

TOP STORY EDITOR'S PICK TOPICAL

Local man to share his own UNL rowing club memories at Midwest Theater showing

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The sport of rowing is getting renewed interest as “The Boys in the Boat,” a film directed by George Clooney, highlights the story of a University of Washington rowing team. Allan Maybee, of Scottsbluff, is taking the opportunity to highlight the accomplishments of the University of Nebraska’s Rowing Club.



Allan Maybee, founder of the UNL rowing team, poses with a custom cornhole board at his Scottsbluff home in July 2021. It was made for the club’s 50th anniversary celebration, celebrated that year in September.

Star-Herald file photo

Maybee will speak Friday, Jan. 12 and Saturday, Jan. 13 at the Midwest Theater, prior to showings of “The Boys in the Boat,” a film set in the 1930s that follows the University of Washington rowing team and its quest to compete in the 1936 Summer Olympics.

He’ll outline his quest to form the UNL Rowing Club, challenges that include battles of will with the famed Bob Devaney and the support that the club has today. Maybee is planned to speak at about 6:30 p.m., with people having an opportunity to ask questions. The movie showing will start at about 7 p.m.

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He’ll also speak at 1 p.m. on Sunday prior to the matinee showing at 1:30 p.m.

If you’re surprised that a rowing club exists at the landlocked university, don’t worry, you aren’t alone. Maybee says a lot of people, even alums, aren’t aware of the UNL Rowing Club that was founded in 1970.

There are two reasons that most people aren’t aware, he told the Star-Herald: “One, most of their events are out of state.”

The second is that it’s not a varsity sport. If you’re a varsity sport at the University of Nebraska, you have a room full of talented press people writing out press releases, sending out photographs and stories constantly to the media.”

Also, he acknowledges, rowing isn't really a spectator sport. "If you do go to an event, the event itself is stretched out over 2,000 meters. Unless you position yourself just right, the race is hard to watch."

When Maybee formed the UNL Rowing Club in 1970, he was a graduate student at UNL. As a high school student, he had competed in football and experienced getting concussions.

He said he thought "there's got to be something better than this."

He started to read about rowing and just started rolling. When he started the club, he didn't have any equipment, but wrote more than 50 letters to other colleges and universities as he recruited members.

"With rowing, you don't just dip your toe in to see what the temperature of the water is. You jump in, and that's what I did."

He started recruiting students in the fall and winter, promising that by the spring he'd have boats and oars. He boasted the largest athletic program on campus, with its students achieving good grades, he said, to the chagrin of Bob Devaney, former coach and University of Nebraska director of athletics. A lot of Maybee's stories are about clashes with Devaney, who didn't support formation of sports that were not revenue producing, Maybee said.

According to Maybee, Devaney once told him, "Allan, you're going to have to understand, I will never support an athletic venture in which the athlete crosses the finish line going backwards ... and sitting on his ass."

Through the years, Maybee kept going. By 1973, women had joined the team. Maybee said the club competed against Ivy league schools like Harvard, Cornell and Yale in the Head of the Charles, a regatta in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 1974, at the International Rowing Championships in Syracuse, New York — an invitation-only regatta — the men placed fourth in the country.

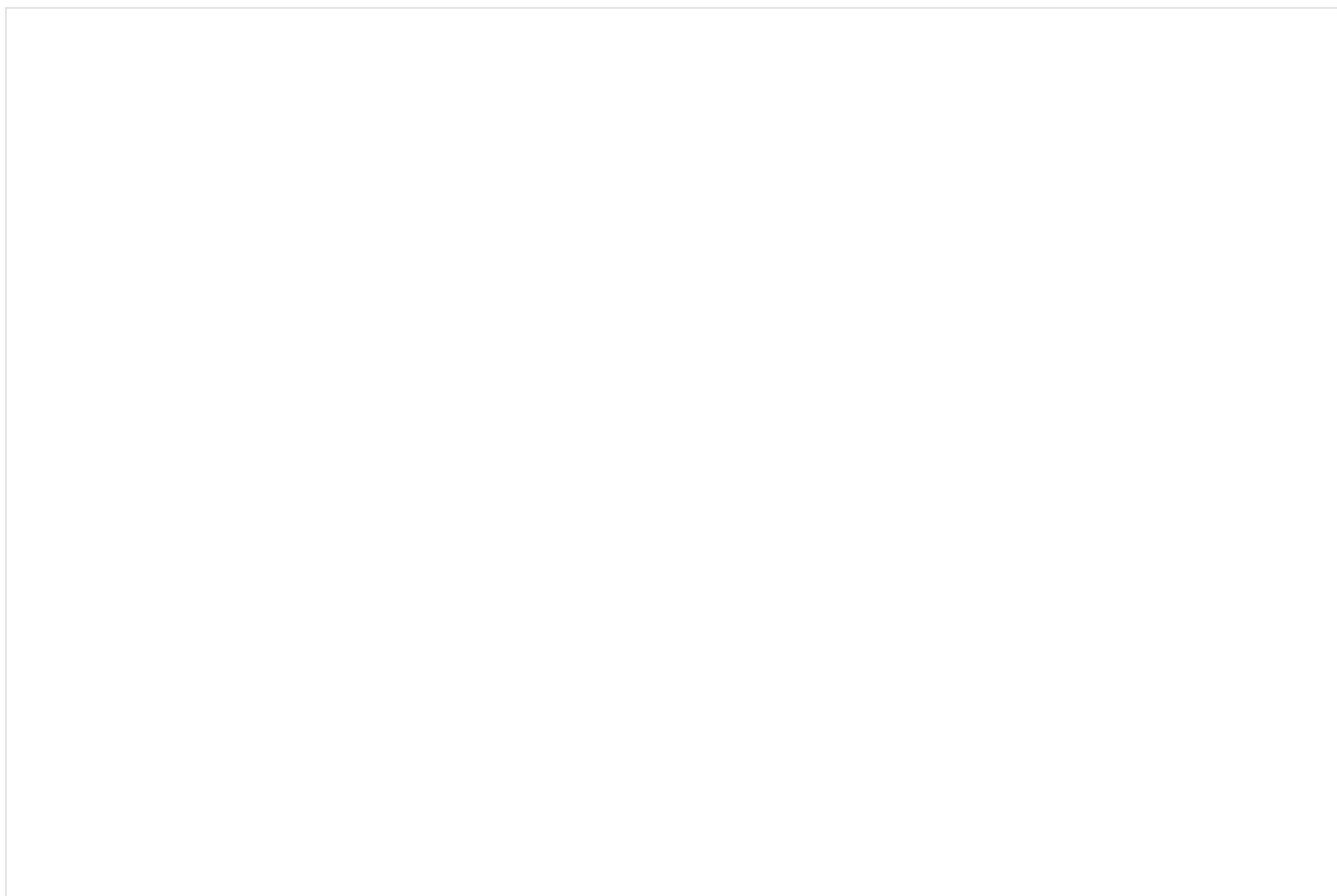
One day, he told Devaney, that the club would have one of its members reach the Olympics, which it did when Lisa Rohde earned a silver medal in women's quadruple sculls in the 1984 Summer Olympics.

Today, he said, the Nebraska Rowing Club has a lot of support from an organization called Friends of Nebraska Rowing. Maybee is on the board and it has a mailing list of about 900 people. He'll promote the club and display regalia and other items in the lobby.

He'll be joined by a Nebraska Rowing Club coach, if weather permits him to travel. Maybee said a similar event will be held in the Omaha area next week, which he said is great for promoting the rowing club and its accomplishments.

Visit the **midwesttheater.com** for more details about its schedule or call the box office at 308-632-4311.

For more on the Nebraska Rowing Club, visit its Facebook page, **facebook.com/NebraskaCrew**.





Celebrating Nebraska Crew's 50th Anniversary

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