

Fleet Of W&m Club Members Row, Row, Row Toward Goal

Crew Tries To Raise Money For Operating Expenses

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WILLIAMSBURG — They started rowing early and pledged to be at Disney World by Wednesday evening.

And that's without ever getting wet - unless you count the sweat-drenched workout clothes each rower seemed to finish with after putting in at least an hour toward the trip.

Well, they won't actually go to Florida, but as part of its Row-A-Thon fund-raiser, the College of William and Mary Rowing Club planned to row at least a million meters - or 620 miles, the distance from Williamsburg to Orlando - on indoor machines on Wednesday.

The purpose of the rowing was to raise money for the club's expenses. William and Mary Rowing, which is not an official varsity sport at the college, has annual operational costs between \$35,000 and \$40,000. Most of the money comes from donations and fund-raisers.

"We should break the million meter mark around 4 p.m.," said head coach Alia Reese. "We'll keep on going and see how far we can get so next year we can set the total distance a little higher and press ourselves to go a little bit higher."

In the Tidewater B room at the University Center, Tribe rowers took turns on 12 grounded practice row machines to help the team reach their goal.

"We're hoping to raise over \$10,000, and that's half way to a new boat for us," Reese said. "We've asked people to make outright donations or pledge per meter."

Rowers started at 9 a.m. and planned to row until 7 p.m. The 120 members of the team, including men and women and varsity and novice rowers, took turns between classes and during lunch breaks.

"I'll be on there for an hour," said Meredith Allen, a junior at William and Mary and fund-raising chairperson of the rowing club. "It's going to be over 12,000 meters. Everyone is trying to go at least 10, but I haven't seen anybody go under 12."

As a club team, William and Mary rowers can compete against regular varsity programs, but they are not eligible for the NCAA Championships. In 1999, the club had the sixth-ranked women's crew and 10th-ranked men's crew in Division III.

Reese, who is in her first year as coach of the club team, said the team plans several fund-raising events throughout the year, such as a work weekend where Williamsburg residents can rent rowers for the weekend to do yard work or other chores. They haven't held a Row-A-Thon in several years, but Reese said they plan to work with a local charity in the future to combine the fund-raiser with community service.

Once they conquer the trip to Florida, does the club plan next year to row all the way across the country?

"I don't know, that's a long way," Allen said. "We might have to make it a Row-A-Thon weekend to do that."

For more information on William and Mary Rowing, go to the club's Web site at www.wm.edu/SO/wmrc.