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ROWING GEARING UP FOR 4th YEAR OF SHOCKER INDOOR SPRINTS

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Wichita State University Rowing will host the 4th annual Shocker Sprints on February 18, 2012 from 9 AM to 2 PM at the Heskett Center on WSU Campus. Shocker Sprints involve rowing on indoor rowing machines, known as ergs. Participants from Kansas State University, Oklahoma State and Nebraska are expected to challenge the Shocker Rowers in the individual and team events.

Although rowing is normally associated with water, like other outdoor sports, rowing has an indoor component. Ergs best train muscles used to power boats, so winter days find rowers pulling on handles attached to chains instead of oars. Of course, training makes rowers hungry for competition and in 1980 the first known indoor race started in Boston, which now holds the World Championships every year. In the 1980s and 90s, Wichita State Rowing held indoor races, but they had not taken place for several years until Shocker Sprints were established in 2009.

Indoor racing uses computers to track the times of the participants. The second by second by-play is projected onto screens so that the competitors and fans can see where they stand. As opposed to lake viewing where the boats are often several feet away from participants, spectators at indoor events can get up close to their favorite rower to cheer.

Shocker Sprints involve 3 race distances: 2,000, 500 and 1000 meter events. The 2k is the distance used on the water in spring racing, so athletes use the testing to measure their fitness. The 500 meters are a fun distance anyone can do; as such, many non-rowers enter the 500 distances. There are events for Wichita State Students, Faculty/Staff and WSU Organization in addition to the 'standard rower' events. The 500 meter events are free and current WSU rowers may not compete in the Student event to encourage campus participation.

The 1K event is a team competition. Rowers participate in 'boats' of four. The computer combines the times of the four athletes as one boat against other boats. Handicaps are given so that a team of four women can compete against a boat of four men, for example.

In the past two years, Kansas State's Men's Rowing program has grown in number and speed. A team that Shocker Rowing had easily beaten before 2010, the last spring and fall have seen closer racing; for example, the men's novice eight last spring raced KSU 4 times, each won 2. Expect the Wildcats to challenge Shocker Rowers in addition to the Cornhuskers and Cowboys.

Outside of the collegiate competitors, there are events for juniors and masters (those older than 30 years), and of course, photo moments as WU Shox takes to the erg at Noon. Shocker Sprint organizers have encouraged KSU's Wildcat, Nebraska's Cornhusker and OSU's Cowboy to challenge WU, but it is expected WU's prowess on the ergs is still too daunting.

For more information or to register for the Shocker Sprints, please visit www.Wichita.edu/rowing.