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FEATURED

Florida Tech men's rowing reinstated – what about the women?

Ayana Aoyagi, Josie Keenan

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Florida Tech women's rowing team sweeps up first place in Winter Park.

Photo courtesy of Adam Thorstad

Florida Tech men's rowing is back. But Sydney Freiburger wants to know what's next for the women's team.

“Of course, I was super happy for them because it was something we were all supporting. But it's kind of annoying that we still have to fight for it,” the sophomore aerospace engineering student said. “Rowing makes me happy, which is why I feel so passionate about getting it reinstated.”

Last June, Florida Tech athletics cut five varsity sports from the program, including men's and women's rowing. It was only until February, that the Florida Tech male rowing team won a court case to have their team reinstated.

The next step was the women.

“The women are not forgotten as they are our number one priority now,” Craig McKay, the president of the Friends of FIT Rowing Association said. “We will be relentless, working for their reinstatement and we're not going to stop.”

Along with Freiburger, Alexandria Easterling was also a cut athlete. The rower had competed with the women's team since 2020, but found herself losing touch with the sport after it transitioned into a club.

“Honestly, good for them. I know there are guys who really wanted to row,” Easterling said. “I think if they bring one back they should bring the other, but I don't see that happening any time soon.”

Easterling said that there were few participants on the club rowing teams. Now that men will transition back to the varsity level, it leaves the female club members in the dust.

Before the sports cuts, the women's rowing team had great success at Florida Tech, being the defending Sunshine State Conference champions for five years, while also claiming runners-up in the 2019 NCAA national tournament in Division II athletics.

Late last year, the Friends of FIT Rowing Association raised about \$7,000, covering about 30% of the university's budget to send the men's and women's rowing team to a regatta in Boston. At the Head of The Charles Regatta, the women finished third out of 35 boats in the Collegiate 4 plus race, with three freshmen in the boat, including Freiburger, according to the FFRA website.

“They did very well up there and we're very proud of them,” McKay said. “They've continued to work hard despite everything and have cheered the men on throughout their lawsuit.”

On Mar. 18, the women's rowing team attended the Rollins Spring Break Invitational race in Winter Park, where they took out gold in both the four-person and two-person boat races.

"It was a good start to our spring season," Freiberger said, who rowed starboard side in the bow seat for both races.

Freiberger continues her challenge to get her team reinstated as soon as possible, through closely working with Florida Tech's alumni rowers at FFRA. Their hopes of filing a lawsuit will not be under Title IX, as their argument for not having enough women's teams at Florida Tech does not apply to them, like it did for the men's team.

The FFRA plan to help fund the women's team going further and hope to be at the NCAA competition in May, 2024.

Ayana Aoyagi

Josie Keenan