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ROWAMERICA RYE DOMINATES USROWING YOUTH NATIONALS

IT WAS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL REGATTA EVER FOR THE PROGRAM, WHICH WAS FOUNDED IN 2013 AND QUALIFIED 19 BOATS AND 134 ATHLETES FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP. THIRTEEN CREWS MADE THE A FINAL, AND 11 OF THOSE BOATS MEDALED.

Forty-one new youth national champions were crowned on June 9 at Nathan Benderson Park in Sarasota as the 2024 USRowing Youth National Championships came to a close. This year's event was the largest ever, featuring over 4,000 athletes competing in 854 crews from 225 clubs across the country.

RowAmerica Rye dominated the eights events, winning both the men's and women's varsity eights. They also finished first and second in the women's second varsity eight in addition to finishing second and fourth in the men's second varsity eight.

Furthermore, RowAmerica Rye won the men's U16 eight and the women's U17 eight. This is the most successful regatta for the program, which was founded in 2013 and qualified 19 boats and 134 athletes for the championship. Thirteen crews made the A final, and 11 of those boats medaled.

STORY BY **MADLINE DAVIS TULLY**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **LISA WORTHY**

RowAmerica Rye rows out of the Rye (New York) Municipal Boat Basin and brought 19 crews to Sarasota's Nathan Benderson Park, returning home with medals from 11 events.



This is the first varsity eight win for the RowAmerica Rye women, who defeated last year's bronze medalists, Newport Aquatic Center, by 1.6 seconds and Marin, the 2023 defending champion, by two seconds.

Meanwhile, the men defended their 2023 title, winning a barnburner of a final with just over five seconds separating the top seven crews. While RowAmerica Rye came across the finish line 1.7 seconds ahead of St. Joseph's Prep, less than one second separated third through fifth places.

Marko Serafimoski, director of rowing and head girls coach at RowAmerica Rye, credits the core group of four coaches who have been there since the beginning—Aleksandar Radovic, Filip Topalovic, Stan Nelson, and himself—with “developing the system and structure, implementing the culture, and creating standards as well as raising those standards as the club’s performance grew.”

“This year’s success came through months and, for some, years of hard work that these young athletes have put in. It was beautiful to see that all the hard work

has paid off, but most importantly it is beautiful to see how this sport and the journey these young athletes go through positively impact their lives and get them ready for greater challenges down the road. This is the true success.”

Los Gatos had its own dominating performance in the quad events, winning six medals. The club won the men’s youth quad as well as the men’s and women’s youth second varsity quad. Los Gatos also finished second in the women’s youth quad, women’s youth second varsity quad, and third in the men’s U17 quad.

This performance builds on last year’s successes, when the club came away with a silver medal in the men’s youth quad, men’s youth four, and women’s straight four, as well as a fourth-place finish in the women’s youth quad.

Before the racing kicked off, the team felt optimistic about its upcoming opportunity as LGRC Director Jaime Velez told the *Los Gatan*, “We’re looking to have an even stronger year this year. We believe we have a really good shot of medaling in quite a few of those entries.”

In the women’s quad event, the

Redwood Scullers came away with the win after finishing second last year to Oregon Unlimited, which finished a very close third in this year’s iteration of the event.

Ian O’Riley from Brophy College Preparatory Crew brought home the gold in the men’s youth single by nearly six seconds. He qualified for the regatta with a dominating performance at the USRowing Southwest Youth Championships, where he won the men’s youth singles event by nearly 30 seconds after finishing third at Youth Nationals last year.

“Ian’s performances this year were incredible,” said Brophy head coach Pete Cannia. “I couldn’t be prouder of him and all his hard work and dedication. I am incredibly proud of our program’s inspiration and the daily Brophy Crew winning culture it brings.”

O’Riley has committed to row at Harvard next year and will compete at the upcoming U19 National Team Trials.

In the women’s youth single, U.S. National Team member Annelise Hahl, representing Triangle Rowing, took home gold after finishing third in the same event last year. No stranger to elite competition,



Hahl placed 11th in the single at the 2023 World Rowing Under 19 Championships. She also competed at the 2023 World Rowing Beach Sprint Finals, where she finished second in the junior women's solo and reached the quarterfinals of the junior double sculls.

In a heartbreaking moment, the Montclair men's pair, who were in the lead at the time, flipped with only 250 meters to go in the A final. Liam Feeney and Isaiah Aljuwani from Canisius High School, who were in a close second, kept their cool, took the lead, and the gold. Notably, a second Canisius pair took silver in the same event.

In another race of note, Community Rowing, Inc's Maria Prodan won the women's U17 single by a comfortable 11.5 seconds. Prodan, who is Ukrainian, fled the country with her family after the Russian invasion. Her father, Anton Prodan, has coached multiple Ukrainian rowers to Olympic and world championship success and now coaches his own daughter on the Charles River.

In one of the most impressive feats of the weekend, the Connecticut Boat

Club crew of Annika Nelson and Caroline Krantz defended their 2023 title with a win in the women's pair event early Sunday morning by over two and a half seconds.

A mere 90 minutes later, they joined with teammates Callaghan Nickerson and Sophie Bell to win the women's youth straight four by over three seconds. The crews are coached by Liz Trond, who says this is something they've been talking about for a long time.

"We planted the seed a year ago," Trond said. "We said, 'We're not going to talk about it all year, but if the pieces fall into place, if you guys are fit enough, maturity wise, it'd be a cool thing. Nobody's ever done it.'"

CBC pulled off a similar feat in 2019 when they doubled up and won the pair and four with, but the straight four was introduced at the regatta only in 2022. Trond left the decision to Nelson and Krantz, who have rowed the pair together for three years and will continue to row together next year at Dartmouth College. They were game

Trond and her rowers emphasized

RowAmerica Rye finished second—and fourth—in the youth men's U17 eight, one of several lower-level events at USRowing's Youth Nationals that allows multiple entries from a single club.

the importance of moderating their effort across the six races, physically as well as emotionally. After the pair won, they focused immediately on preparing for the four, which was a tough race.

CBC was down on RowAmerica Rye for the first half of the race, though the rowers did not doubt themselves or their preparation. Sophie Bell, the only junior in the crew, told her coach after the race, "We got contact, and I just felt like I was coming in like the Kool-Aid man."

Trond couldn't help but get philosophical about the experience.

"It's not easy," she said. "That's what makes sports so cool. The big moments are few and far between, so I appreciate that people want to celebrate this one

"It's important and fun for high-school athletes to set big, scary long-term goals. It's OK, especially for women, to try to take up more space." ▣