



The Greater Dayton Rowing Association quad crew of Emilee Koenig, Kayla Eads, Megan Hinkle, Abby Hamilton.

## Oakwood rowers compete at Youth Nationals; GDRA crew ranks fifth place in championship

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Having barely placed third at the Regional qualifier at Harsha Lake near Cincinnati, the girls first varsity quad from the Greater Dayton Rowing Association, or GDRA, were not expected to rank well at the Youth National Championships held in Sarasota, FL.

The weekend started with Friday’s races, where every boat that qualifies to participate at youth nationals must participate, to determine if they go directly to repechages (reps) or semifinals, held Saturday, which would eventually determine if crews go to A, B, or C final — A being ranked 1-6, B ranked 7-12, and C ranked 13-18 in the nation. In the girls quad event, first place from each heat from the Friday races placed directly into semifinals, leaving everyone else to battle it out in reps, giving them a chance to advance to semifinals or go directly to C finals.

Astoundingly, the GDRA rowers placed second in their heat, sending them to battle it out in reps. In reps, the pressure was on to place first or second to advance to the semifinals, leaving everyone else to race in the C finals on Sunday. For the first time ever in GDRA history, the women’s youth quad advanced to race in semifinals later that afternoon on Saturday.

Then the real racing was on! In semifinals, the top three places advance to A final, the fastest final, and the rest of the boats participate in B finals. Either of which would represent a huge accomplishment for the girls from GDRA. In the semifinal all systems were go, and the girls were fired up. Against all odds, the GDRA girls made team history, placing third in semifinals sending them to participate in the A finals. An achievement that caught the entire country off guard, so much so that the announcer said “GDRA isn’t supposed to be this fast. I guess they didn’t get the memo.”

But the rowers from Dayton weren’t done making team history and defying odds yet. Sunday morning at 11:11a.m., the GDRA women’s youth quad consisting of Abby Hamilton, a senior from Oakwood High School who will be attending Stetson University in Florida in the fall on a rowing scholarship, Megan Hinkle from Troy Christian High School, Kayla Eads from Centerville, and Emilee Koenig from Oakwood High School who will be a 2017 grad, placed fifth in the nation for the women’s youth quad event with a time of 7:15 for the standard distance of 2000 meters, the same distance rowers race at the Olympic level. The girls of GDRA shocked the rowing community with such a high rank for a small team from Dayton, Ohio. They set very high standards for themselves. The team will be working with new rowers in their Learn-to-Row classes throughout the summer for grades 7-12. For more information, go to [daytonrowing.org](http://daytonrowing.org).