

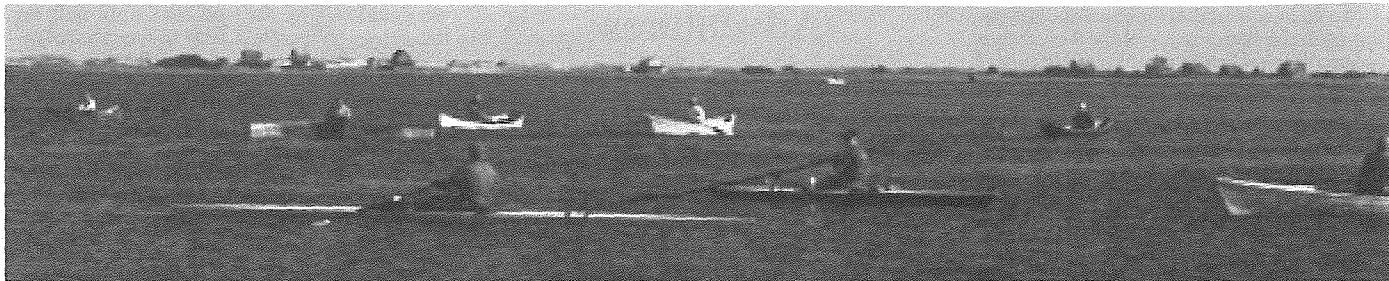
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We could not have asked for a better day in early November, bright sun, temperatures approaching the 60° mark, and calm. Too calm for some but a welcome change for many of those crews who had just the week before competed at the Weir River race with winds gusting into the mid-40mph range, an exciting event where a full two-thirds of the boats entered did not finish.

Nelsons Beach in Plymouth, Massachusetts, was the venue and what a great spot. The entire 3.5-mile race course was viewable from the beach with the start and finish line right there. Hosted by Saquish Rowing of Plymouth and sponsored by Shaw & Tenney of Maine, the theme of the event was definitely that of traditional, mostly fixed seat rowing craft. This was the inaugural race and the only open water event in New England that specifies rowing only, no paddlers.

The array of craft that gathered for this race was made up of some formidable crews from up and down the East Coast. Dorries, Adirondack guideboats, Whitehalls, wherry's, six-oared mighty pilot gigs, Manville gigs, whaleboats, double-enders, and many more including sliding-seat open water craft and racing shells, 46 boats in all, 130 rowers. It was a feast for the eyes just patrolling the beach and viewing these gorgeous boats.

East Coast Open Water Rowing Championships

By Pete Smith

Photos by Hilary Moll
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Shaw & Tenney brought their brand new and beautiful Whitehall to display. Traditional looking but modern lightweight design, she looked fast but they could not be persuaded to race her.

The format for the race had boats all going off together in heats, which made for some great viewing as many of the races came down to the wire, making for some exciting finishes. Mike Jenness of Saquish Rowing, with the help of a public address system, was able to call the racing and did so like it was a horse race. He did a great job announcing the play by play so, unlike most open water venues, the spectators knew what was going on.

The fastest time of the day was posted by Al Flanders of Cape Cod, rowing a sliding seat shell, posting a time of 20:03, with the Cape Cod Rowing high school mixed crew

just a few seconds off at 20:27. Fixed seat racing legends Paul Neil and Jon Aborn won their classes (oar on gunnel and w/outriggers) with times of 27:20 & 28:01. The men's double dory class came down to the wire with Cote and Swift from New Jersey losing by six seconds to reigning world dory champions Tarantino and Jarvis of Gloucester. The pilot gig class was highly competitive as well with local favorites Saquish Rowing edging out the "Come Boating" crew from Belfast, Maine, with times of 26:29 and 27:02. Check out the website for all the results, www.eastcoastopenwaterrowingchampionship.org.

After the racing was over the crews gathered at the Weathervane Restaurant on the pier for the medals ceremony and party. A lot of medals were given out as well as a dozen or so beautiful handmade presentation plaques and trophies from Shaw & Tenney.

Look for next year to be a slightly different format as Saquish is talking about holding a handicapped sprint race for all the class winners to determine an overall champion after the 3.5 race is over. Also, next year the after race party will likely be held on the beach under a tent where people will be fed and have more opportunity to mingle post race.

All in all a great day and a firm foundation for the future of this Championship event.

