

Text by CHRIS JEON and JULIE YANG

GENTLY DOWN THE STREAM

SENIOR DUO COMMITS TO DIVISION I ROWING



IT IS PITCH BLACK outside as the waves crash against Westpoint Harbor in Redwood City, breaking the silence of the calm morning. At 5:15 a.m., a group of high school boys change into their gear, still groggy and shivering as the crisp breeze hits their faces. Once they are warmed up, the crew prepares their boats before setting out into Redwood Creek.

As the rowers push off into the water, Palo Alto High School seniors Matias Bliss-Carrascosa and Peter Fetter can be spotted out on one of the boats. Close friends since kindergarten, the soon-to-be graduates continue to spend time together through their mutual love for rowing. Both are committed to rowing at the Division I collegiate level. Bliss-Carrascosa will attend Columbia University and Fetter will attend the University of California, Berkeley.

Bliss-Carrascosa was the first of the two to take up rowing. He played rugby until the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in sev-

enth grade, and transitioned to rowing at NorCal Crew, the largest rowing program in the Bay Area, known for its successful Division I athletes. Bliss-Carrascosa was partly influenced by his older brother, who was also a competitive rower at the time.

Fetter, on the other hand, began rowing later and was an active swimmer up until his junior year. In the fall of 2023, he went to row at Norcal Crew with Bliss-Carrascosa.

“He [Bliss-Carrascosa] motivated me

to come join them, and by then, I was completely done with swimming,” Fetter said. “Since then, I’ve been on the team and it’s been a lot of fun. I was kind of sick of swimming meets, so it [rowing] was a nice change of pace.”

Fetter and Bliss-Carrascosa bonded through watching rowing videos and sharing their love for the sport. The two get along well both in and out of the water and find comfort in practicing every day with a

familiar face.

“I would say we treat the rowing practices as if we were just hanging out,” Fetter said. “Although there’s definitely a bit more focus when we’re at practice, it’s nice to have someone I know well at school and at rowing.”

One aspect that sets rowing apart from other sports is its profound emphasis on camaraderie and pushing oneself for the team’s sake. In a rowing crew, the coxswain is responsible for steering the boat and coordinating the other rowers. Typical rowing boats, which hold eight crew members, require the rowers to be in perfect synchronization as they race down a two-thousand-meter course.

“It’s as if you have eight people trying to swing a golf club and hit a golf ball in perfect sync 240 times,” Fetter said.

For them to be able to perform to a state of perfection, rowers need to have extraordinary muscular strength and endurance. Many rowers use indoor rowing machines, or ergs, to simulate the motions of rowing and help with training.

“If you took a football player and you put them on the erg, they could probably pull a really good score,” Fetter said. “There

are kids who can get recruited with these good scores, but for someone who has dedicated themselves to the sport for a while and is really good at rowing, it might be harder for them to get recruited just because they’re not strong.”

While physicality is important, a strong mindset is also crucial for success in rowing.

“You’re doing something that’s greater than yourself,” Bliss-Carrascosa said.

“So, it’s just pushing yourself for the betterment of everyone around you. Not only is it motivating to see progress on your own physiologically, but you want to help those around you succeed, which I feel is a big motivator.”

Both Fetter and Bliss-Carrascosa have shared the triumph of victory as they have rowed together more this past fall than they have in prior seasons. Now that they have committed to their respective colleges, the seniors are looking forward to rowing in a more competitive environment and continuing to enjoy their favorite sport.

“It’s going to be a lot more intense,” Fetter said. “Because if you were one of the better people from your team, you’re going to a group where it’s all people that have

been the strongest on their teams.”

As they move up a level, a new standard appears, and the two are excited to compete with rowers from many backgrounds.

“There are kids

from all over, not only the country, but internationally, and that’s going to be exciting not only to meet people from these places, but to work alongside them,” Bliss-Carrascosa said.

As time flies and the seniors live out the last few months together in the same high school and rowing crew, they have bitter-sweet feelings about moving away from the community they grew up in and from each other.

“I’ve been told that ... you should meet new people in college, you’re not going to be with the same people your whole life, but I would hope to see him [Bliss-Carras-

cosa] not when I’m studying,” Fetter said.

Bliss-Carrascosa also said that he is hoping to stay connected with his good friend throughout college.

“I’m excited to experience something new, especially on the East Coast,” he said. “But I think I’m still going to see Peter plenty when I’m around, and there might even be opportunities for us to row outside of college.”

As the two rowers prepare to part ways and start a new chapter of their lives, they advise anyone pursuing activities for college admissions to stay true to oneself.

“Do something that you enjoy doing, aside from maybe just getting into school,” Fetter said. “It [sports] can be a great doorway to get somewhere if you’re not going to be the strongest in other aspects of life. For me, I was just kind of tired of swimming, so I really don’t think I’d be happy swimming in college. ... Do what makes you happy.” ▽

DEDICATED DUO (RIGHT) — Fetter (left) and Bliss-Carrascosa pose for a photo after morning practice. “Practices start at 5 a.m. during the week when it is usually really dark for most of the time,” Fetter said. Photo by Julie Yang