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Seat Racing As Part of Selection

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Thank Rowperfect, Rebecca, Grant.

Aim: To promote discussion of selection techniques.

To pass on my ideas and opinions on selection, particularly seat racing.

Intro: My background and experience.

1 Context

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- Selection is an issue for all crews.
- Dissatisfaction with selection procedures or outcomes is a common negative factor in crew performance.
- Good selection policy and procedures are a useful management tool.

Rowing is a team sport, teams must be chosen.

Bad selection, or selection that doesn't meet the expectations of the team will reduce performance and enjoyment.

Just look at all the headlines!

Good selection is a way of managing athletes. Use selection as a way of managing expectations, good selection shows the athletes why the decisions have been made.

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2 Selection Philosophy

- All selection tests are an approximation of the final event.
  - Time.
  - Usually distance.
  - Often boat type.
- Continuum from social to performance driven.

Selection is always done before the event, no substitutions in rowing!

So, the selector is making a choice before the event about which athletes he / she thinks will be fastest on race day over a specific course.

Information to make this choice is imperfect. Tests are done before the event, over different distances , in different boats.

From this imperfect information the selector must extrapolate forward to race day and make a judgement.

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3 Selection Methods

- Continuum from subjective to objective.
  - Social.
    - Who turns up.
    - Taking turns.

More appropriate for children, recreational.

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- Coaches opinion.
  - Technique.
  - Compatibility.
  - Age.
  - Experience / service.

Opinions are valid, but make sure the athletes know that opinion is the basis.

Technique is a valid selection criterion but hard to measure.

Age is a valid measurement, too young.

Experience, do last year's medals count?

Service, do you reward loyalty? What effect does this have on other people and their performance?

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- Physiology
  - Size / weight etc
  - Ergo scores
    - Training scores
    - Maxima
    - Weight adjusted maxima

Easily measured but what is the effect on boat speed?

Low tech or high tech? Height, weight, wingspan or Max oxygen uptake and anaerobic thresholds?

What ergo score? 2km? 5km?, maximal or submaximal? Which machine on which setting? What if any weight correction factor?

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- Racing
  - Regattas
  - Time trials
  - Matrices
  - Seat racing

Which regattas? If you are racing 2km then relatively easy. How to simulate the HORR or WeHORR. Henley? Boat Race?

Time trials. What distance? Relatively easy to manipulate.

Matrix. Good and useful but require fleets of identical boats, multi lane courses etc. Big assumption that 2- speed equates to 8 speed.

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4 Choosing a Selection Process

- To suit crew and objective.
- To suit facilities and abilities.
- Usually a mix of tests is better.

Fit the tests to the ambitions of the crews. Don't repeatedly test young people on the ergo. A-M small etc.

Fit the tests to the water and testing equipment you have. Don't seat race on the Tideway!

Tests should fit the training at the time, long in winter, shorter in summer.

Test that which you are training. Simple tests can work, pull ups!

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5 The Case for Seat Racing

- Advantages.
- Disadvantages.

For	Can be a good simulation of racing.
	Fair
	Transparent
	Repeatable
	Good training
Against	Time consuming
	Requires space and equipment
	Requires a good level of rowing ability.

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6 Principles of Seat Racing.

- Everything held constant except athletes.
- Comparisons are one to one, athlete to athlete.
- Each race after the null race gives only one piece of information

Only thing changed is one athlete per boat. This gives a measure of those two athletes.

Null race tells nothing about the athletes but may tell something about a crew.

7 Assumptions for Seat Racing.

- All athletes are honest and well motivated.
- All athletes have comparable levels of fitness and skill.

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8 The Rules of Seat Racing

- Only one change at a time.
- Athletes must not know what the next change is.
- Times don't matter, differences do.

Exception is a double change and a comparison with an earlier race. See example.

Athletes know neither the number of races or the next change.

Total time is irrelevant to the seat racing. It does give information about the general level of the team.

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9 Procedure

- Use fours.
- Coxed is usually better than not.
- Decide a distance.
- Decide, and enforce, a rate.
- Boats must be similar and capable of being rigged identically. Identical boats are better.

Eights too clumsy

Steering is vital, can distract the steersman and leads to difficulty boating crews.

I use 1500m

I use 34 or free.

Similar boats are acceptable, rig must be identical. Usual convention is that athletes can change height and stretcher only.

- Course should be straight, and have consistent conditions across both lanes. Bouyed courses are significantly superior.
- Cox’ns, if used, say nothing except rate.
- Boats stay in same lane.
- All comparisons are done between crews with only one difference.

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- All sequences require a null race with a small difference between the crews.
- Changing two athletes at a time is allowed but the comparison is with an earlier crew.
- If in doubt, change back.

If the null race has more than 1 length difference start again.

Careful! Change two athletes so that in effect you go back to the previous line up and make a single change.

If any result seems doubtful, change back and check.

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- Comparisons are only allowed within sessions.
- Less than 1 sec is not a result.
- All athletes should have the same number of races.

You cannot compare between sessions.

Draws are acceptable data.

This applies if you have more than 2 boatfuls.

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10 Common Errors

- Inconsistent water.
- Too great a distance between crews.
- Rating differences.
- One or more incompetent athlete.
- Bad steering.

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11 Traps

- Not thinking ahead.
  - Decide what comparisons you need, boat crews accordingly.
- Not having enough time.
- Too many races.