

# Mercy Crew

# Team Handbook

# 2026



Our Lady Of Mercy School for Young Women



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## Introduction

Rowing is a beautiful and demanding sport. A true team sport, rowing develops and instills in a young woman qualities that are the foundation for life-long success: mental and physical toughness, perseverance, dedication, self-confidence, sacrifice and commitment to a goal greater than a single individual.

The Mercy Crew team is open to young women attending Our Lady of Mercy High School in grades 7-12. Mercy Crew is a Scholastic program, meaning all of our athletes are students of the school. The team competes in local, state, regional and national regattas. Depending upon the regatta, Mercy Crew competes against other Scholastic teams and club teams. The team competes in both the Fall and Spring, with the Spring season considered as the "official" season. Athletes are welcome to participate in either or both competitive seasons. Winter training is conducted during the months between the Fall and Spring seasons. Athletes in their first 12 months of rowing are considered "novices" and then advance to "varsity".

Annually, 25-30 girls participate in the sport making it one of the largest teams at Mercy. The sport is considered a varsity level sport at Mercy. While a competitive program, Mercy Crew also provides an environment for the personal growth of the individual athlete. Crew can provide a unique opportunity for girls who have not found a home in other sports. Rowing is the ultimate "walk-on sport", most new athletes have little or no prior rowing experience. Mercy Crew does not have cuts, but it does require a commitment to practice, to work hard and to embrace the spirit of teamwork.

This handbook is intended to provide information to help you know what to expect from crew and enhance your enjoyment of the program. Our web site, [www.mercycrew.org](http://www.mercycrew.org), has additional information and the latest updates. Welcome to Mercy Crew!

## History

Founded in 2005, the team has grown as the interest in the sport of rowing has grown. In its short history, the Mercy Crew team has enjoyed tremendous success. Our boats have medaled in numerous regattas. Mercy boats have participated in the US National Scholastic Rowing Association of American Championships. Mercy Crew has also sent boats to the prestigious annual Head of the Charles Regatta in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Freshman 8 boat earned New York State Champions honors in 2006, the Lightweight 8 won the New York State Scholastic Championship in 2014, the Open Weight 4 won both the New York State and National Championships in 2015, and the Freshman 4 won the New York State Scholastic Championship in 2019 and 2024.

Mercy Crew athletes have gone on to row at the collegiate level at Ohio State, Michigan State, University of Notre Dame, Duquesne University, Boston University, Hobart and William Smith, Rhode Island University, Mercyhurst College, Syracuse University, the University of Rochester, and Rutgers University.

Mercy Crew athletes have excelled off the water as well receiving honors from the New York State Scholastic Rowing Association, individually and as a team.

## **Organization**

The team is run by Mercy Crew Inc., a parent-run 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, the mission of which is to promote the sport of rowing and provide student-athletes with a supportive and nurturing environment in which to develop as athletes and young women. Mercy Crew, Inc. is run by a Board of Directors elected from participating families. As a parent-run, not-for-profit organization, Mercy Crew relies upon athlete fees, sponsorships, donations, parental support and annual fundraising efforts. While the Mercy Crew Team is wholeheartedly supported by Our Lady of Mercy High School, as a club sport at Mercy, it receives only minimal financial support from the school. Therefore, Mercy Crew depends upon the support and hard-work of its participating families whose contributions are the cornerstone of the program's success. Parents are encouraged to fill positions on the Board, work at regattas, assist with equipment maintenance and fundraisers or other service to the club.

Through the hard work of parent volunteers, Mercy Crew, Inc. facilitates the day to day operations of the program, maintaining and acquiring equipment, securing rowing facilities and raising the funds needed for the athletes' equipment, coaching, competitions, and travel. Various committees of parent volunteers organize and coordinate athlete registration, uniforms and fan wear, regatta meals, team hotel, the team website and the end of season banquet.

Our Lady of Mercy High School is our sponsoring organization. While Mercy Crew coaches contract with and are paid by Mercy Crew, Inc., the school has responsibility for the coaches. Any disagreement with coaches or concerns about coaches' behavior or activities is resolved through the Mercy Athletic Director.

Members of the Mercy Crew Board are voted upon at the June Board of Directors' meeting. Board members stagger 2-year positions as outlined in the bylaws. Officers serve 1-year terms and directors serve 2-year terms. All crew families are invited to attend monthly Board meetings.

## **Registration Requirements**

- 1. COMPLETE THE OLM FAMILY ID REGISTRATION**  
<https://www.mercyhs.com/athletics/>
- 2. U.S. ROWING** <https://usrowing.org>
- 3. REGATTA CENTRAL REGISTRATION** <https://www.regattacentral.com>
- 4. CONCUSSION BASELINE TESTING** [ONLINE](#) **5. NOVICE ATHLETES MUST COMPLETE THE** [SWIM TEST AND SUBMIT FORM](#) **6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/SIGNATURE FORMS**—Completed by Athletes and

**Parents and due by the first day of practice.**

Athletes and parents must also attend the Athletics Parent meeting held at OLM in the Fall and Crew Parent meeting in the Spring.

New athletes must pass a swim test, pay the team dues and complete the registration process.

The swim test consists of:

- Swimming 50 meters;
- Treading water for 10 minutes; and
- Putting on a life jacket/vest while treading water
- Assess overall swimming strength as poor, fair or good.

## **Fees**

The season registration fee will be established prior to the start of each rowing season by the Mercy Crew Board of Directors. All registration fees are due upon registering on Regatta Central.

**It is critical that registration requirements be completed by the stated deadline. This is necessary to establish the team roster, which is a requirement for Mercy Crew to secure and maintain insurance coverage for our athletes.**

### **Departure from Mercy Crew:**

- Pro-rata refunds of season fees will be made only in the event of a verified medical reason.

### **Uniforms and Crew Events:**

- Money paid in advance for uniforms and Crew events, including but not limited to hospitality, hotel rooms, banquets, etc. are non-refundable regardless of circumstance.

## Coaches

Mercy Crew is fortunate to have experienced, dedicated and hardworking coaches. The coaches' biographies are available on the Mercy Crew [website](#).

## Communication

**Email ("Crew Communications")** Periodic announcements and information are distributed via email ("Crew Communications") to student-athlete and parent email addresses obtained during the registration process. Changes to email addresses should be sent to the team registrar. A messaging app may also be used for timely communication.

**TeamSnap App** This app is used for scheduling, chatting, availability, and reminders. Every athlete **and** parent need to have this tool to stay informed. Upon registration, you will receive a link to join. If not, please contact [communications@mercycrew.com](mailto:communications@mercycrew.com). Messages will be sent via the app for quick updates regarding practices, regattas, or special events. All of the practices, regattas, and special events are listed in the App. It is the responsibility of the athlete (and/or parent) to **add her availability for every event**. In the app, go to Schedules, click on the event, add availability by clicking on "Going", "Maybe" or "No". *For returning families, this replaces the No Practice Link on the website, we no longer use this.* **Questions?** Contact [communications@mercycrew.com](mailto:communications@mercycrew.com)

**Website** The Mercy Crew website ([mercycrew.org](http://mercycrew.org)) is a great source of information about the program and contains important information and forms.

**Coaches** Student-athletes are encouraged to maintain open and frequent communications with coaches to help ensure all expectations are clear and understood. All communications between athletes and coaches are to be on a "one to many" basis. Coaches should not be communicating directly with only one athlete, nor should a athlete contact a coach on a one-to-one basis. There should always be a third-party involved in any written communications, including email, Instagram, text, etc. All electronic communications between coach and athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities.

**Captains** The team captains are Varsity Athletes who serve an important role in the communication process for the overall team. They are nominated annually and selected by the team members and coaches.

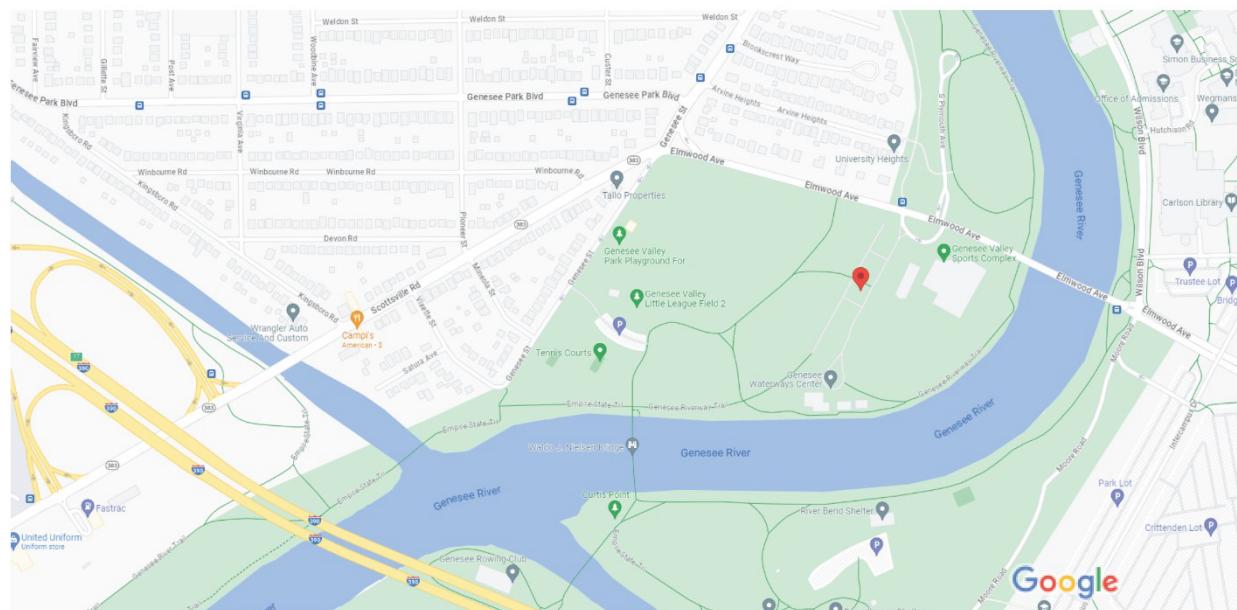
**Orientation Meeting** Parents and athletes are required to attend the orientation meeting held prior to the start of each season. All necessary forms, volunteer sign ups, uniform ordering, practice and regatta schedules are addressed at that meeting.

## The Boat House

The boat house is where all boats are stored and where practice occurs at the Genesee Waterways Center ("GWC") located in Genesee Valley Park near the City of Rochester ice rink/outdoor pool (149 Elmwood Avenue, Rochester NY 14611).

From I-390, get off at the Scottsville Road (NYS Rt. 383) exit which is on the southwest side of Monroe County. Travel north on Scottsville Road for about 2/3 mile and then bear right onto Elmwood Ave. Proceed 1/4 mile on Elmwood Ave and turn right into Genesee Valley Park by the City ice arena/pool. Go another 400 feet until you see the GWC facilities (tan and green buildings) and park in the designated areas.

**Google Maps** 149 Elmwood Ave



## Transportation to Fall/Spring Practices

The team practices from 3:30 pm to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday weather permitting in the Fall and Spring at the Boathouse.

Carpooling is highly encouraged. Families who are carpooling together to the training site or home can use a free carpool app if they so choose. Mercy Crew is not involved in organizing the carpooling. *Carpool Kids* is available in the App Store and Google Play.

## Transportation To Regattas

Transportation to away regattas is provided by parents. If a parent will not be attending an away regatta, arrangements need to be made for your daughter to travel with another family.

## Attire

Athletes/Coxswains will need running shoes and workout clothes at every practice. Because temperatures on the water are often as much as 10 degrees cooler than on land, Athletes/Coxswains should dress in layers. Consider adding these to your workout wardrobe:

- leggings or spandex pants and shorts
- long-sleeved Under Armor-type shirt
- a wool or fleece hat
- a lighter hat for sunny days
- wool socks
- athletic socks
- a polar fleece jacket or pullover
- a weather shirt (like our "crew jacket") or another waterproof jacket that cinches at the bottom and has a hood
- Avoid wearing baggy clothing. Loose pants and long shirts can get caught in the slides and be ripped. Don't wear any clothing that you are unwilling to see ruined.

In addition, athletes should bring:

- a water bottle
- a duffle bag
- a cell phone
- sunscreen
- sunglasses
- a healthy snack for before practice (fruit, bagel, granola bar, power bar)
- an inhaler (asthmatics' coxswains can hold them during practice)
- chap-stick or lip balm
- medical tape for the blisters that may form on your hands

## **Athlete Expectations**

Participation in Mercy Crew is both a privilege and a responsibility. Athletes at all times represent Our Lady of Mercy High School as well as Mercy Crew, and are therefore expected to follow the requirements and code of ethics set forth in the Our Lady of Mercy High School Student-Athlete Handbook, and the Mercy Crew, Inc. Statement of Expectations for Athletes (Appendix A). Mercy Crew will not tolerate any misconduct by the athletes, including any conduct that includes:

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Hazing
- Emotional misconduct
- Physical misconduct

In the event that anyone witnesses any misconduct occur, communication should be sent to a coach or Mercy Crew's Board, as appropriate, to address the problem.

## **Missing Practice**

Missing practice is highly discouraged. The success of Mercy Crew and each of its boats depends on the dedication of every athlete. When any single athlete misses practice, the absence affects the entire team. An absence may cause a boat to spend the entire practice on land, cutting into valuable water time.

If it is necessary that an athlete miss practice for any reason, she is responsible for alerting the coaches via the Teamsnap App.

Failure to alert coaches about an absence may result in discipline. See the *Statement of Expectations for Athletes* at Appendix A.

Absences without notifying your coach in advance may, at the discretion of the coaches, result in the following consequences:

- Removal from current boat/seat;
- Removal from a day of practice; or
- Removal from the next regatta.

## **Release from Class to Attend Out of Town Regattas**

Some regattas require travel and therefore necessitate missing school. These absences are considered by Our Lady of Mercy High School to be excused. The Coach will provide the OLM Athletic Director a list of all student athletes attending the regatta and the date(s) of absence or early/late arrival prior to leaving for the regatta. All school work shall be made up according to the policies of the teacher.

## **College Visits**

It is understood that Juniors and Seniors visit colleges. However, such visits should be scheduled around the crew seasons. In particular, the focus of regatta weekends should be the team and its competition. School visits should only be scheduled if they will not disrupt team practice and competition.

## **Spring Break and Vacations**

Vacations during the spring season are discouraged. Regardless of the circumstances for student athlete absence, you must follow team procedures for notifying the coaches. If the student athlete misses practice, the student athlete must be willing to accept all consequences, including the possibility that Athlete/Coxswain may lose their seat. A seat will not be held for the Athlete/Coxswain during an absence.

## **Discipline**

Mercy Crew team members are expected to exhibit the highest standard of personal conduct at all times. Athletes will not use or possess alcohol, drugs or tobacco products. Inappropriate language or misconduct (see, "Athlete Expectations") will not be tolerated by any member of the team. This includes swearing or remarks based on sex, color, ethnicity, religion, etc. Behavior that disrupts the team will not be tolerated and may result in suspension or removal from the team. The Coaches will decide disciplinary actions in cooperation with the Our Lady of Mercy Athletic Director.

## **Senior Blade Criteria**

Senior Blades are awarded at the end of the Spring season at the annual Crew Banquet. Senior Blades will be awarded to athletes who have rowed three complete Varsity seasons, one of which must be in their senior year. The award is forfeited if an athlete leaves the team during a competitive season (Fall or Spring) of any of their Varsity years for reasons other than medical.

## **Uniforms**

All athletes follow the below-listed uniform requirements:

- Uni
- Mercy Crew T-shirt
- Sports bra
- White long sleeve thermal tech shirt (cold weather)
- Long black leggings (cold weather)
- Mercy Crew Splash jacket (optional)

Refer to the [Uniform Tab on the Mercy Crew website](#) for information regarding uniform orders. All athletes must be in uniform at regattas.

If the athlete wishes to pull down the shoulder straps of her uniform during downtime, she needs to wear a t-shirt or sweatshirt. Walking around in a sports bra is considered inappropriate and not consistent with the values of Our Lady of Mercy School.

## **Fan Wear**

Family and friends can purchase Mercy Crew fan wear including t-shirts, sweatshirts, baseball hats, jackets, blankets and several other items. Information for ordering these items is on the [Uniform Tab of the Mercy Crew website](#).

## **Regattas**

"Regatta" is the term used for a boat race. Regattas are scheduled on weekends throughout the Fall and Spring seasons. Mercy Crew competes at local and away regattas. Races are divided by boat type and, depending upon the regatta, class of athlete (i.e. novice, varsity, Freshman, Junior). Races begin early and occur throughout the regatta day. All team members are expected to remain at the regatta site until Mercy Crew is finished racing, boats have been de-rigged and loaded onto the boat trailer and the athletes have been released by the coaches.

### **What to Bring to a Regatta:**

#### **Athletes and Coxswains**

- Uniforms (uni's)
- Extra change of clothes, socks
- Boots, crocs, sneakers
- Prescription medication
- Reusable water bottle, labeled with name
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Seasonal clothing (jacket, pants, raincoats, boots, gloves, hats)
- Clothing that wicks moisture away from the body is best. Cotton is not recommended for rowing. Always overdress! It's better to come prepared with several layers than to not have warm clothes available.
- Blanket
- Towel
- Large, clear plastic bags in which to put wet and muddy clothing and to keep back packs dry

#### **Parents**

Weather conditions can vary greatly from one location to another, so the best advice for regatta attendance is to "be prepared"

- Chair/blanket to sit on
- Layers-sweatshirts, jackets, waterproof jackets
- Umbrella
- Winter Boots/Rain Boots
- Hat, sunglasses, sunscreen
- Hand warmers
- Water bottle
- Binoculars, camera
- Book, or other diversion (lots of waiting to be done!)

- Cowbells

## **Hospitality**

Regattas are all day and sometimes two-day events, so it is necessary to provide food and support for the team and parents. Our Hospitality Committee helps to organize and coordinate cooking for both home and away regattas. Typically, on a regatta day two families/4 people will be responsible for cooking breakfast and lunch for the team and attending parents. Each family is expected to take a turn cooking throughout the season. Mercy Crew has a Hospitality Trailer stocked with tents, gas grill and propane, cooking utensils, pots and pans, water, paper products and condiments. In addition, each family is responsible to sign up for and bring a staple item to each regatta.

## **Hotels**

For out of town regattas, hotel accommodations are coordinated in advance by the team's designated Hotel/Travel Coordinator. The Hotel/Travel Coordinator selects a property that is as competitively priced and convenient to the regatta site as possible. Families initiate their hotel room reservations directly with the hotel by referencing room block information provided via e-mail as the regatta approaches. There is no guarantee that all families seeking rooms at the team-designated hotel can be accommodated, so it is imperative to make family reservations promptly. Rooms are paid directly by families.

## **Winter Training**

During the winter months, training sessions are mandatory for athletes not participating in a Winter Sport and who will be participating in the Spring Season. This is necessary to maintain and improve conditioning between the Fall and Spring seasons. Registration for winter training will be posted on the Mercy Crew website.

## **Fundraising and Sponsorships**

Fundraising and sponsorships are critical to sustaining Mercy Crew. While Our Lady of Mercy High School does provide some financial support, the program is funded primarily through athlete fees, donations, sponsorships, and annual fundraising efforts. The monies obtained from these efforts are used for coaches' compensation, making payments on Mercy Crew's fleet of boats and equipment, regatta fees, US Rowing membership costs, insurance, and other operating expenses. Fundraising and sponsorship efforts help to maintain the annual dues at the lowest possible level, comparable to other such programs. Past fundraising efforts have included the Sticky Lips BBQ, Salvatore's Pizza and Super Bowl Squares as well as soliciting business

sponsors from the community. Fundraising and sponsorship requires the commitment, dedication and active participation of both student-athletes and their parents. Ideas for new fundraising initiatives are always welcome. So too are donations, most of which are tax deductible given Mercy Crew's status as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization

## **Boating Safety**

Mercy Crew Inc. supports the crew team from Our Lady of Mercy High School. The team members are restricted to grades 7-12 and must be currently enrolled at Our Lady of Mercy High School. Mercy Crew Inc. rows out of the boat house owned and operated by Genesee Waterways Center (GWC) and owns equipment for the athletes' use. As such, Mercy Crew Inc., the athletes and the coaches that it contracts agree to abide by the [safety policies of GWC](#) and the [GWC Code of Conduct](#).

The members of the crew team vary in age and experience. Novices and 7th graders are not the physical or technical equivalent of a senior who has rowed for 3 or 4 years. In addition, Mercy Crew has a Cold-Water Policy set forth below.

Spring season conditions are typically the most hazardous due to cold river temperatures, faster current, debris floating in the river, and inclement weather. Wind, river debris, and fast current all contribute to increased risk of swamping or capsizing a shell. Cold river temperatures do not contribute to an increased risk of capsizing, but do subject athletes to a hazardous situation of cold-water exposure which reduces ability for self-rescue and survival.

When water temperatures are under 40 degrees survival times are 50% less than in water over 50 degrees. Therefore, US Rowing recommends extra caution in water less than 50 degrees. The GWC safety policy includes the US Rowing recommendations.

## **The Mercy Crew Fleet**

Mercy Crew maintains a fleet of 2X, 4X, 4+ and 8+ boats. The boats are owned and maintained by Mercy Crew. The fleet varies from season to season depending on the size of the team. The equipment is available for the expressed use of the Mercy Crew team while engaging in Crew events, including practices, scrimmages and regattas. Loaning of equipment is at the discretion of the coaching staff with approval of the Board of Directors. Mercy Crew also has agreements with local clubs to borrow boats as the need arises.

In addition, Mercy Crew currently owns three launches that are used by our coaches during practices.

## **Student Athlete Injury or Medical Incident Reporting**

If a Mercy Athlete, Coxswain or Coach is injured or has a medical incident at any Mercy Crew Activity (practice, training, regatta or activity) a Mercy Crew Injury Medical Condition Form will be filed and submitted to the Coach as soon as possible. The Mercy Crew Injury Medical Condition Form can be found at the end of the handbook.

## **Cold Water Policy**

1. When the water is less than 40 degrees, no novices may row in a boat comprised only of novices. A novice may be seated in a boat of senior or junior level athletes, but not a freshman boat.
2. Only boats with 8 oars are allowed on the water when less than 40 degrees (4x or 8+).
3. During cold water conditions coaches must be within 100 yards of boats. Boats should row closer to shore. Maximum 1 boat per coaching launch with water less than 40 degrees, 2 boats per launch with water less than 50 degrees.
4. No rowing if river current is at flood stage, over 8,000 cfs flow, as measured by USGS at the Ford Street Bridge. ([See web site](#))
5. No practice is to be held on the Genesee River if white caps are present. White caps usually occur with sustained winds over 25mph. Coaches may guide their crews to the Erie Canal by staying close to the shore to avoid the wind. If a thunderstorm suddenly approaches, crews should stop and seek shelter from the wind by rowing to shore.
6. Every season, the coaches review current safety information with the team. Topics discussed are what to do in emergencies and how to ensure safety during practice. In general, we follow US Rowing's [Safety guidelines](#) (the "[Safety Video](#)"), adapted to our local circumstances.
7. No singles or doubles allowed on the water until the water temperature is safe to swim in. These boats flip easily. A safe temperature here will be defined here as greater than 60 degrees.
8. Experienced Mercy scullers who are GWC members and over age 14 may take out designated GWC boats alone after being certified by the GWC rowing director. Scullers must go out in pairs. Use the buddy system at all times. Athletes under age

18 must have a signed note of consent from their parent or guard presented to the club president.

9. Coaches recommendations for clothing are to be followed strictly. An outdoor sport like rowing carries weather related hazards, and proper clothing is essential to protect the athletes from the elements. Remember, in cold and wet conditions cotton holds water and synthetic clothing should be worn. Athletes are strongly discouraged from wearing cotton t shirts and cotton sweats. Under Armour, Lycra, synthetic fleeces, and team splash jackets are best.

## **The Language Of Rowing**

### **Rowing Categories**

**Sweep:** Type of rowing in which each athlete has one oar. The oars are about 12 feet long.

**Scull:** Type of rowing in which the athlete has two oars. Each oar is about 9 ½ feet long.

### **Types of Races**

**Head race:** Long-distance race, usually held during fall regattas. Each boat is sent down the course, one after another, typically at 10 second intervals and timed between the start and the finish line. Head races are usually between 4 kilometers and 5 kilometers in length.

**Sprints:** Shorter races are called sprints, usually held at spring regattas. These races are generally 1500 – 2000 meters in length. For sprints, boats all line up at the start together, and all start on the judge/referee's command. These races are also timed, but it is easier from a spectator's perspective to tell who is winning.

### **Boat Types**

**Shells:** Boats used in rowing. The shells are thin, with a special fiberglass, carbon, or wooden laminated exterior structure just 3/32nds of an inch thick over a framework. The bow and stern decks are covered with either plastic cloth or a fiberglass top. The boats have sliding seats, which run on a track about 27 inches long, so the athlete moves back and forth she rows.

**Sweep:** A shell configured so that each athlete has one oar. Oars on a sweep shell are normally alternated from side to side.

**Scull:** A shell configured so that each athlete has two oars. These shells almost never have a coxswain. Steering is generally accomplished by applying more power or pressure to the oar(s) on one side of the shell. The hands overlap (usually left over right in the U.S.) during part of the rowing cycle or are left in front of right.

## **Boat Terms**

**Blade:** The term for the oars used in rowing. The oar is actually composed of the handle, the shaft, and the blade. The blade is the surface that is in the water during the drive. There are two types of blades: hatchets and spoons. The terms describe the surface of the blades; spoons are symmetrical, and hatchets are asymmetrical. Blades are painted in the team colors. Learning to use the blades correctly is the most difficult part of learning to row; if the blade doesn't move through the water at exactly the right angle, it will pull that side of the shell down and slow its progress.



**Bow:** The nautical term for the forward part of the hull (the part that gets to the finish line first with the bow number). The athlete in the most forward seat is called the bow.

**Bowball:** A rubber ball attached to the most forward part of the bow to protect the boat and others upon impact. A bowball has the same function as a bumper.

**Cox Box:** Cox boxes come in three parts: the box itself, the microphone, and the speaker system which is in the boat. A boat equipped for a cox box has a speaker system fitted down the length of the boat beneath the seats which relays whatever is spoken. The most useful feature of the cox box display is the "rate meter". This calculates the number of strokes which would be taken in a minute if the athletes continued at a uniform speed

**Foot stretcher:** The parts which attach the shoes to the boat, including the footboard, the adjustable metal bars, and the wingnuts which secure it to the boat.

**Hull:** The skin of the boat which is in direct contact with the water. The hull supports the weight of everyone on the water. The hull is rigid and fragile and should not be stepped onto when getting into or out of the boat. Any obstruction in the water can puncture the hull.



**Oars:** The sweep oars are 12 feet in length and like shells, lightweight and finely designed.

**Oar Lock:** Piece of hardware on the end of the rigger that the oar goes into. It is U-shaped and has a locking bar (called a "gate") to keep the oar from coming out.

**Port:** The nautical term for left. The left side of the shell as one faces the bow. Also, the term for a sweep athlete on that side – her blade and rigger are on that side, usually an even-numbered athlete.

**Rigger:** the metal or carbon fiber bars that extend from the hull at each seat. Riggers are typically bolted onto the boat with 4 or 6 bolts. Attached to the riggers are oarlocks, topnuts, and pins.

**Rudder:** Steering device at the stern. The rudder is connected to cables (tiller ropes) that the coxswain uses to steer the shell.

**Seat:** Seats in the boat are numbered 1 through 8 or 1 through 4 beginning in the bow of the boat. The athlete sitting in the bow, the part of the boat that crosses the finish line first, is the bow seat or No. 1 seat. The person in front of the bow is No. 2, then No. 3 and so on. The athlete closest to the stern that crosses the finish line last is known as the stroke. The stroke of the boat must be a strong athlete with excellent technique, as the stroke is the person who sets the rhythm of the boat for the rest of the athletes.

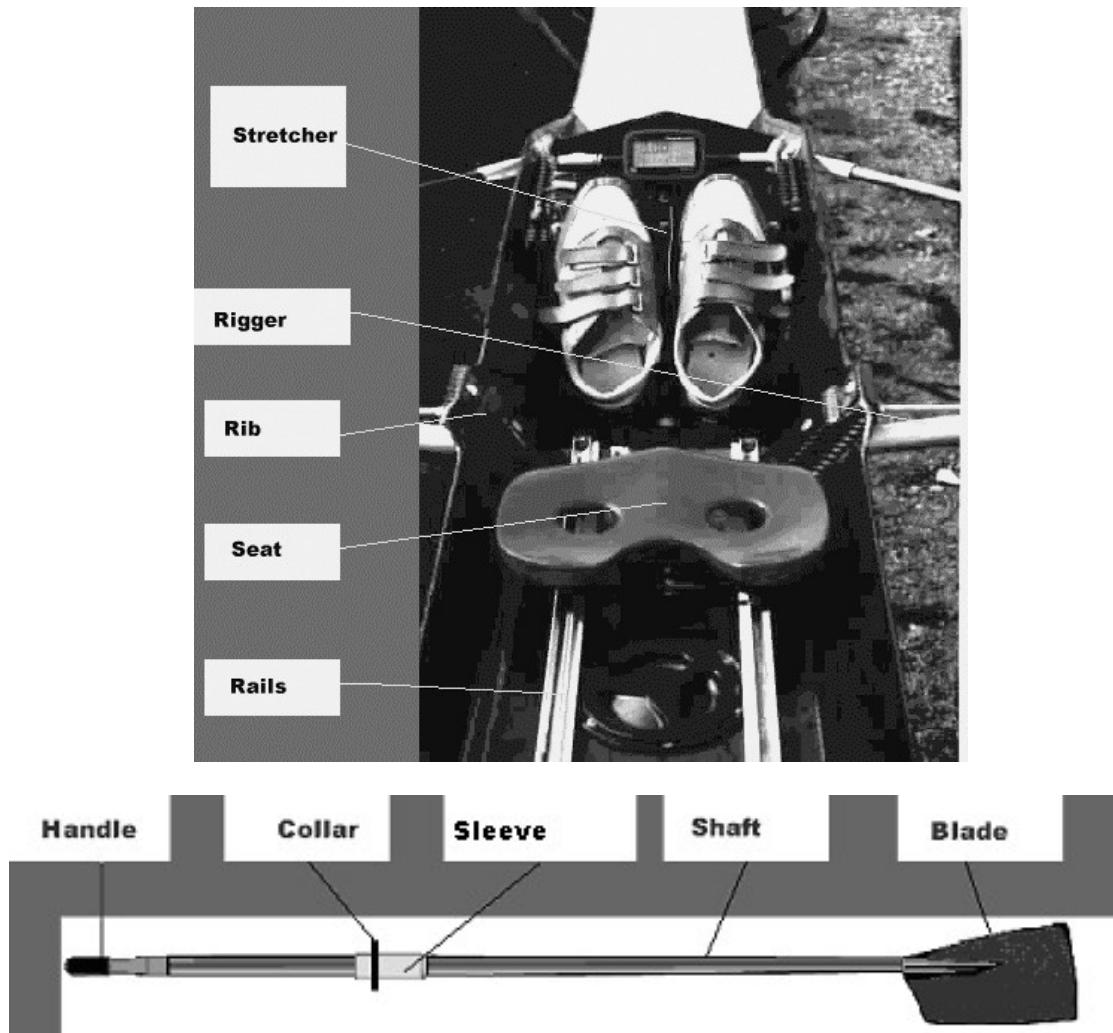
**Skeg:** (or fin) A small fin located along the stem section of the hull. This helps to stabilize the shell in holding a true course when rowing. All racing shells have a skeg. The skeg should not be confused with the rudder.

**Slide:** Two tracks upon which the athlete's seat is fixed. The seat moves forward and backward on the slide, enabling the athlete to "gather up" his or her body at the start of the stroke and then use the combined power of the legs, back, and arms when actually executing the slide.

**Slings:** (or boat slings) Collapsible/portable frames with straps upon which a shell can be placed temporarily.

**Starboard:** The nautical term for right. The right side of the shell as one faces the bow. Also, the term for a sweep athlete on that side – his blade and rigger are on that side, usually an odd-numbered athlete.

**Stern:** The nautical term for the back of the boat. More precisely, this is the farthest point on the back of the boat.



## Rowing Terms

**Back-it:** Means to have the athletes place their blades at the release position, squared, and push the oar handle towards the stern of the boat. This motion causes the shell to move backwards.

**Catch:** The beginning of the stroke when the blade enters the water.

**Coxswain:** The person who sits at the stern of the shell and steers, gives commands to the crew and generally acts as an "on-site" assistant to the coach. Because coxswains don't pull an oar, relatively lightweight people are sought for the position; however, a good coxswain will have as much competitive spirit as the athletes and can make a considerable difference to a crew's success.

**Crab:** "Catching a Crab" is used to describe the situation when a athlete's blade gets stuck in the water and he/she finds it difficult or impossible to get the oar out of the water

at the end of the pull-through. This may result in slowing the boat down and throwing off the set. This term is from the claim that "a crab grabbed the blade and wouldn't let go."

**Drive:** Just after the catch, the athlete begins pulling back on the oar. Initially, the body position should not change the legs are doing all the work, then the upper body begins to uncoil, and the arms start their work of pulling the oar through the water. Finally, the athlete pulls his or her hands quickly to the body, finishing in a "layback" position.

**Erg or Ergometer:** A rowing machine. An "erg" allows beginning athletes to learn the basics of the stroke before going on the water and all athletes to develop their conditioning. The verb "to erg" means to work out on an ergometer. An "erg piece" is a particular set of work on the ergometer, such as rowing 2000 meters. Erg tests are used by coaches to ascertain an athlete's aerobic and endurance capabilities.

**Feather:** Refers to the rotation of the blade at the finish when the blade is parallel to the water's surface. Feathering is the actual motion of turning the blade.

**Finish:** The final part of the pull-through just before the oar is taken out of the water.

**Full pressure:** The top level of exertion of which an athlete is capable.

**Hold-Water:** Tells the athletes to stop rowing and to square their blades immediately. Used to avoid collisions.

**Let-her-run:** The command to stop rowing and let the oars rest flat on the water.

**Novices:** Athletes who are rowing for the first season.

**Piece:** A unit of training, i.e. " We will be doing two 1000-meter pieces today."

**Power 10:** A series of ten strokes where a crew gives additional power (maximum effort). This is often used as a racing technique to advance on another crew.

**Pressure:** The amount of effort a athlete puts into the stroke. Races, of course, are conducted at full pressure, but practices and warm-ups may entail a series of strokes at half or three-quarter pressure.

**Racing Start:** The first strokes of a race, usually shorter and quicker than those used in the body of the race.

**Recovery:** The act of bringing the oar back from the finish in preparation for another pull-through. This is the relaxation part of the stroke.

**Release:** The act of getting the oar out of the water at the end of the stroke and beginning the recovery (gathering the body with the knees coming up) for the next stroke.

**Rushing:** Term for when athletes move too quickly along their tracks into the catch. The boat will lose the feeling that it is gliding or "running out."

**Set:** The balance and feel of the boat. The most efficient boats are balanced evenly over the center line and remain so throughout the strokes. If athletes are not aligned properly, or a athlete swings off center as part of his or her motion during a stroke, or if athletes on one side of the boat are pulling with more or less force than the other side, the set of the boat can be altered, introducing drag.

**Stroke:** The stern-most athlete in the boat that sits just in front of the coxswain. The stroke sets the pace for the rest of the crew, responding to the commands and encouragement of the coxswain.

**Stroke rate (Rating):** The number of strokes a crew takes in one minute referred to as strokes per minute (spm). A stroke rate can range from 0 spm (sitting still) to 44+ spm (sprint). You can calculate the spm by counting the number of strokes taken in 15 seconds, and multiply that number by 4. Most amplifier systems have a meter to tell you what your stroke rate is.

**Weigh enough:** Stop whatever you are doing; rowing, a drill, walking with the boat, etc.

## **Appendix A**

### **Statement of Expectations for Athletes**

Participation in Mercy Crew is both a privilege and a responsibility. Athletes earn recognition for their achievements as representatives of their school, team, and the community. Though a separate organization, Mercy Crew is sanctioned by Our Lady of Mercy High School and athletes at all times represent Our Lady of Mercy High School as well as Mercy Crew. Athletes are expected to follow the requirements and code of ethics set forth in the Our Lady of Mercy High School [Student-Athlete Handbook](#) as well as comply with established team rules, procedures, and instructions of the coaches and the following Statement of Expectations for Athletes.

1. It is expected that an athlete will attend all scheduled practices and regattas in their entirety. Absences dictated by academic requirements are understood, but athletes should otherwise plan schedules around practice and regatta times. Absences can affect more than just one boat. Athletes are not guaranteed a seat in the boat and must earn the right to row at regattas. Advance notice of absences should respectfully be made in writing, time permitting, requesting permission for the absence as soon as the athlete becomes aware of a conflict.
2. If an athlete has more than three (3) unexcused absences from practice, the coaching staff may remove that athlete from the team for that season. An **unexcused absence** is defined as an absence that occurs without prior notification to the coaching staff. The notification process is outlined in the "Missing Practice" section of Athlete Expectations.
3. All athletes are expected to remain at practices and regattas until dismissed by their coach.
4. Athletes should report daily, prepared for practice. Weather appropriate clothing (for both land and water practice) should be worn.
5. Athletes are expected to treat the equipment with respect and handle all equipment carefully.
6. Athletes are expected to maintain the boathouse and property; personal items will be picked up daily.
7. Athletes are not to bring cell phones in the boat.
8. Athletes are expected to completely clean their site at all regattas.
9. All athletes are responsible for de-rigging and loading the trailer prior to regattas and unloading and re-rigging the boats after regattas.

10. Athletes are expected to stay at a regatta and actively participate in de-rigging and loading until the trailer is fully loaded and ready to depart and the coach has dismissed the team.
11. Athletes are expected to be in uniform at regattas. If the athlete wishes to remove the shoulder straps of her uniform, she should wear a t-shirt or sweatshirt. Walking around in a sports bra is not considered appropriate attire.
12. Athletes are expected to participate in scheduled Boathouse workdays.
13. It is expected that athletes will participate in team fundraising that are planned as group activities.
14. Athletes are expected to advocate for themselves. If athletes have questions about workouts and boat lineups or have other concerns, they should speak with their coach. All written communication between an athlete and a coach will include another coach.
15. Athletes will not use cell phones, cameras, computers or other electronic devices in a manner which violates the privacy of others, or for any purpose other than that for which they are intended.
16. Athletes will not use Internet blogs or websites, instant messaging, personal pages (such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or Twitter) or email to violate the privacy of others, or to make disparaging statements about others, including coaches and other members of Mercy Crew.
17. As a team sport, the primary focus of Mercy Crew is on developing and preparing athletes for participation in multiple-athlete team events. Further, athletes should expect that regatta entries and scrimmages will be based on equipment under ownership of Mercy Crew, Inc. Requests by athletes or the parents of athletes to use boat types that differ from those owned by Mercy Crew, Inc. will not be considered for reasons of fairness and liability.

Coaches have the authority to suspend an athlete temporarily for displaying behavior that violates the Our Lady of Mercy High School [Student-Athlete Handbook](#) and this Statement of Expectations or when the athlete's safety or safety of others requires such actions. The athlete's parents will immediately be notified upon such action. Consequences for inappropriate behavior or behavior which is dangerous to oneself or others in violation of the Code can result in a suspension ranging from one race to one year based on the nature and level of severity as determined by the crew coaches. Permanent removal from the team may occur only after consultation with the Board of Mercy Crew and the Our Lady of Mercy Athletic Director.

I pledge to abide by the foregoing Statement of Expectations for Athletes.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Athlete Signature

## **Appendix B**

### **Mercy Crew Statement of Expectations and Code of Conduct For Parents**

Crew is a beautiful and demanding sport that builds character, physical strength, mental toughness, self-confidence and promotes the true meaning of the word "team". Crew also demands a larger commitment from families in terms of time, money and energy than many other high school sports. Yet the learning experiences, the lasting friendships and sense of community enjoyed by athletes and parents outweigh the demands. The same team spirit embodied by the athletes is needed to support and run Mercy Crew. Because Mercy Crew receives limited financial support from the school, the program relies upon the contributions of hard-working parents. To the best of their abilities, parents are expected to support the mission of Mercy Crew with their time and energy. The success of Mercy Crew is founded upon the support and participation of all its members to the best of their abilities. As a prerequisite for an athlete's participation in the Mercy Crew program, parents are expected to sign and fulfill this statement of expectations and code of conduct.

#### **Statement of Expectations and Code of Conduct**

1. I will encourage my daughter to embrace the values of good sportsmanship and teamwork through their full participation in all of the responsibilities of rowing.
2. I will be a positive role model for Mercy Crew and promote good will among the athletes, coaches, and other parents.
3. Respect is a cornerstone of the mission of Mercy Crew. I will always be courteous and respectful towards athletes, coaches, and other parents and will not harass, ridicule, or humiliate any individual, including athletes, coaches and other parents.
4. I shall appropriately control my emotions at all times.
5. I shall represent Mercy Crew and Our Lady of Mercy High School with dignity.
6. I will not enter the boat trailer area as this is like the locker room for the crew athletes.
7. I will not go on the dock unless asked by a coach for help.
8. I shall support my daughter's participation in Mercy Crew by contributing my time and energy to the program to the best of my abilities, including, but not limited to assisting with car pools, hospitality, fundraising, and fulfilling other critical administrative functions.

9. When I attend away regattas, my primary focus will be the regatta itself and to assist with the logistics of team travel, including team practice, setting up and taking down hospitality at the regatta site, transporting athletes to and from the regatta site, and generally supporting the team throughout the regatta.
10. I will abide by the rules and policies of the Hotel Guidelines for Mercy Crew Parents, and ensure that my daughter does as well.
11. I shall honor my financial commitments to the program.
12. I shall endeavor to ensure that my daughter is punctual for practice including pre-regatta practices at away regattas.
13. When a conflict arises, I shall endeavor to resolve it first, as appropriate, through direct and constructive discussions with the other party.
14. I shall resolve conflicts in a calm and respectful manner without resorting to name calling, hostility, or violence.
15. I understand that serious misconduct contrary to this Statement of Expectations and Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action that is appropriate under the circumstances, including warning, parent exclusion from regatta attendance, athlete exclusion from regatta attendance and in the most extreme cases only athlete suspension. Whether conduct constitutes a violation of this Statement of Expectations and Code of Conduct depends upon the surrounding circumstances, the nature of the behavior, past incidents, the relationships between the parties involved and the context in which the conduct occurred.

I pledge to abide by the foregoing Statement of Expectations and Code of Conduct.

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Parent (Guardian) Signature

Date

## **Appendix C**

### **Boat Selections and Seat Lineups**

Boat selections and seat lineups are based on a combination of factors, not just erg scores and seat race results. Coaches take a holistic view of each athlete's performance both on and off the water. The primary considerations include:

1. Technique on the water
2. Attitude on and off the water
3. Attendance
4. Coachability and harmony with boat mates
5. Erg scores
6. Seat race results

The goal of Mercy Crew is to send out the fastest and most cohesive lineups possible to achieve competitive success. Coaches are responsible for creating practice and race lineups that support this goal. These decisions are based on the six factors above. Boat lineups are not personal in any way toward an individual athlete.

Coaches reserve the right to make changes to lineups at any point during the season based on the six factors above. Transparency and fairness are guiding principles in all lineup decisions, and coaches are committed to open communication with the team.

Seat racing methodology is determined at the coach's discretion. While there are a multitude of ways to run seat racing, the structure and method will be chosen by the coach. Coaches reserve the right to perform seat racing as needed during the season while maintaining fairness in the process.

Athletes are encouraged to ask questions if they have concerns about lineups. These conversations are welcomed by the coaches and provide the opportunity for constructive feedback. Coaches will work with athletes to identify areas of improvement and outline steps to increase their chances of being placed in a more competitive boat.

The Mercy Crew coaching staff aims to see every athlete succeed both on and off the water. Rowing is a demanding sport, and athletes will get out of the sport what they put into it. Everyone has an equal opportunity to grow, ask for guidance, and improve throughout the season.

**I have read the above explanation about boat selections and seat lineups and respect the coach's decisions to create the best possible team.**

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Athlete Signature

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Date

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Parent (Guardian) Signature

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Date

## Appendix D

### Hotel Guidelines for Mercy Crew Parents

Throughout the season the team will travel to regattas that will require an overnight stay. Usually the team will stay the night before the regatta for a one-day event, but a two-day event will sometimes require two nights in a hotel. Mercy Crew's Hotel Coordinator goes to great lengths to find the best hotels for the best discounted rate. To secure discounted rates during peak rowing season, Mercy Crew must sign a contract for a block of rooms for athletes, coaches and parents. Hotel information, including room booking deadlines, will be provided to the parents by email.

Parents and athletes must understand that participation in away regattas is a privilege. Behavior of an individual athlete that is contrary to the Our Lady of Mercy High School Student-Athlete Handbook, the Mercy Crew Statement of Expectations for Athletes, team rules and the instructions of coaches can jeopardize the ability of the entire team to travel. In entering hotel contracts, Mercy Crew assumes liabilities for the actions of its athletes. Often, Mercy Crew must sign a separate code of conduct to be applied to all student-athletes. These hotel-imposed codes of conduct govern such things as curfew, pool use and student-athlete behavior in general. Parents and athletes must appreciate that a violation of these codes does not affect just one athlete or parent but the team as a whole, and can jeopardize the ability of the team to travel to compete in the future.

1. **Hotel Rooms:** It is the parents' responsibility to book and pay for the room, on their own credit card, from within the block of reserved Mercy Crew rooms. Please watch booking deadlines and information carefully. When the hotel removes our room block, it may be difficult to get a room, especially at our discounted rate. After that point it will be the responsibility of the parent to secure his or her own accommodations.
2. **Cancellation Policy:** Parents are responsible for cancellation of their own reservations. But keep in mind these rooms are reserved under a contract, and the hotel has the right to hold you to that reservation price if you cancel after the deadline date. Mercy Crew will not be held financially responsible for any cancelled parent room.
3. **Cancellation Policy-Hospitality:** Planning and costs for hospitality occur long before a regatta. Therefore, if you cancel for any reason you will still be responsible for your daughter's hospitality cost and your own.

## Appendix E

### Mercy Crew Coaches' Discipline Guidelines

It is expected that Mercy Crew members will at all times demonstrate the true spirit of teamwork and sportsmanship. Failure to meet the expectations of coaches and fellow teammates will result in various degrees of consequences, depending on the infraction. Identification of any infraction and the implementation of any consequence will be at the complete and total discretion of the coaches. However, the following guidelines will generally be adhered to by the coaches.

**Major and Minor infractions:** The classification of any infraction as minor or major will be at the discretion of the coaches. Generally, a minor infraction will include, but is not limited, to the following:

- failure to actively assist in preparation and cleanup activities on a daily basis,
- failure to assist in the launch and recovery of teammates boats at regattas,
- failure to assist in the rigging, derigging, loading and unloading of trailers in preparation for and while at regattas,
- failure to stay at the Boathouse within the general eyesight of coaches (no wandering off),
- failure to timely notify all coaches of an anticipated absence from practice,
- unsportsmanlike conduct directed towards any coach, teammate, competitor, regatta official, etc.
- foul or abusive language,
- failure to abide by the Statement of Expectations for Athletes.

**Minor** infractions will, in general, be subject to a three-strike rule. The first infraction will be discussed with the crew member by one of the coaches and noted and discussed with the other coaches. The second infraction will result in an email to the crew member's parents with a copy to the other coaches and the President of the Mercy Board. A third infraction will result in the member not being allowed to participate at a regatta.

Any infraction which the coaches deem to be a **Major** infraction (including failure to attend a pre-regatta day course practice or attend a boat meeting without advance notice) will result in an immediate application of steps one through three above. Appeals can be made to the coaches, the President of the Board and the Our Lady of Mercy Athletic Director.

## **Appendix F**

**Mercy Crew Injury Medical Condition Form (See next page for form)**



## Mercy Crew Injury Medical Condition Form



**Instructions:** Complete Parts I and II and sign and give to Head Coach.

### **PART I - ATHLETE INFORMATION**

Name:	Home Address:
Home Phone:	Cell Phone:
Grade:	Email:
Parent 1 Name:	Parent 1 Cell Phone:
Parent 2 Name:	Parent 2 Cell Phone:

### **PART II - INCIDENT INFORMATION**

Incident Date and Time:	Witnesses:
Location of Incident:	Medical Treatment Provided: (check if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid by Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital/Urgent Care <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Physician
Part of body injured:	Name, Address & Telephone Number of Doctor/Hospital/Urgent Care:
Type of injury:  (e.g. bruise, burn, cut, fracture, puncture, swelling, sprain, strain, etc.)	Will athlete miss practice or school? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Description of incident: (Include causal factors that contributed to the accident. Please be specific and include as many details as possible. Attach additional sheets if necessary.)

Follow-up actions or recommendations:
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Report Completed by	Signature:	Date:
Student Athlete Signature:	Date:	
Mercy Crew Board Review:		