

Rowing 1954-1974—Twenty Years at the Tiller

by

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The past two decades in national and international rowing have produced significant changes in the sport caused in part by post-war recovery in Europe and by the rise and fall of spectator sports in East and West as reflected by their own particular political and economic goals and achievements.

In viewing the participation of United States crews during this period, the distinction between clubs and colleges emerges more than at any time since 1900 and 1904.

Two main spheres of rowing influence existed for United States international contact. Traditional entries such as at Henley, England from 1950 to 1964 rarely included strong European entries and almost never World War II foes. Foreign Olympic competition, virtually non-existent in 1948 and 1952, strengthened in 1956, overtook the United States' premier position briefly in 1960 then overwhelmingly in 1968 and 1972. Incidental meetings on this continent for the Pan American Games generally were quite favorable to the United States over weaker Latin American and Canadian entries.

Academic calendars rarely permitted training for mid-summer and fall non-collegiate regattas and this void was filled by clubs and accepted as their "turf." The non-overlap of seasons provided infrequent contact between the two major rowing bodies except in the Olympic years until 1964-1965 with the Vesper-Harvard titanic struggles at home and abroad.

Development of United States National Teams first appeared in 1964 and 1968 finally achieving full funding and status in 1972 and thereafter with outstanding success. Similarly structured teams rowing-Federation or State supported had emerged many years before, virtually world-wide.

The impact of the National Team in the United States has had far-reaching effects on the collegiate system which now is the prime source of its personnel and on the clubs, suffering from low budgets and recruiting problems.

The rapid growth of media-assisted spectator sports has apparently by-passed rowing during these two decades and with it the influx of competitors has failed to grow in significant proportion except for the exciting aspect of competitive women's rowing since 1970 and spurred by Title IX of the Education Act.