

# Guastello Rows to the Occasion

**Junior Mary Helen Guastello has found confidence in herself after discovering her voice as a coxswain for the Kansas City Rowing Club.**

PHOTO AND STORY BY LANEY ULOWETZ  
REPORTER

**T**he water glistens while oars stroke the glassy sheet in perfect rhythm. Swish. Swoosh. Splash. The sky paints yellow and orange as the sun continues to rise over the lake. It is the start to a long day. The regatta has begun.

Junior **Mary Helen Guastello** has taken up rowing. About two years ago she started off learning the basic techniques and began as a rower. Over time her skills developed to align with the position of a coxswain, steering the boat and keeping the rowers in sync.

Her position requires an abundance of background knowledge and understanding of the sport. Guastello holds her team together and keeps the order, so she must be in control at all times. Her role is unique because she takes responsibility for the team and must assert herself.

"You have to build up this voice inside of you and have to separate yourself because you're telling these people what to do, but you want to be motivational towards them," Guastello said.

Shy and reserved, Guastello did not seem to fit the criteria of a typical coxswain given how chaotic the boat can be. After getting a new coach and being brought down from varsity, Guastello realized she needed to work harder to get the results she wanted. She proved herself worthy as a coxswain, working hard, doing research on the position and working on self discovery.

"I had to build up the confidence to think 'I can do this, I deserve it just as

much as everyone else,'" Guastello said.

Guastello used the internet to learn about what a coxswain does and how to do it right. She also observed other coxswains and took in how each has a different style. Her gatherings led her to the conclusion that she would have to be a different person on the water to take charge and gain respect from her rowers. Her hard work paid off because she has found not only a love for rowing, but confidence.

**"You have to build up this voice inside of you."  
-junior Mary Helen Guastello**

"It's nice to see her so passionate about something," Guastello's friend, junior **Elizabeth Burnham** said.

There is immense pressure in rowing and the commitment is extremely taxing. Practices are two hours a day, five days a week. Day long regattas on the weekends. And for Guastello, they begin an hour earlier as she meets with the other coxswains to strategize the course. The

sport requires dedication, but it pays off in the end according to Guastello.

Rowing is a very rewarding sport, partly because it is so team oriented. The crew depends on each other and puts total trust in one another to do their part. For that reason, the relationships you make as a rower are strong both on and off the water, according to Guastello.

The sun sets over the lake as the boats are brought in. All the hard work and long days of practice have led up to this moment. The water sits silently. The regatta has come to a close.