



Crew teams row Town Lake today

By John Herndon

Special to the American-Statesman

A flotilla of rowing shells will navigate Town Lake today for the third Annual Heart of Texas Regatta. The event features rowing teams from Texas, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Iowa.

The 28 races will take place from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The crews will race east from the I-35 bridge, and spectators can find good spots for viewing the races from Fiesta Gardens, Holly Beach and Pleasant Valley Park off South Lakeshore Boulevard. Regatta chairman Mark Nibbelink says the prime spot is Holly Beach.

Early spring weather in Austin attracts teams to compete in the the regatta and to train on Town Lake. Besides the Austin Rowing Club, which is hosting the event, competitors include the University of Kansas, Kansas State University, Wichita State University, the University of Texas, the Dallas Rowing Club, and the Duluth Rowing Club. Training crews are Northwestern University, Notre Dame University, Washburn Uni-

versity, and the universities of Minnesota, Nebraska, and Iowa. Out-of-town teams will be training through the end of March.

Nibbelink says about 400 athletes will compete and train. "We're trying to promote Austin as a place to come and row," he said. Town Lake is an excellent place to row because it is long and straight with few obstacles, he added. Its east-west alignment means rowers usually don't have to fight prevailing winds, and Austin's climate permits rowing year round.

Regatta events include teams of eight, four, and two, plus singles. The awards ceremony will be held at 4 p.m. at the Austin club's boathouse, 2100 S. Lakeshore Drive. Trophy cups will be awarded to the overall winning team and the winners of the varsity men's heavy-weight eight race.

Although this regatta is billed as the third annual, the history of rowing in Austin goes back more than 100 years.

Austin's first rowing regatta was held July 4, 1884. The race was met with great enthusiasm by the citi-

zens of Austin, according to Audray Bateman, curator of the Austin History Center, but it was nine years before the next regatta, held to celebrate the completion of the Great Granite Dam in 1893. The event drew rowers from as far away as Australia, and more than 10,000 spectators lined the shores,

After that, it was 90 years before the next regatta on Town Lake. The Austin Rowing Club is working to make sure that interest in rowing is not allowed to lapse again. The club offers classes in rowing from April to September.

Rowers from all over the Midwest will compete at Town Lake today.