

# Rowers showcase their vitality at Head of Shanghai River Regatta

Ma Yue

**T**his is just cool! I will check with the rowing club if they want new members!" Tongji University freshman Shen Xizhe couldn't hold back her excitement as she watched her school team compete in the 2022 Head of Shanghai River Regatta on Suzhou Creek.

The regatta made Suzhou Creek a popular place over the weekend. As Shanghai's self-developed sports competition, this year's event attracted 40 professional and amateur teams from around the country to compete in the 4.2-kilometer chase and 500-meter city dash.

Shen's home is a 10-minute bike ride from the finish line set in front of the landmark Waibaidu Bridge at the Bund. She joined other spectators near the Sichuan Road Bridge and cheered for her school

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It has been a niche sport ... Now, rowing has become a popular choice among the students.

**Zhou Yinan**

Tongji University team coach

team. Tongji University defended the mixed 4.2km chase title in the college group, and placed second in the men's 4.2km chase.

"I know rowing is a traditional interschool competition in some countries. Britain has the famous Oxford-Cambridge contest. Here, it's still a new sport. But, look at the crowd

here! It undoubtedly adds to the vitality of the city."

For Tongji University team coach Zhou Yinan, the result was satisfying, as the student rowers had no more than two weeks of group training before competing.

"The new semester got interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic resurgence," Zhou said. "The team also recruited new members this year. Therefore, I didn't set a goal for the team. I just wanted them to present their best form and enjoy the sport itself."

Zhou is a retired professional rower, who has represented China at the Olympic Games. He was teaching dragon boat racing in Tongji before the university's rowing club was established in 2017.

"It has been a niche sport, I used to stop tall students in front of the canteen and try to lure them into the club in the early days," said Zhou. "Now,



One of the 40 teams of rowers that took part in the regatta on Suzhou Creek in Shanghai. — Zhou Shengjie

rowing has become a popular choice among the students."

The club now has about 50 members. Zhou said the recruitment requirements are simple. "One should be able to swim. Height can add points for a newcomer, but the most important quality is the student's will and persistence."

To avoid clashing with study time, Tongji rowing club's training time is often set at 5:30am. The club therefore has the nickname of "530 club." There is a 700-meter river course on Tongji's Jiading District campus. The club organizes a two-hour training twice or three times a week.

"The club can usually attract over 100 members at the beginning of a new semester as a lot of new students are curious about the sport," said Zhou. "But training takes up time and energy. Those truly devoted to the sport stay on."

According to Zhou, a professional rower won't be allowed to enter the water before receiving half a year of basic skill training. But for students, it is different.

"To keep the students fit through exercise and introduce them to rowing culture are the main purpose of the club. They can also experience teamwork spirit and the

intimacy with nature while enjoying the sport itself."

Shanghai Ocean University was the champion of the men's 4.2km chase in the college group.

According to student rower Hu Huiming, his teammates come from varied majors.

"We have students majoring in ecological environment, computer, marine science and information management. Our university is named after the ocean, therefore, water sport has to be our strong suit,"

In the professional group, team Shandong beat Shanghai to win the men's 4.2km chase. The top three professional finishing teams of the women's 4.2km chase were Shandong, Jilin and Shanghai.

Twelve rowers sent by their clubs took part in the 500m city dash for individuals last weekend, a new discipline for this year's regatta. Huangfu Yuna representing Shanghai Huamu Rowing Team won the women's title, while BLUE Rowing Team's Alex Sanches took the men's crown.

In the team's 500m city dash, Shanghai Ocean University and Tongji University won the college men's and mixed finals, respectively. Team Shandong won both men's and women's professional finals.



People take photos of the 2022 Head of Shanghai River Regatta on Suzhou Creek. — Zhou Shengjie