

Get to know the Mercer Captains for 2020-2021



How did you get involved in rowing?

Andrew - My brother loved rowing and highly recommended it to me. At the time I was between sports, so I decided to try it out and I loved it just as much as he did.

Audrey - I got involved in rowing in 8th grade after talking to a family friend who rowed. After rowing at the Mercer camps the summer going into my 8th grade year, I knew that I wanted to join the novice team that fall.

Charvee - I got involved with rowing February of my freshman year because a teacher at my school who rows for the Masters program at Mercer told me about the sport. My first season was the spring of 2018, and I've been hooked ever since!

George - My mom originally signed me up for a summer camp between 6th grade and 7th grade. I originally couldn't handle the amount of work because I was nowhere near what someone would call in shape and hated it at first. After that, I truly started in the fall of my freshman year of high school.

Riley - My cousin started rowing in high school and got 5th at nationals and went to college for rowing, so my mom signed me up for a learn to row camp and the rest is history.

What is your favorite part about rowing?

Andrew - It's great to be around a group that's as highly motivated and passionate about the sport as the guys at Mercer are. Everyone who shows up to the boathouse wants to succeed and

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better themselves and it's a great feeling to be a part of a community that cares this much about one thing.

Audrey - The unique part of rowing is that unlike other team sports, there is no “star player”. This is my favorite part of rowing because no other sport requires the same amount of teamwork and unity. In order to be successful, rowers need to trust that their teammates are putting in full effort. The trust and reliance built in a boat is unmatched by other team sports.



Charvee - My favorite part of rowing is definitely the community of the team. The varsity girls are extremely close knit and I have made so many friends here. My friends on the team are also definitely the people who have influenced my rowing career the most so far, because they push me to be a better athlete, they've changed my mindset about so many things, and we've been through so much together. I think that last point is why our team is so tight.

George - I don't really have a favorite part about rowing because everything is my favorite. If I was to single out the team, we are one big family that is really competitive with each other and we love to see each other succeed. When we are racing the adrenaline and the feeling of getting in front of another team's boat is incomparable. The trips are always a blast and even the erg workouts have their highlights.

Riley - My favorite part about rowing is racing. I love being in a boat with other people and all of us pushing ourselves as hard as we can and moving together as one.



What has been the most challenging aspect of rowing during Covid-19?

Andrew - Keeping everyone connected has been a challenge. Especially in the pods system which is meant to separate us into groups, it's been hard to make the team feel like one team.

Audrey - The most challenging aspect of rowing right now is keeping the team unity. Due to Covid-19, the entire team cannot practice on the same days, so it has been difficult to maintain our strong team spirit. We are working to ameliorate this challenge by holding weekly team-wide zoom calls.

Charvee - Because a lot of the tougher aspects of rowing are made so much easier just because you have a group of strong girls around you, facing the same challenges. It's such a great, supportive, and inspiring group of girls.

George - I think that a lot of guys have lost some motivation to work out for that one particular goal. Like in the Spring a lot of guys were working towards going to Nationals and maybe having a chance to do really well and step up our game as a team. But, when Nationals was canceled some guys, myself included, were almost heartbroken but we still had to keep going because there was another season following it. As of now though, with the rules in place that

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allow us to have actual practices, it almost feels like a normal season. The only thing that has really changed is that we have to wear masks, other than that it's still rowing and we still have to do pieces and workouts that we may or may want to do.

Riley - The most challenging part of rowing during Covid-19 is not being able to see the team every day and to not have any upcoming races to look forward to.

Do you have any strategies for leading the team during Covid-19?

Andrew - Communication is key. The best thing I can do for the guys right now is let them know that we're all in this together. For me, the Mercer Strava group has been a great reminder that everyone is working really hard even if we can't do it in the same physical space. I highly recommend everyone join that group, if not to post workouts of your own then to motivate yourself by seeing everyone else's work.



Charvee - Quarantine and the pandemic made it pretty hard to have that kind of connection with the team, and it was tough to go through the workouts alone. But I think we came up with a lot of fun ways to keep the team together even when we were erging at home alone or separated into pods. We would have weekly Zoom meetings as a team, and I ran erg sprint parties 3 times a week over Zoom as well. Over the summer, I think warming up as a team before practice was a good way to get back to the routine of a normal practice. And going into the fall, we're seeing more and more of each other so I think that's motivation in itself.

George - This is something that we will have to establish along the way. Last years' captains tried their way of leading the team during the beginning of Covid-19 and now that there are new captains we get to try our own ways and see what works. But as of now, I think that communicating with each other and motivating each other are some of the best things that we can do right now.

Riley - As captains, we try to keep everyone motivated to work hard. I also think that keeping a positive attitude and working hard is a good way for me to be a good leader and a good way for me to set an example for the team.

How do you think you will help the team stay motivated given the limited competition this fall?

Andrew - The easiest way to keep everyone motivated right now is to remind them about the big picture. Better things await us outside of this fall: spring racing, Nationals, Canadian Henley, and future years to come for the younger guys. Right now is the time to train hard and get better so we can hit the ground running when things start to go back to normal, and I know everyone else feels the same way about that. One of the two mantras that Jamie has made us

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take to heart is that just because this situation isn't the most favorable for us that doesn't mean we can't use this opportunity to get better, faster, stronger.

Audrey - After a few months of not practicing last spring and having limited rowing during the summer, everyone on the team is yearning for the competitive Mercer atmosphere we all love. Although there are no regattas this fall, we have races within our team to become better racers and maintain our competitive spirit.

Charvee - Even if we're not working towards an end goal or a race, just being around the group of girls again, pushing each other and getting back to team boats after being away from them for so long has been incredibly motivating. I know Coach Trow(bridge) is organizing a lot of competitions within the team: there's going to be a meters competition between pods and we're racing within the team on the water. It's bringing back the drive and purpose to each practice, and competing is the best part of rowing! It's definitely going to be a weird season, but I've come to terms with the situation we're in for our final year at Mercer. We're making the best of it and it's super exciting that every season we are getting faster and proving to ourselves that we are stronger than we think we are as we're dealing with all of this. MGDIB!!!

George - I'm really not sure. All I can say is that I know that my teammates and I have been sharing erg scores and workouts with each other to stay competitive with one another even though we are working out at home. It is still the beginning of the season and things might hopefully change for the better but no one has gone through this before. Like I said earlier the previous captains lead us through the quarantine portion of Covid-19 and now we are in this weird middle section where some people are still quarantining and other people are getting together for schools and events so it's different and I think that Andrew and I are going to have to figure it out for ourselves.

Riley - We are always looking forward to what is to come in the future and the possibilities for the spring. These are trying times for the entire rowing community so we are looking towards getting better when every team in the country is going through the same struggles as we are.

What has been your greatest challenge with regard to rowing?

Andrew - Sometimes improving my fitness doesn't always come easy for me. When I train for months at a time and my fitness doesn't significantly increase, but then a few days off wrecks my splits, that's frustrating for me. But I know deep down that hitting a wall is temporary and fitness will come in time.

Audrey - The greatest challenge I have faced is switching from a rower to a coxswain. Shifting into the role of a coxswain was the best decision that I have ever made, but it was not an easy transition. After rowing for almost three years, I thought the switch would be seamless; however, it was more complicated than I anticipated. The most challenging part of the transition from rower to coxswain was gaining the confidence to lead a boat without any self-doubt.

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Charvee - I know I'm a lot more appreciative of every single practice on the water because I know how hard it was to be home alone. Also, getting back the race spirit, even if it's not against other teams, has really helped with motivation.

George - Balancing rowing with my life has got to be my greatest challenge. I have had to give up a lot of things that I may have wanted to continue but I chose rowing. Sure, races are hard, 6ks are hard. But those are a fraction of time that rowing really takes up in someone's four years of high school. I have had to find a happy medium with rowing where I have to decide do I go out to the movies and hang out with my friends or do I prep myself for the next day where I know I am going to be challenged.



Riley - My greatest challenge in regards to rowing was learning to row in a pair. My teammate and I had both never rowed in that type of boat before and had 1 month to figure everything out before competing at Nationals. We had to learn how to communicate during a race without a coxswain, how to steer, and how to row well together. It was the best rowing experience, and taught me so much.

What is the greatest lesson rowing has taught you?

Andrew - Of all the things rowing has taught me, the most important one by far is discipline. To be the best of the best, you have to set aside a few hours every day to sit on an erg or a bike or a boat and just put your head down and work. Once you have this level of discipline under your belt, doing an hour of homework at night feels like a walk in the park.

Audrey - The best lesson that rowing has taught me is to remain calm under pressure. A coxswain needs to be confident and centered in stressful situations. This is something that took me a few seasons of coxing to execute, and I know it will take me years to perfect it.

George - This is a hard one because rowing teaches a lot of people different things. It could teach discipline, how to maintain your physical fitness, or just teaching you how to open your mind to change. I think that rowing has shown me that I am not the only person in the world. It's shown me that there are people faster than me, smarter than me, and people that have more problems than me. Rowing has shown me that so many different kinds of people can all be connected to something that the population doesn't really know about. I think that rowing has also taught me that I have chosen a very difficult sport to explain. Whenever I meet a new person and they ask what sport do I play I have to go into a 10-minute rant explaining crew.

Riley - Rowing has taught me to be more confident and to believe in myself and my abilities even when times get tough.

Who has influenced you the most in your rowing career so far?

Andrew - I attribute a lot of my leadership qualities to Grant who's up in Ithaca now rowing for Cornell. In the year prior to my captaincy he taught me how to lead a group of guys (like the one at Mercer), shared how to motivate and inspire, and generally mentored me on how he approached a position of leadership.

Audrey - I cannot pinpoint one person who has influenced me the most in my rowing career, but I can definitively say that the Mercer community has shaped me into the coxswain and person I am today. I am grateful to be a part of such a motivated, driven group of girls.

George - I think the people around me influenced me the most. No one in my family rowed so I had to look for other people if I wanted to look for the next step. But I really do believe I looked to my friends and my coaches for influence if I ever needed help. I believe our head Coach Jamie is the perfect coach to influence all of us on the team because he knows when he can be our friend but he also knows when he needs to be a coach and step in and change us. I am also lucky enough to be a part of such a great team of guys who I can look up to or who can look up to me and say "hey what can I do to get one step further" and I think that because of that everyone on the team influences one another.

Riley - Coach Matthew Carlsen has influenced me the most in my rowing career this far. He has made me the rower I am today and took my rowing to the next level. When I was rowing under him, he always took the time to work on improving my rowing technique and always wanted to make me a better rower and I am so thankful for that.