

Profile: Rowing: Floating on air is more like it

Capital Crew wins two medals in the nationals

By Quwan Spears -- Bee Staff Writer

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Forget the championship trophy. The post-race, all-you-could-eat ice cream session was more rewarding.

Since April, the Capital Crew women's lightweight four-plus rowing team of Katie Luke (Folsom High School), Sarah Bauer (St. Francis), Megan Alexander (St. Francis), Libby Painter (Bella Vista) and Tracy Clevenger (Bella Vista) cut back on the fat.

Each abstained from junk food to meet the 130-pound weight qualification for the lightweight division.

After the group won the USRowing National Youth Invitational Championship at Lake Harsha in Amelia, Ohio, on June 12, the girls dropped scoops of ice cream in their crystal championship cup and gobbled it like a kid would eat cake.

"All I can tell is that the ice cream went pretty fast," Clevenger said. "It was so nice to eat some junk and not have to worry about it affecting your body or adding pounds."

The dieting illustrated the sacrifice to vie for a championship. It's a journey that started three months ago under the watchful eye of coach Dave Hayashi.

Hayashi selected Luke (coxswain), Bauer (stroke), Alexander (three seat), Painter (two seat) and Clevenger (bow seat) from 30 girls under his tutelage.

He entered them in races in March and April, and the team finished no lower than second.

The key test came in the USRowing Southwest Junior Rowing Association Championship on May 8 at Lake Natoma. The team finished in second with a time of 8 minutes, 26.21 seconds on the 2,000-meter course.

From there, the team's confidence grew, and the girls started training more seriously.

The team rallied around Painter, who had to watch her weight the most. For most of her career, Painter rowed with the varsity eight, a division that has no weight requirement.

Since Painter had to count calories, the rest of the team did the same, eating a diet of meats and vegetables.

The team practiced two hours a day, five days a week leading up to the nationals. Each girl also handled academic responsibilities.

"We all wanted it so bad that it wasn't a big deal to make sacrifices," Luke said. "However, all of us had finals during that stretch. We had homework that we had to do as we got to the close of the school year. Basically, rowing became our life. But we couldn't let other things fall, either."

The hard work eventually paid off in the nationals.

Fighting choppy waters and a stiff head wind, Luke, Bauer, Alexander, Painter and Clevenger jetted across the 2,000-meter course in 8:37.59 and became the first women's team from Capital Crew to win a national title since 1999, according to Hayashi.

The crew had a fast start, dropped to second midway through, then cranked into high gear during the final 400 meters, beating second-place Saugatuck Rowing Club of Westport, Conn., by nearly three seconds (8:4.17) and Green Lake Crew of Seattle by more than nine (8:46.90).

"It was probably the best start we had all season," Alexander said."

The girls lightweight wasn't the only team to take a medal for Capital Crew.

The varsity men's doubles team came up a few seconds short of a gold medal. The tandem of Bella Vista's Peter Carlson and Rio Americano's Justin Rediger finished second with a time of 6:57.43. Erik Farrar and Mark Jelsing of the Lake Stevens Rowing Club in Washington won in 6:56.95.

The season isn't over for Carlson and Rediger. They will compete in the Junior World Trials from Friday through Sunday in Princeton, N.J.

A victory in that competition will send them to the World Championships in Germany in August before each heads to college in the fall. Rediger will row at Cal and Carlson at Washington.

A victory in the World Trials would make up for a disappointing regular season. Both were part of a varsity eight team that was talented enough to challenge for the national title.

But injuries hampered the team's chances. Carlson, who had a foot injury, and Rediger, who had an ankle problem, were two of four members who were hurt.

As a result, the team was dismantled, and Carlson and Rediger joined forces. They won the Southwest Regional championship before placing second in the nationals.

"These two kids are athletes," said Capital Crew assistant men's coach Bob Whitford, a two-time national team sculling coach. "They have learned on an exponential curve, making it a honor to coach them."

About the writer:

- The Bee's Quwan Spears can be reached at (916) 326-5517 or qspears@sacbee.com



The Capital Crew varsity men's doubles team of Peter Carlson, front, and Justin Rediger won a silver medal in the USRowing National Youth Invitational Championships.



Capital Crew's women's lightweight four-plus team - from left, Libby Painter, Katie Luke, Tracy Clevenger, Sarah Bauer and Megan Alexander - won the gold medal in the national championships. Coach Dave Hayashi is in the back. **Special to The Bee/ Marcia J. Painter**