Rowing teams tout Clemson's facilities

BY GREG OLIVER
THE JOURNAL

CLEMSON — Major League Baseball clubs are in spring training camps in Florida and Arizona preparing for the upcoming regular season. The same principle applies to rowing teams from cold-weather sites seeking warmer locales.

Last weekend, the first three of 13 teams, representing nine colleges and universities from the Northeast and Midwest, arrived in the Clemson area for their own version of spring training. Each team is bringing rowing equipment – also known as shells – to the University Beach, conducting stretching exercises and then rowing the waters of Lake Hartwell for morning and afternoon practices.

"The courses here are fantastic," said Brad Holdren, head coach of the Eastern Michigan University rowing team. "Clemson's course is a world-class course in and of itself and the chamber put in a three-lane course on the other side of the lake. It's worked out great for everybody because there just aren't a lot of buoyed courses around the country."

The first participants to arrive in Tigertown consisted of the women's rowing team at Penn State University, making its first visit to Clemson; and longstanding participants in the Michigan State men's rowing team and Eastern Michigan women's rowing teams. Between now and Sunday, Boston University and Syracuse University men's and women's teams and the Indiana University and Purdue University women's rowing teams are scheduled to arrive.

Next week, the Marist University men and women's rowing teams arrive while the North Suburban women's rowing team will be the final participant to arrive April 1.

Holdren said the lake rowing course used by the Ypsilanti, Mich., school back home is "12 inches of ice right now."

SEE ROWING, PAGE A6



JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

Members of the Penn State women's rowing team prepare to embark on the waters of Lake Hartwell for a training exercise. A total of 13 rowing teams representing nine Northeast and Midwest colleges and universities are traveling to Clemson this month for warmer conditions and state-of-the-art training facilities.



Rowing teams coming to Clemson for training over the next couple of weeks cite Lake Hartwell's large body of water and the two race courses among the reasons why they enjoy the area.

ROWING: 'The weather is good, the food is good

FROM PAGE A1

Holdren estimates his team's training regimen consists of an hour-and-a-half in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. Part of the training also involves the rowers walking or running two to three miles from the hotel where they are staying.

"Some will run close to 100 miles total during their stay," he said.

Hannah Keener, one of 35 members of the varsity women's rowing team that includes four coaches and a trainer, said she always looks forward to coming to Clemson.

"Usually, it's very, very warm and we love how friendly everyone is," Keener said. "We go to Harcombe (Dining Hall) and they're so nice to us."

Keener added that the Eastern Michigan team runs in "8's," meaning eight rowing members and one coxswain rowing in one shell.

"We spend a lot of time together, so we're like the same person," she said. "We spend 24 hours a day together and know each other's personality. We feed off one another."

Michigan State head rowing coach Rob Hermann said there are three primary things he enjoys most about the visit to Clemson.

"The weather is good, the food is good and the people are friendly," said Hermann, adding there are 34 members of the men's team that made the trip. "Michigan State has been to Clemson in the past and the guys, when I asked where they wanted to go for spring break, wanted to come here."



PHOTOS BY JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

The Penn State women's rowing team enjoys the wide expanse of Lake Hartwell during an afternoon training exercise. A total of nine colleges and universities, comprising 13 teams, will train at University Beach over the next couple of weeks.

Hermann said East Lansing has experienced a milder winter than previous years, with a foot-and-a-half of snow combined. But what surprised the coach was waking up Saturday morning to see snow falling outside his Clemson hotel.

"I saw flakes outside the window and thought, 'Are we in South Carolina?'" he said.

The Michigan State head coach said he also enjoys the size of Lake Hartwell.

"I like my rowers to row long distances without having to turn," Hermann said. "Due to the shape of the lake, there's always water. There is also a women's race course out here and the city (of Clemson) through the (Clemson Area) Chamber (of Commerce) put in a course that's fantastic. I've never been anywhere with two race courses that practice here and that's a big draw."

This year marked the first visit by the 60-member Penn State University men's and women's rowing teams. Assistant coach Conor Ryan said Clemson's reputation for a strong rowing program with excellent training facilities was a major attraction.

"It's good to have a place where we can have long practices," Ryan said, adding that State College, Pa., where the university is located, is experiencing frozen lakes due to temperatures in the 20s.

Tim Shea, a sophomore rower for Michigan State University, said rowers typically train 16-20 hours a week, spending "a lot of time" indoors with rowing machines, a.k.a. ergs, and lifting weights.

"While it's one of the harder sports (to train for), it's very rewarding," Shea said.

Holdren said training in the spring consists of 2,000 meter racing while fall practice is more cross country, or 5,000 meters.

"The spring is what really counts," Holdren said.

goliver@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6687