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Rowers clinch Olympic bids at Benderson Park trials



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SARASOTA -- Experience was ultimately what separated the favorites from the challengers at the USRowing Olympic trials at Nathan Benderson Park. Most divisions were occupied by a 2012 Olympian still in his or her prime. Youth chased experience.

The Olympic trials concluded Sunday in Sarasota, and experience separated the qualifiers from those who fell short. Half of the six individual or doubles winners have Olympic experience.

Kenneth Jurkowski brought the most impressive resume to Benderson Park and pulled off a one-second win in single sculls. Jurkowski represented the United States at the 2008 and 2012 Summer Olympics and is now one step away from doing it again at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio De Janeiro. He will need a top-three finish at the final Olympic qualifying regatta to make the Olympic team.

"The term 'Regatta of Death' I think is silly," Jurkowski said, referring to the nickname for the final qualifying race. "I look at it as an opportunity to make the team. I prefer to look at it as the 'Regatta of Opportunity.'"

Genevra Stone, another

single sculler, is the only other repeat Olympian. The 30-year-old from Massachusetts' Cambridge Boat Club covered the 2,000-meter course in 7:58.57 for a seven-second win.

"I was pacing myself during the week, I'm not going to lie. I didn't race an entire 2K until today," Stone said. "The next 100 days are all about the fine touches."

The double scull team of Ellen Tomek and Meghan O'Leary is the other duo with prior Olympic experience. Tomek, who rows out of New York Athletic Club, competed at the 2008 Summer Olympics. O'Leary, who trains at the United States Olympic Training Center in Oklahoma City, will be a first-time Olympian.

Willy Cowles and Stephen Whelpley of Vermont's Craftsbury Outdoor Center will be the USA's men's double sculls team. Andrew Campbell and Joshua Konieczny, also from Cambridge Boat Club, will be the men's lightweight doubles team. Kate Bertko and Devery Karz from Vesper Boat Club in Philadelphia were the women's lightweight winners.

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