



**Cape Coral Rowing Club  
Bow Certification Program**

## **OBJECTIVE:**

This document outlines the process involved in achieving bow seat certification in coxless sculling and sweep shells at CCRC. Safety is the primary consideration in requiring members to be bow certified. Sculling shells and coxless sweep shells must be safely steered and landed. At CCRC, these shells are maneuvered by either rower pressure or a shoe-operated rudder. While rudder controls can technically be placed in any seat in the boat, we choose to locate them in the bow seat. In all coxless shells at CCRC, the bow seat rower is considered the coxswain. This seat affords the best visibility forward, so, is most ideally positioned for steering a safe course. As coxswain, the bow seat rower is charged with the safety of the entire crew and the safety of the equipment.

## **COXING FROM THE BOW SEAT**

Coxing from the bow seat is often referred to as “blind coxing” for obvious reasons – the rower is facing opposite the direction of travel. Clearly, this makes bow seat coxing much more challenging than stern seat coxing. Just like a stern coxswain, you are charged with the safety of the crew and equipment and are expected to command the shell. It is your responsibility to be aware of the weather and water conditions so you can responsibly determine whether it is safe to take a shell out. You are expected to be very familiar with the waterway and its safe navigation. You need to have read the Safety Guidelines in the Member Handbook and should have significant rowing experience on the local waterway. It is your responsibility to cox the shell out of the rack and down to the water. You should know how to set foot stretchers for proper finish position and how to rig the shell you plan to row. You will be in charge of all commands in the shell, with safety being your primary focus. This is why stern coxing is such a clear pre-requisite for learning to bow cox.

## **SAFE HANDLING OF THE SHELL**

As coxswain, you are in charge of launching, steering and docking the shell safely. In boats without shoe-operated rudders, you will be responsible for pressure steering a safe course. A bow coxswain must be intimately familiar with how to pressure steer and have a good feel for the amount of pressure needed to steer each club shell. Steering singles is different than steering doubles. The weight of the shell, its inherent maneuverability and the composition of your crew will directly impact your ability to steer a safe course. In pressure steered shells, understand that the bow of the boat is most maneuverable and seat your crew accordingly. Members who are approved to row club singles unaccompanied are good candidates for obtaining certification to pressure steer club doubles. Foot operated rudders are installed on both club quads and can be installed on two of the club’s double sculls. Although each boat

handles differently, certification to toe steer a quad should qualify a bow coxswain to toe steer a double scull. However, learning to toe steer a double scull does not automatically qualify a bow coxswain to toe steer a quad. The larger shell is far less responsive and trickier to maneuver around the tight turns in the spreader canal system. For this reason, it is recommended that toe steering be learned in a quad. The club also owns coxless sweep boats. The club's Vespoli quads have sweep rigging and can be rowed without a coxswain, if necessary or desirable. The club also owns two pair/doubles which can be rigged for coxless sweep rowing. Bow coxing sweep shells is completely different than bow coxing sculling shells and depends greatly on the teamwork and composition of your crew. Pairs (2-) will generally be pressure steered since the rudders are typically not installed for sculling and they are more frequently used in that configuration. Pressure steering a pair takes a significant amount of practice and an engaged stroke seat. Pair rowing should only take place with a coach's approval and a certified bow coxswain or under direct coaching supervision. Similarly, a coxless 4 (4-) should only be crewed with a certified bow coxswain and very experienced rowers. The 4- is steered using a foot operated rudder, so, members who are already certified to bow cox quads are excellent candidates for gaining bow certification in the 4-. When training to row the bow seat in a pair, a rower must crew with a certified 2- bow coxswain in the stroke seat or be accompanied by a coach in a safety launch. In the 4-, a bow coxswain-in-training should crew with at least two certified bow coxswains in the shell (one located in the 2 seat) or be accompanied by a coach in a safety launch.

## **HOW TO OBTAIN CERTIFICATION**

The ideal track to bow certification for new rowers would start with achieving competency in sweep rowing (including stern coxing), completing beginner sculling lessons, rowing with experienced rowers in doubles and quads in seats other than the bow, and training for certification in the bow seat under the supervision of a coach. Current members who are not already certified but desire to be should request a review with a club coach. Coaches will assess members' current skills and experience and determine what will be involved in obtaining certification. For some rowers, this could be as simple and painless as a check row with a coach in the shell. In other cases, it could translate to a few training sessions with experienced crew under a coach's supervision. Clearly, the path to certification will vary for members who will be grandfathered into the program. Regardless of progression, all members seeking certification will need to meet a standard list of requirements.

## **BOW SEAT SCULLING CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS**

- Experience stern coxing sweep crews
- Familiarity with waterway; clear understanding of routes, traffic pattern, and hazards
- Demonstrates knowledge of safe rowing conditions (water, weather, wind, tides, etc)
- Understands how to rig each shell and properly adjust foot stretchers and oarlock heights; performs equipment check before launching
- Checks rudder operation before launching (if applicable)
- Safely enters and exits the shell
- Demonstrates ability to look behind the shell during the drive to check course
- Demonstrates ability to maintain a straight course while rowing continuously
- Demonstrates ability to steer to port and starboard using both pressure and foot operated rudder (where applicable)
- Demonstrates safe navigation of corners in the spreader canal system while rowing continuously
- Demonstrates safe 180-degree river turns
- Demonstrates ability to manage crew with proper coxing commands throughout an on-water session
- Demonstrates ability to back the boat in a straight line for 10 strokes or approximately 50 meters
- Demonstrates ability to safely and cleanly dock the shell without assistance
- Demonstrate ability to safely extract shell from the water and rack it properly