

Boat Captain's Report for the year 2021

Presented to the Members at the AGM held on February 27th, 2022

Another difficult year with the restrictions of Covid-19 but some die-hard members managed to row every month except for March. Others had been sent home overseas for a long while so were not even in country.

There have been two major problems running throughout the year which have also affected rowing.

Firstly, the pontoon continued to suffer damage from the wakes of ferries and fishing boats. In spite of many complaints to the Coastguards and even speaking directly to some ferry captains, there was little improvement. In fact, it was noticeable that when people were visible at the Boat Club, boats did slow down, but when the drivers thought nobody was around or in the case of fishing boats at night, they ignored our pleas. So, we know they have got the message that their wakes damage our pontoon, but they ignore that when they can. As a result, we completely lost the pontoon in August. However, thanks to Quintin Pastrana finally getting the Philippine Rowing Association to the table, he managed to negotiate us getting replacement pontoons from La Mesa that had been used at the SEA Games. It has only taken 2 years of requesting this, but Quintin finally succeeded and great thanks are due to him. Now we just have to arrange transport and installation at MBC.

Secondly, Benny's Health. His seizures have not abated, mostly because he has refused to follow his doctor's advice and stop drinking and smoking. As a result, we were unable to use his services as cox or extra rower, nor offer lessons to beginners. In fact, over the year, Benny has become less and less effective as an employee and ignored the instructions of the Board and been found drunk (and occasionally belligerent) during working hours on far too many occasions. As a result, the Board were forced to ask him to retire early and his 33 years of service has now ceased. We still await the finalization of his departure.

BUT the good thing is we were forced to find a replacement coach and now we have Benjie Tolentino (Philippines Olympian rower 2000) who has been helping out since October. It was not easy to work out schedules as Benjie has a long commute to MBC, so it was necessary to make his journeys worthwhile. Thanks to the support of a core group of rowers, we have managed to work that out and are also now seeing more beginners come and try their hand. We have even picked up a new member from this! The last 3 months of 2021 earned Benjie a reasonable stipend and he seems to be happy with this arrangement.

We suffered an unfortunate accident in October with a capsize of the double and whilst there was no injury to the crew nor damage to the boat, one oar was lost, together with a seat pad. The oar has been promised to be replaced by the crew member, although we will probably need to order a pair of oars. This was in fact a repeat of an accident several years ago in the

same place when the boat got stuck on water lilies piled up in front of a moored barge and it was not possible to dislodge the boat due to water pressure and accumulating lilies. Assistance from the Fire Brigade, Police, Barangay officials and Coastguard together with several locals, resolved the problem however.

The boats remain in good order. The Boat shed is getting a little tidier, with the exception of a mountain of books at the back which are due to be removed shortly I believe. Benny manages to clean a small bit before forgetting to continue the task and has to be constantly reminded. We have however managed to remove Randy and all his accumulated belongings. He should have returned to his house, but I hear rumors that he prefers to sleep on the street and use his house for storage of clutter!

I have acquired the digital plans for building a very nice wooden single – the Cambridge Racer and will try to complete the first boat in 2022. See <https://angusrowboats.com/pages/cambridge-racer>
Given that we are occasionally asked for boats to be used as decoration, this could even end up being a profit generator for the Club especially as in theory we could miniaturize the plans and build display models of overhead lights.

As for the other boats, we really need to acquire 2 coastal singles, another double and a triple scull. The reason for the triple is that we often have 2 people come to try rowing or 2 members wanting to row at the same time and as we all know, it is very useful to have someone in bow to steer around the water lilies or coach. This is another project for 2022.

The outlook for rowing next year looks good. Whilst we are not really constrained by Covid-19 restrictions (at the moment), we hope to see more people regain their confidence to come out and row. We have an ongoing concern about the proposed construction of PAREX, a six-lane expressway that will go down the Pasig River from Manila to C6 by Laguna Lake. This could result in serious changes in water flow, the increase of dirty water and smell due to the lack of sunlight because of the road deck above, oil and rubber debris runoff and of course severe hindrances from the whole construction process. BUT we continue to hope this project will never come to fruition even though extensive geo-technical surveys are being carried out currently and we keep trying to engage Ramon Ang at SM Development to discuss how this might affect us without any response from SM.

Please see the rowing statistics for 2021 which are attached and which will be posted to the website..

James Stratton
Vice President & Boat Captain
Manila Boat Club
January 2022