



## The Eight: A Season in the Tradition of Harvard Crew

By Susan Saint Sing

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**The Eight: A Season in the Tradition of Harvard Crew** By Susan Saint Sing

*A fascinating look at the 2008 Harvard Varsity Crew Team and the university's legendary history of accomplished rowers*

The Eight is a thrilling, behind-the-scenes look at a group of young men who have given up nearly everything to transform themselves into the best team possible at arguably the world's most venerable rowing institution, Harvard crew. Through a blend of journalistic writing and historical narrative, Saint Sing highlights their struggles and triumphs as she follows them through the spring season of 2008.

This exclusive, competitive world is illuminated as never before as the athletes race for the collegiate national championship and one former member achieves a historic first for Harvard: a gold medal at the 2008 Olympic Games.

What these men go through physically to earn a seat in the Harvard first eight is just the beginning. The real test of their mettle is the inner athlete called upon to make their dreams a reality in this very tense and dramatic world. *The Eight* chronicles the drama of a full season of elite college racing, including the bitter personal struggles and the team's pursuit of excellence.

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## **The Eight: A Season in the Tradition of Harvard Crew** By Susan Saint Sing Bibliography

- Rank: #1514577 in Books
- Brand: Susan Saint Sing Ph D
- Published on: 2010-03-16
- Released on: 2010-03-16
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x .88" w x 5.50" l, .94 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 336 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Although Harvard's legendary varsity crew did not measure up to expectations in intercollegiate competition in 2008, four of its alumni competed in the Beijing Olympics, and one—Malcolm Howard rowing for Canada—won the gold. In this fluid, thorough work by a former member of the U.S. National Rowing Team, journalist Sing takes a breathlessly reverential survey of the tradition of Harvard crew, first established in the Yale-Harvard regatta of 1852, expanded by innovative Harvard president Charles Eliot and championed by alum (and sculler) Teddy Roosevelt at the turn of the last century. The event's apotheosis came during the undefeated 1974–1975 season, coached by Olympian Harry Lambert Parker. Sing carefully notes Parker's coolheaded training method during early morning practices at the Newell Boathouse, where you can smell time.... a place hallowed by deed and deserving of awe. Over 46 years with Parker at the helm, the Crimson crews have gained 19 undefeated seasons and 17 national championships. Sing is besotted by Harvard's longstanding influence on athletics and makes an enthusiastic case for the role of sports in defining a noble character. (*Mar.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

Sing is not only an expert in the history of competitive rowing, she has also competed on the college and national level. Her book focuses primarily on the 2008 Harvard University rowing team, but it also takes readers back through the history of the sport. Intercollegiate competitive rowing, which began in 1852 with a race between Harvard and Yale, is one of the oldest sports in the country—older than basketball, baseball, and American football. Sing examines both the historical impact of the sport and the rowers themselves: what it takes, psychologically and physically, to be a competitive rower. The book is fascinating and informative, but be warned: the author does tend to lay it on a bit thick. In her descriptions of the rowers themselves, near-perfect physical and mental specimens, she often sounds like she's writing about godlike figures from mythology, not flesh-and-blood human beings. Some readers might wish she'd toned down the hero worship; others, wrapped up in the compelling saga of an overlooked sport, might not notice or mind. -- David Pitt

Review

“At last, a rare and hotly anticipated opportunity to peek beneath the kimono of Harvard crew.” ?*Brad Alan Lewis, Olympic Gold Medalist and subject of David Halberstam's The AMATEURS*

“I am sure Harvard as a family and Coach Parker will appreciate this sensitive effort. It is as fine a piece as I've ever seen written about a crew and their heritage and ethic. Susan is a sponge of rowing lore, a super magnet of issues that are important, and a loyal friend of all those who ply the water for speed or for personal enlightenment. She gives us balance often when winning is catching up with humanity.” ?*Ted Nash, Olympic Rowing Gold Medalist and 15-time U.S. Olympian.*

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