



## ***The Finish Line. . . .2008 Stotesbury Cup Regatta***

As a part of this continuing series, I contacted Jeff Murt (Sgate Alumni - currently a member of the Mercyhurst Crew) regarding one of his favorite race experiences during High School. Jeff responded with a descriptive narrative of the Men's Senior Double race with his partner - Brian Homiak. Please note, below is the "short" version as the original is several pages long and I've edited the Jeff's perspective to the Semi-Final and the Final. The excitement is still evident in Jeff's own words:

*"At the start of the fall Brian and I had approached Coach Keith asking him what it would take for us to go out to Philly and race at Stotesbury and he told us "own everyone" and that was the mission from then on out. We had won every race up to that point and we were ready to go.*

*We finish 7th in the Time Trials. First time a crew from our high school goes to the largest high school regatta in the world and we are going on to the semi final. The six crews faster than us included 3*

*Canadian schools and 3 Philly schools... this was not going to be easy... in the semi final we knew we were going to be seeing Montclair, Lyme Olde Lyme, Grimsby, Simcoe, and Don Bosco. The semi-final was on Saturday at 9:54 am.*

*On Saturday morning, we launched nervously and rowed our way up to the starting line where we were now doing straight up sprint racing now. Six boats across and no holding back.*

*We rowed up to our starting block and got locked in and waited to hear for the alignment call followed by "Attention. GO!" I felt like we were waiting forever for the call. I looked to my right and left and saw the people I wanted to beat more than anything in the world and then I heard it... "We have alignment. Attention. GO!!!" mass insanity. Brian and I took off the line and we were sitting in fourth place behind Grimsby, Simcoe, and Lyme Old Lyme. Brian and I were having our good strokes and our bad ones so this made us a little uneasy and panicky because we didn't want to go home early and we wanted to see the final. I made a call for us to relax and exactly that happened. The 6'-4" giant stroke brought our stroke rate down a little bit more and the boat speed picked up and we caught up. We were in a fight now for third with Grimsby in the last 750 and we knew it was not going to be easy. It came down to our last 350 meters and the lane markers above the lanes were now behind us and Grimsby slowly was going to be there too. We crossed the line and with Grimsby and we here beep beep. We didn't know who got it so we rowed back to the dock and were scared as hell we didn't know if we were done or not. We sat around for a little bit to wait for the results and they finally got posted. 1st place Simcoe with a 5:06.75. 2nd place Lyme Old Lyme 5:09.70. 3rd place Southgate Anderson 5:12.00. 4th place Grimsby 5:12.56. We were going to be racing the first ever final at the 2008 Stotesbury Cup Regatta for Southgate Anderson High School in the Men's Senior Double.*

*We arrived at the course for the fourth and final time of the weekend for what was about to be the hardest race of the season for Brian and I. We unstrapped the boat and checked over it and stretched in preparation for our final. Keith told us exactly what we needed to do and that was simply to row our race and everything will happen the way it needed to. By this he meant to not get caught up in what everyone else was doing in their race. Hit OUR start, hit OUR settle, hit OUR moves, and pull out OUR sprint that we knew we had. We were in lane 6 next to Westdale in lane 5 from Canada. Lane 4 was Simcoe. Lane 3 was St. Francis. Lane 2 Lyme Old Lyme and lane 1 Chestnut Hill. Three Canadian schools and three American schools. We had the slowest time overall going into the final and Keith had told us that times aren't going to mean anything as long as you don't let them mean anything. The sun was out and the wind was blowing just hard enough to make the water choppy but we had a Wintech with high gunnels and a self-bailer we should be fine. As we rowed to the start we practiced a few starts and they were not as good as normal so we were a bit scared for what the race was going to be like with a slight headwind and choppy water.*

*So we get into the starting blocks and we see our competition in the five lanes to the right of us and we knew this was not going to be easy. The only thing that would help was that with the way the wind was blowing from about 450 to about 100 meters left we would have flat dead water from the giant island blocking the wind and we would need to crank it there. As we sat awaiting for the officials the nerves grew stronger but I could see myself going to the awards dock and I didn't care about what it was going to take. Then we heard the call again "We have alignment. Attention. GOO!!!!" the nerves got the better of us and we were being tossed around by the bad water and within a matter of 15 strokes we were sitting in sixth place and the other boats had quite a significant lead. This was not the best way to start a race that was going to last 5 minutes. Brian and I brought the nerves under control and start rowing OUR race. We were in fifth and we were only 500 meters into the race. We had 1000 meters to go and we were moving. 250 more meters and we were in third. 750 meters to go and were fighting for third place with Westdale from Canada for that third place. We were doing it - we were going to get into a medaling position. Finally the last 500, five more strokes and we were going to be in our dead water with no wind. It was time to go I called out to Brian to bring it up and we did just that and we were going to hold it. 350 to go and we were a deck ahead of Simcoe who was in second place. We had this in our grasp. We had Westdale right off our stern. It was a three boat race for 2nd 3rd and 4th. 150 meters to go and the water started getting choppy again and it became not so conducive for a high stroke rate and it got sloppy. Simcoe got themselves back into second place and Westdale was back up with us for the last ten strokes. I never pulled so hard in my life as I did in those last ten. BEEP! BEEP! Back-to-back. Who got third? We rowed through the bridge to await the official's orders of who was going into the awards dock in what order... We waited for 3 minutes at most but it felt like 3 lifetimes and finally the official in the launch announced "The first boat to go into the awards dock to receive bronze... SOUTHGATE ANDERSON!!!!" he didn't yell it . . . but in my head it was. After looking at the results we beat Westdale by .3 seconds to get the 3rd place. We did it - we actually did it. We came to Stotes for the first time ever in Southgate's history of their program. We only were beaten by Canadian teams. We were the fastest American high school double. We overcame times. We overcame it all and medaled at the largest high school regatta in the world. The hard work paid off."*

Jeff and Brian concluded their 2008 High School season with a win at the SRAA National Championships in Oakridge, TN and a 7th overall finish at the USRowing Youth National Championships in June.