

4.4 CREW SELECTION *by: Mike Purcer*

Rowing, other than the single sculling event, is a team sport and requires athletes to come together in crews to compete. Crew selection can be challenging for coaches and athletes because of their emotional ties with others in the program. Athletes are highly stressed and may feel disconnected due to competing against their friends for a seat in the boat. Coaches can be apprehensive about preconceived feelings and expected outcomes of the selection process. Coaches and athletes will often have intuitive feelings based on their knowledge and experience within the athlete group. The athletes must feel the selection process is fair and will result in a crew makeup that reflects the best athletes and will result in the fastest crew.

Selecting a team or a specific crew from within the group must be completed with a process that provides a fair opportunity for all athletes. Coaches and selectors must be unbiased, and crew selection must be objective with quantifiable evaluation results.

Athletes often have a sense of who they believe the top athletes are within the group, and coaches may have their own feelings. At times, an individual's perception of the best athletes may conflict with selection event results. For this reason, evaluation methods, procedures and results must be transparent. The selected team should leave all athletes confident that they have had a fair opportunity to succeed and the coaches satisfied that the best team is selected.

Coaches have sometimes struggled with leaving a top athlete on the dock due to poor performance during selection events. The saying, "the eight best does not always make the best eight," is not lost on coaches searching for the crew rhythm and the intrinsic value of a

crew coming together. The team selected may not have the confidence of all, but it is a critical step to moving forward.

The timing of the selection process must be early in the season to allow crews to come together once selected and develop timing and speed. Ultimately, the selection process is an opportunity to bring the team together. A well-run process will be open and show respect for athletes and the coach's unbiased goal to put the best team together. The athletes should feel the best people have been selected for the crew. Athletes who are de-selected or kept on the team as spares should feel they have had a fair opportunity as they may be the program's future.

4.4.0 Selection Document

The selection document provides information on the selection process. More extensive rowing programs should have a selection policy outlining the development and publication dates for the selection document, which will change with annual updates.

The selection document may include the following sections:

1. Objectives of the rowing program
2. Schedule - Dates and Location (timelines of the selection process)
3. Athlete Eligibility and Prerequisites
 - a) minimum standards of performance
 - b) prerequisites
 - c) registration/fees
4. Athlete's Commitment if Selected
5. Athlete Representative (confidential resource)
6. Selectors
7. Conflict of Interest
8. Evaluation criteria (events)
 - a) description, format, assessment outcomes
 - b) objective values recorded

- c) subjective criteria (objective notes recorded)
- d) athlete compatibility
- 9. Methodology
 - a) ranking and rating
 - b) successive elimination events
 - c) aggregate score evaluation
- 10. Sickness/Injury
- 11. Athlete Pre-briefs and Debriefs
- 12. Publication of Results
- 13. Appeal Process
- 14. Unforeseen Circumstances
- 15. Ongoing Performance
- 16. Glossary of Terms, if needed
- 17. References to Related Documents

The selection document should be published months before the selection process begins and must be available to all possible participants.

4.4.1 Objectives

The selection document should outline the goals of the program, including the major regatta(s) in the upcoming competition phase. It also outlines the specific objectives of the selection process, which may include the size of the team or specific crews to be identified.

4.4.2 Schedule

This section document should outline the dates and location(s) for the event evaluations. Some selection event dates may be set, while others, such as on-water racing, might be tentative as they are weather dependent. Some selection events may be tentative or as required based on the results of previous athlete scores. The ongoing selection process is often challenging, but every effort should be made to adhere to the schedule.

If there are prerequisites to attending the selection process, they should be included in the published selection document and the schedule. Finally, the end date should be outlined if there are time constraints to complete the selection due to travel or financial restrictions.

4.4.3 Athlete Eligibility and Prerequisites

The athletes selected must be eligible to compete in the scheduled regattas. For example, racing in regattas on school teams may require the athletes to be full-time students. Club membership may be required at club regattas, or national citizenship may be required at international regattas. Other examples are physical requirements, such as in PARA rowing classifications or weight-restricted events. The selection document must include any eligibility requirements, and the process must ensure these requirements are checked and met.

The program may have prerequisite requirements before joining the selection process, such as a minimum erg score submission or performance requirement for selected events at a qualifying regatta. Prerequisites published well in advance are the first step in the selection process and may exclude athletes who are not at the required level of the team.

Along with athlete requirements to be involved in the team selection process, coaches and selectors must recognize that the athletes have rights.

Athletes' Rights

- To know and understand the selection process.
- To have a fair opportunity to participate in the process.
- To see the results.
- To ask questions personally or through a confidential representative.

- To be able to express concerns to coaches or the selection committee.
- To make appeals to selection decisions and receive written explanations.

4.4.4 Athlete Commitment if Selected

Athletes must be informed about their responsibilities before the selection process begins if chosen for the team. The commitments may include time commitments to training and travel, costs, and team rules that should be shared.

4.4.5 Athlete Representative

The selection process is stressful for athletes, and many may be overwhelmed and unable to ask questions. An athlete's representative can be selected by the athletes participating to act as a confidential resource. Athletes not wishing to ask questions to coaches directly can contact the representative. The athlete representative may also be requested to attend team or individual meetings.

4.4.6 Selectors

Depending on the size of the program, people analyzing the results and making decisions on the athletes that move forward or are deselected may range from the coach alone to a coaching staff or a combination of coach and group of selectors chosen to maintain total bias. Sometimes the coach may not be involved in the selection process, allowing a clean slate startup with the crew when the team or crew is chosen.

Developing a selection committee to lead the process and analyze the results is sometimes preferable and allows the coach(s) to appear neutral. The selector(s) will monitor the evaluation events and may require additional personnel

to monitor events processes like taking times or assist in events.

4.4.7 Conflict of Interest

All selectors must identify any conflict of interest, including personal or professional ties to athletes involved in the group. Coaches that have coached athletes in the past may have a bias in favour of past team members, and new athletes to the program may perceive a bias. Advanced-level programs may request selectors to sign a declaration of independence attesting to their impartial status with all athletes involved.

4.4.8 Evaluation Criteria

The selected events should be relative to rowing performance, provide objective, quantifiable results, be reliable/repeatable and be economical to organize. The selection process may consist of many events, including on-water speed in time trials and seat racing, aerobic and anaerobic testing such as 2k, 6k, and max watts ergometer results, lab tests like MaxVO₂, and various forms of strength evaluations. Coaches have also used running or bike ergometer tests to evaluate aerobic fitness. Other assessments, such as rowing technique, may be subjective, while others may be years of experience or age that allow future involvement and development within the program.

Athlete evaluations in selection events must provide scores and values for ranking and comparison. Results must be checked, and recorded scores and raw data should be kept for the record. Legibility is critical, and a picture of recorded times may be a good backup. Timed event records should include the start time and finish times, as well as the overall final result. Records should include a full description of the event and notes taken during the

process. These could include weather and water conditions, start times, and boats used. This information will be critical if appeals are received and a great reference for the future.

Weight tests can be a good way to measure an athlete's strength. Leg press and bench press tests are often used as they relate to muscles used in the rowing stroke.

Seat Racing is a term used to describe a series of intrasquad races with athletes changing crews to compare their boat-moving ability. This form of evaluation reflects the athletes' ability to perform in racing and provides objective results by comparing race times. Seat racing is possibly the most common form of comparing athletes in the final part of the crew selection process. Athletes and coaches highly accept seat racing as part of the selection process.

The selection document may include **Subjective Evaluations** such as effective rowing technique or coachability. Subjective criteria require a detailed explanation of the requirements and scoring, including a description of minimum and maximum ranking values. Coaches must record descriptive notes to support their evaluation scores. Evaluating athletes with subjective criteria may leave the evaluators open to questions and criticism.

The need to bring athletes together in crews requires that they are compatible with similar stroke lengths (reach) and power capacities. When selecting a specific crew, there is a need to evaluate **athlete compatibility** to ensure selected athletes can develop together. Their individual rowing technique (biomechanical movements) affect their power application and body movements in the boat that affect hull speed. Compatibility is often overlooked or evaluated as part of team events such as seat racing. Boating athletes with large physical differences may result

in limiting opportunities for improvement. For this reason, specifying priority boats may handicap the selection, as all athletes will want to be in the priority boat. During the selection process, coaches try to find the top athletes in all the selection events, but at times, coaches do an injustice by not looking at compatibility to select top crews.

The selection process aims to evaluate athletes on criteria that produce consistent and repeatable results. As athletes often perform inconsistently, selection events such as seat racing may provide different results for the same event. For this reason, athlete scores that are close should be reviewed, and athletes should be provided additional opportunities to perform. On the other hand, like racing, each athlete is given an equal opportunity to perform on a given day. Seat racing results similar to races at regattas will provide different results each time athletes race. The opportunity to succeed must be fair, and athletes must know the outcomes of the event.

Recording Data is critical, along with maintaining original records. Times for racing must include backed-up timers. Start and finish times must be recorded, and calculations should be checked. Data that is transcribed to a different format, such as watch times to paper, must be checked. The quality of the selection process depends on the quality of the notes taken.

4.4.9 Methodology

The evaluation criteria and the timeline schedule should outline the proposed events. The process of evaluating event results and identifying or deselecting athletes between events must be planned. Event evaluations will provide the coach or selection committee with result values that must be analyzed. Event scores can rank athletes in order or be compared and rated based on their values. Scores organized in order of performance rank athletes as

first, second, third, fourth and so on. Ranking athletes in order allows selectors an objective basis to move forward in the process. However, ranking scores in order does not fully consider their comparative value.

Figure 4.4.9a Ranked and Rated Scores shows five athlete scores on a 2k ergometer event. The athletes 2k times are ranked and rated. The rank column shows the finish order of the athletes. A more in-depth evaluation involves calculating the scores with a comparator or standard to determine a percentage value. The difference (Diff) column calculated the erg finish time from the fastest time to show a comparative value difference. Further analysis shows the erg times compared to the 2k erg standard of 6:32.0 to calculate a percentage of the standard value.

Analysis of the percent of standard values shows that although there is a difference between athletes ranked second and third, their scores are very close.

Figure 4.4.9a *Ranked and Rated Scores*

Name	2k time	Rank	Diff	% Standard Rating **
Carol	6:38.9	1	0.0	98.27%
Jessica	6:47.2	2	8.3	96.27%
Natasha	6:48.3	3	9.4	96.01%
Wendy	6:59.8	4	20.9	93.38%
Cathy	7:04.5	5	25.6	92.34%

* Note: Diff is calculated from the fastest time

** Note: 2k erg standard is 6:32.0

On-water time trials are often evaluated as a percentage of the Gold Medal Standard (GMS).

The event result values must be fully analyzed before athletes are selected or deselected. Score values with minimal differences should not separate athletes into different groups.

Selection by Elimination Events or Aggerate Scores

The selection process often includes multiple event evaluations, such as ergometer scores and seat-racings, sometimes in different boat classes. Athletes progressing through the selection process may score high and be moved to the next evaluation, or their results may exclude them from further selection events. This process of elimination allows athletes with top scores to move forward while others with lower scores are deselected or assigned to secondary crews. The elimination process is valid but may exclude athletes early with one poor performance.

Progression through an elimination process is shown in Figure 4.4.9b twelve athletes erg test with the top eight going on to racing in a singles time trial. The top four fastest times move into a doubles matrix to determine the fastest double.

Figure 4.4.9b Progression Summary

Name	2K Score	2k Erg Weight Adjusted			1x Trial		Doubles Matrix	
	2k Erg	body weight (kg)	2k erg adjusted	Rk	TOTAL TIME	RANK	2k Erg	Rk
Scott	6:15.2	72.0	05:33.5	1	7:25.65	3	18:12.56	2
Ben	6:45.0	55.0	05:39.1	2	7:29.35	5	18:18.25	4
Tom	6:20.0	74.0	05:39.8	3	7:20.26	1	18:09.15	1
Tim	6:26.0	71.0	05:42.0	4	7:27.52	4		
Jordan	6:34.5	68.0	05:46.2	5	7:22.52	2	18:14.58	3
Frank	6:29.9	72.0	05:46.5	6	7:35.65	6		
Corey	6:32.0	72.0	05:48.4	7	7:40.56	7		
Jordan	6:56.0	62.0	05:57.7	8	7:49.47	8		
Alex	6:53.4	66.0	06:00.4	9				
Jacob	6:42.0	75.0	06:00.5	10				
Bobby	6:49.7	74.0	06:06.4	11				
Mike	6:58.3	73.0	06:12.9	12				

Selection by elimination events offers a direct process to select identified boats. However, deselected athletes early limit the boating options and do not allow athletes a chance to demonstrate their abilities in all events.

Selection by aggregate score involves all athletes being evaluated through multiple events. The results of multiple evaluations can be aggregated, and a total score can be calculated based on points assigned to each event. All athletes have the opportunity to participate in all events, and the final selection is based on the aggregate score. Figure 4.4.9c shows twelve athletes with scores from a 2k erg and seat racing events. The total point score and athlete rank with the group are shown in the right-hand columns.

Figure 4.4.9c Aggregate Scores Summary

	2K Erg Score				SEAT RACING				Results	SCORE
	00:14.37	Stand Deviation	00:57.49	4x STDEV is equal to 0%	00:14.23	Stand Deviation	00:56.92	4x STDEV is equal to 0%		
	40	point value			60	point value				
Name	2k Erg	RANK	percent score	earned points	TOTAL TIME	RANK	percent score	earned points	Total Points	RANK
Scott	06:15.2	1	100.0%	40.00	21:15.35	2	96.9%	58.13	98.13	1
Tom	06:20.0	2	91.6%	36.66	21:20.95	3	87.1%	52.23	88.89	3
Tim	06:26.0	3	81.2%	32.48	21:13.58	1	100.0%	60.00	92.48	2
Frank	06:29.9	4	74.4%	29.77	21:34.25	5	63.7%	38.21	67.98	5
Corey	06:32.0	5	70.8%	28.31	21:43.25	8	47.9%	28.72	57.03	6
Jordan	06:34.5	6	66.4%	26.57	21:23.65	4	82.3%	49.38	75.96	4
Jacob	06:42.0	7	53.4%	21.35	21:38.25	6	56.7%	33.99	55.35	7
Ben	06:45.0	8	48.2%	19.26	21:46.58	9	42.0%	25.21	44.48	9
Bobby	06:49.7	9	40.0%	15.99	21:46.95	10	41.4%	24.82	40.82	10
Alex	06:53.4	10	33.5%	13.42	21:40.85	7	52.1%	31.25	44.67	8
Jordan	06:56.0	11	29.0%	11.61	21:56.29	12	25.0%	14.98	26.59	12
Mike	06:58.3	12	25.1%	10.04	21:49.85	11	36.3%	21.77	31.81	11

The final selection process results should identify athletes' strengths and weaknesses and which athletes can combine for the best possible crews.

4.4.10 Sickness/Injury

The selection document should clearly outline the process for athletes who are sick or injured during the selection process. Athletes who cannot participate in a selection event may be required to submit documentation related to their condition. Athletes should not be able to move forward on past results.

4.4.11 Athlete Pre-briefs and Debriefs

Before all selection events, coaches/selectors should hold pre-briefs to explain the event's setup. This may be a time to answer questions regarding the setup of the event and details, but discussing post-event actions should be avoided. Immediately following the event, there should be a debrief with athletes for review and to provide an opportunity for athlete feedback. This is not the time to share results as the data should be checked, and speculation on the next steps may be premature if the results affect the next steps.

Following evaluation events, results can be compiled anonymously (without names) for the initial sharing with athletes. Individual athlete debriefs will provide a private opportunity to review their results and discuss future goals with the coaches.

Where athletes are selected for the next round of event evaluations, individual meetings provide an opportunity for feedback and input. Individual debriefs will allow athletes to share their personal feedback, questions and goals. Individual debriefs will also give coaches a chance to share subjective comments.

Each athlete being de-selected from the group must receive an individual debrief. The meeting should include reviewing the athlete's future goals, making recommendations for their development, and determining where they should continue their rowing development. If requested by the athlete, this meeting could include a representative, and it should always include two coaches/selectors.

4.4.12 Publication of Results

Results are published only within the team, and before the athlete debriefs, the data may be anonymous, without names. Scores can be related to a reference letter or colour

on the results sheet, and athletes are given their personal references to allow them to view their own scores. Result scores or times that are published should include raw data such as start and finish times. Upon meeting with individual athletes, the coach can share that person's score and maintain the anonymity of the others. This will prevent speculation as coaches meet with athletes individually.

Results from event evaluations should be made available to the team at the completion of the individual meetings. Typically, individual results are shared with the athlete first if the athlete is de-selected.

4.4.13 Appeal Process

The selection committee must outline an appeal process. During the selection process, athletes may, at an appropriate time, ask questions if they need clarification about the setup of the event. Questions about how the event results will be used are not appropriate.

Athletes may choose to ask questions or express concerns through the pointed representative to maintain anonymity. Once the results are shared or published, and the next steps are shared, athletes can appeal the decision. The appeal must be in writing, and the reason for the appeal must be explained. The coach/selection group must respond in writing. If the athlete's appeal is rejected, they may want to take it to the next level. There should be a level above the coach/selection committee that will hear the appeal and make the final decision.

4.4.14 Unforeseen Circumstances

The selection document outlines the process, events and timelines; however, in the event of unforeseen circumstances that require changes in the process, the selection document should outline how changes will be made. If needed, the selectors and the administration must

thoroughly review the options. Athletes should be informed of any changes as soon as possible and given the opportunity to provide feedback.

4.4.15 Ongoing Performance

Athletes must be committed to ongoing crew development and improved performance. Crews failing to improve based on time trials and performance at regattas may be reviewed. Injuries within the team may require coaches to re-evaluate the boatings. Coaches will monitor crew and individual athlete development. Athletes who are struggling should ask for a personal meeting with coaches to view and discuss performance expectations. Coaches should identify athletes who are struggling to improve and work with them to identify areas or strategies to help them improve.

4.4.16 Glossary of Terms

If needed, there should be a glossary of terms, including descriptions. For example, the Gold Medal Standards (GMS) should be identified and explained.

4.4.17 References to Related Documents

The selection document may contain references to other documents, such as the organization's policies or associated rules. The names, publication dates, and locations of the related documents should be listed in the selection document.