“It’s wonderful that we could accomplish what we have this year, just for all the obvious reasons,” he told The Boston Globe after the Yale race. “We moved on as we began, following the tenets that H. Parker established, and it’s been a real pleasure.”

Though Butt’s appointment was not automatic, he was for many reasons the logical choice, having worked alongside Parker for a quarter-century and having built a record of success nearly as impressive. In his 28 years at the helm, Butt’s lightweight scullers logged 25 winning seasons, 15 Eastern Sprints titles, and nine national championships, monopolizing both the latter honors in 2012 and 2013. Decades in Newell Boathouse mean that Butt “knows the Harvard culture,” says John Powers ’70, the Boston Globe sportswriter whose chapter on lightweight rowing appears in the recently published Third H Book of Harvard Athletics: 1963-2013. “He knows the kind of people you are dealing with, and what motivates them. Like Harry, Charley has a gift for explaining to a rower, ‘You’re doing this, this, this, this, you’re doing this.’

Harvard athletes are driven, Butt explains, “because they want news that stays news, the eternal essentials of moving a boat.”

Furthermore, Butt owns an impressive track record in international competition. He coached single scullers Andrew Campbell ’14 (to a gold medal in world competition) and Michelle Guerette ’02 (to a silver medal at the 2008 Olympics). About Guerette’s win, Powers recalls, “Charley’s race plan in Beijing was brilliant, and absolutely on the money. He knew all six women in that final, and told Michelle, ‘Row your race, and the field will come back to you.’ And that’s exactly what happened [late in the race, her opponents lost speed relative to her pace]. That kind of advice gives you confidence when the field jumps out in front of you at the start.”

In 2004, Butt coached Henry Nuzum ’99 and Aquil Abdullah, the first American men since 1984 to make an Olympic final in the double scull. “It was all due to Charley’s coaching,” Nuzum explains. “He has an unbelievably keen technical eye. He notices seemingly small biomechanical elements that make a big difference in boat speed.” (In lightweight rowing, technical superiority can be crucial, because the weight limit removes the option of winning with bigger athletes.)

“You need a feel for the water and a feel for whether the work you are doing is producing hull speed,” Butt explains. “Everything is in rhythm and sync, and that makes the hard work satisfying. There’s no escaping the work, but it’s the quality of the work and the feeling of working together that make it enjoyable. You have to respect how a boat moves, and you cannot go outside the lines of how a boat moves. Water doesn’t compress, but it does pile—you’ll find a mound of water in front of an oar blade. You’re in a highly intense and potentially chaotic situation, with no timeouts, so you want to stay smooth. And you need a very strong sense of pace.”

Butt began absorbing such knowledge from his father, Charles (“Charlie”) Butt Sr., an MIT-trained engineer who is a legend in the sport. Butt the Elder started a crew at Washington & Lee High School in northern Virginia in 1949 and coached this public-school program to win the Princess Elizabeth Cup at the Henley Royal Regatta in England in 1964 and 1965, for example. “I remember the excitement,” his son recalls. “In those days, the cup stayed in your home, and I remember what it felt like—it even had a distinctive odor.” Top rowing coaches

Hockey Highlights—and Heartache

National Runners-Up
The men’s hockey team—under Landry Family head coach Katey Stone for the twentieth season—finished 27-6-3: a tremendous year marked by the Beanpot championship, Ivy League title (8-2), and the Eastern College Athletic Conference season and tournament titles (the former, tied with Clarkson; the latter, a 7-3 win over Cornell). Having reached the NCAA national championship game, the Crimson fell 4-1 to Minnesota in the Gophers’ home arena on March 22.

Seniors Hillary Crowe, Sarah Edney, Lyndsey Fry, Marissa Gedman, Michelle Picard, Josephine Pucci, and Samantha Reber depart with a 97-29-11 record. But junior goalkeeper Emerance Maschmeyer returns, as do offensive powerhouses Mary Parker, Miyi D’Oench (both juniors), Sydney Daniels (a sophomore), and Lexie Laing (a freshman); four of the five team leaders in points.

A Brief Postseason
The men’s hockey squad, for the most part healthier this year than in past campaigns, finished 21-13-3. The Crimson swept Brown in two games in first-round ECAC tournament competition, and then dramatically defeated Yale in the second round by taking the third game in double overtime, 3-2. Subsequent victories over Quinnipiac and Colgate at Lake Placid earned the Crimson the championship, and its first NCAA tournament appearance since 2006, with a three seed in the Midwest region.

But the postseason was a one-and-done affair: Harvard fell to Nebraska-Omaha, 4-1, in its first-round Midwest Regional contest at South Bend, Indiana. Fittingly, the Crimson’s goal was scored by junior Jimmy Vesey, the ECAC Player of the Year, who entered the game with 31 goals, leading the nation. A finalist for the Hobey Baker Award, conferred on the top NCAA men’s ice hockey player (the decision was scheduled for April 10, after this issue went to press), Vesey, drafted by the Nashville Predators, decided to return for his senior year—a big boost for the Crimson in 2015-16. Senior goaltender Steve Michalek set the Harvard record for saves in a season, finishing with 1,029.

Reprinted from Harvard Magazine. For more information, contact Harvard Magazine, Inc. at 617-495-5746