

## **SRC SQUAD TRAINING**

### **Theme Sheet - Balance ergos**

Theoretically, if the finish, recovery, catch and drive are correctly executed this theme should be unnecessary. As we live in the real world balance will be the penultimate theme for this series. A stable boat provides a level platform on which to row. Correct balance will provide a comfortable and enjoyable row. In order to balance the boat crew members have to work together to move consistently throughout the stroke. Balance is a function of crew hand heights throughout the stroke but it is more than that. Lack of flexibility or core strength can cause individuals to fail to maintain correct position, or hand heights or to move out of unison with others. Timing (the final theme) is also a contributory factor.

### **Factors spoiling balance throughout the stroke**

#### **Finish**

Drawing down, rather than level immediately prior to the finish will cause the blade to pop out of the water early (washing out) and may draw the boat down on the side of the offending crew member. This is not however, a universal effect. Washing out may leave crew members' blades on the opposite side in the water and make it difficult for them to extract their blades. Remember think "draw level, down and away."

Dropping the hands too far at the finish or on the recovery will tend to draw the boat down on the side of the offending crew member. The reverse is also the case. Some inexperienced crew members will try to twist the blade out of the water and fail to drop their hands. This will tend to push the boat down on the opposite side to the offending crew member. Remember think "draw level, down and away and level hands."

#### **Recovery**

Assuming that the crew has balanced the boat at the finish the next variable is the recovery/sliding. There is a tendency for people to drop their hands:

- as they get their hands away and rock over (remember to think "reach forward" not "rock over")
- as they square before entry (remember to think "square, level hands")
- if they reach for more length at front-stops (remember to think "length from backstops")

## Catch

The main problem here is attempting to square and take the catch in one movement. This inevitably leads to a lost catch and lack of control of blade height. Thinking of "square and in" as two separate movements encourages more stability on the catch and control of hand heights.

## Drive

If the catch is executed correctly the drive should take place without hand heights changing before the finish. It is important to think "place, drive, draw level." Experience shows that telling people, particularly novices, to "draw up at the finish," will result in them raising the hands in the middle of the stroke followed by the inevitable draw down to the waist at the finish. It is better to use the term "draw level."

## Ergo Exercises

Surprisingly the ergo is a really good place to think about hand heights and balance because it is a level platform. The ergos at SRC are mostly taped up to show the correct height of the chain during the stroke and on the recovery. It is valuable to row every stroke keeping the chain at the correct height in relation to the tapes. This helps to imprint correct heights on "muscle memory." Specific exercises include the following:

- Fixed seat rowing: row the finishes only checking up on hand heights and ensuring that you draw level, then drop the hands on the release so that the chain is level with the bottom of the tape as you push the hands away.
- Fixed seat rowing with reach forward: as above but reach forward with the chain still level before taking the next stroke.
- Quarter, half, three quarter slide: develop the fixed seat rowing by "breaking the legs" and sliding 15cm for 20 strokes followed by 30cm and 45cm and then full slide. All the time checking that the chain stays level with the bottom of the tape. When you reach full slide check that you are not "reaching for more" at the catch and that the hands are staying level before the catch.
- Lift the hands and drive the legs: as you row full stroke check that you are raising the hands to lift the chain to the top of the tape before driving the legs, keeping the arms straight and the hands level.

The above four exercises can be practiced as part of a 20 minute ergo piece. Practice the first two and last exercises for a minute each at zero, 5 and 15 minutes. The third exercise at 10 minutes will take up to two minutes depending upon rate.