

Hot and calm weather saw many great races come down the course in Oak Ridge today. The finals are all set for tomorrow and “that extra gear” is in high demand as the rowers retire for the evening. A report from heats and semi-finals follows.

Men’s Novice 8-Heats

In the first big boat racing of the day, I have to start first with a team that was neglected by the ACRA preview. Coming off a 4th place finish at the PAC-10 Championships last weekend where they were only one second behind 3rd place Stanford, Washington State’s Novice 8 came into this weekend “on cloud 9” as one rower put it. After being dropped by University of New Hampshire by four seconds in the heat, they would have to “pull their heads out of their asses” (according to the same rower) and qualify through the reps. First year coach Julia Gamache agreed that her guys were overconfident after PAC-10s and that this race was “one big piece of humble pie.” Coach Gamache got them refocused for their rep in the afternoon and they easily advanced to the final with an 11 second victory.

In other Men’s Novice 8 action, Minnesota and Bucknell continued the rivalry begun at the Dad Vail Regatta where twice Bucknell walked through Minnesota in the last 500 meters. In today’s rematch in the heats, Bucknell changed tactics and jumped out to an early 5-seat lead. Minnesota quickly closed the gap and these two crews traded blows and narrow leads through the middle thousand. Bucknell grabbed a three-seat advantage with 500 to go and were just able to hold on, winning by an even eight tenths of a second.

The final is set for tomorrow with Michigan, Bucknell and UNH advancing straight from heats and Minnesota, Notre Dame and Washington State joining them from reps. It looks to be a tight final as there was only an eight second difference between the heat times of all six crews.

Men’s Varsity 8

In the Men’s Varsity 8, Michigan defended their number one seed, posting the fastest times in both the heats and semis.

The winners of all three heats posted very close and very fast times with Michigan (6:05.3), Purdue (6:06.5) and Grand Valley (6:06.3) taking the heats. The third heat was by far the most competitive with three boats eventually advancing to the finals. With 700 meters to go, Lehigh was holding three seats on Rochester and Grand Valley who were running even. In the last 500, Grand Valley kicked it into gear and ended up winning the heat by a solid two seconds. It will be exciting to see if they can use that late race speed to stay with Michigan in the final tomorrow.

In the two semi-finals with three advancing to final, only the second heat saw any drama, as Rochester had to fight off a strong Bucknell crew to hold on to that third spot eventually winning by only a second and a half. The final, contested by Michigan, Rochester, UC-Davis, Grand Valley, Lehigh and Purdue looks to be a barnburner as only six seconds separated the crews in the semi-finals.

Men’s Lightweight Varsity 8

These two heats saw some of the tightest racing of the day. In the first heat, University of Chicago jumped out to a quick lead by the 500. Although first ranked Georgia Tech pulled level

by the 1000-meter mark, they were not able to put Chicago away and a late charging Penn State crew made it a real dog fight by the last few hundred meters. In the end, it was GT by less than two seconds over Chicago who held off Penn State by four tenths of a second.

The second heat saw a great start by Michigan who put an early bow to stern lead on second ranked Washington University. WashU held the gap through the middle thousand and in the last five hundred put on a strong move that resulted in a 1.5 second win over Michigan.

Women's Varsity 8

There were two heats of women's eights with the top three going straight to the A final. In the first heat Grand Valley delivered as expected. Cruising to a 12 second victory, they shut it down in the last third of their race with miles of open water back to Rochester who was comfortably ahead of third place Ohio State. The second heat saw the first match up between 2nd and 3rd ranked Purdue and New Hampshire and New Hampshire asserted themselves by delivering a five second victory over Purdue who had 12 seconds over 3rd place Tulane. More importantly, neither UNH nor Grand Valley were pushed and produced heat times only 3 seconds apart. If UNH has an extra gear, it may be interesting to see how hard they can push Grand Valley tomorrow.

Women's Novice 8

The Women's Novice 8 saw Colorado (7:11.8) and Grand Valley (7:14.3) win their heats in convincing fashion. It appears that these two crews will battle it out for the gold tomorrow and it will be fun to see which crew was holding more in the tank today. There should also be a close fight for the bronze medal as the two second place crews Washington University and UC-Santa Barbara posted heat times merely half a second apart. These four boats will be joined in the final by University of Georgia and Michigan State.