Nevertheless, Breet and his fellow South African rowers, all Olympic rookies, embraced the familiar role of the underdog:

"At the games, we improved day-to-day," said Breet, applauding his team's resiliency. "The nice thing is that because we were unknown and had no expectations, the expectation at the beginning was for us to come in last, and we readjusted that every day."

The South Africans' path to the medal race had "dark horse" written all over it, but to the credit of the team, this was methodically planned: Breet and company availed themselves of the repechage, a unique opportunity during which teams that lose their initial heat can earn a spot in the semi-finals by placing in a "redemption race" of sorts.

"Our intention was to go into the [first]

heat really tired," Breet said, elaborating on his team's strategy in Rio, "and sort of peak later in the week for our semi-final.... You need to do well through the beginning stages but then really well in the later stages."

Following a repechage victory coupled with a strong semi-final performance, Breet found himself lining up to race for an Olympic medal—the childhood fantasy was actually playing out in front of his very eyes.

"Our motto is you only need a boat and a little bit of water to row," Breet said, reminiscing about his team's flexible attitude.

Breet's Rio experience was nothing short of memorable: overcoming unanticipated obstacles, genuinely contending for a medal, and donning the green and gold with the utmost honor. And yet, the Games came and went. Before he knew it, Breet, one of three Harvard undergraduates to have competed in Rio, was on his way back to the U.S. to resume his studies, albeit without a medal.

It seems as though Breet, the precocious Olympic dark horse and near-medalist, has returned to Cambridge with an extra layer of world perspective. He noted that his two years away from school have allowed him to appreciate life's big picture and handle the day-to-day stress more effectively than the pre-Rio Vince.

"I would say I'm having a lot more fun here on [the Harvard] team," Breet noted. "I have a lot of advice to offer.... I've become the sounding board for [Coach Butt]."

The Harvard heavyweight crew team is excited to have Breet back on the team, as they look forward to picking Breet's brain this season.

"We really benefit from [Breet] translating that hunger for winning and coming so close [to medaling] into coming back to the team," Buchholz said. "He's taken a leadership role, bringing all of his experience from training through an Olympic cycle and racing in an Olympic final."



