

SRC SQUAD TRAINING

Theme Sheet - Drive in the boat

The aim is to impart maximum work to the boat but in tune with the speed of the boat. The faster the boat the faster the drive. Slow boats like pairs and singles demand a more progressive drive. The drive involves the legs, body and arms in that order. In all cases it is important to place the blade (catch) and drive the legs.

The drive should be taken with the legs first but it is important to engage the glutes as part of this process. It's almost a case of thinking about driving with the backside rather than the quads. This has the further benefit of ensuring that the core is engaged and the lower back is set and solid. The upper body and shoulders remain over the knees creating the "hang" where the pressure is on the legs. The arms are not involved during the first half of the drive. It's almost a case of, "leaving the hands behind."

During the middle of the drive the body angle opens as the legs exert their maximum force and the arms come into play. Legs, body and arms finish in this order but it should feel as if they finish together.

The speed of the handle(s) accelerates through the stroke, as does the boat speed. This creates an air pocket behind the blade, from which, the blade should be extracted by tapping down with the outside hand.

Remember

- Catch and drive;
- Drive with your backside and a solid lower back;
- Do not open the angle between body and horizontal until mid drive;
- Keep the arms straight until the last quarter of the drive - leave the hands behind;
- Accelerate the boat towards the finish.

Avoid

- Taking the catch with the shoulders - just raise the hands;
- Raising the hands during the stroke - keep them level from the catch to the chest;
- Bum shoving - keep the lower back solid;
- Hunching the shoulders during the arms draw - keep them low and relaxed but roll them into the finish rather than using arms only
- Leaning out of the boat, especially at the finish. For sweep rowing try to follow the arc of the blade during the stroke. This provides more clearance for the outside hand at the finish.

Water Exercises

- **Single stroke rowing from blades square in the water**
With the boat stationary the cox should bring the crew forward with feathered blades. Then call "square" and when the blades are square and covered call "go." The crew should drive the legs and finish the stroke to the "hands away" position. The crew should be reminded to drive the legs and finish out the stroke only. The blades should be covered so the hands should remain level to the finish. This exercise should be repeated until the crew drive together and level. Then extended to two, five, ten strokes, etc. but being reminded to make the second and subsequent strokes feel like the first, namely placed and driven.
- **Off seat rowing**
This is similar to last part of the ergo exercise. Initially row slowly (rate 20) lifting the backside off the seat on each stroke but without falling off the back of the seat. Thinking "engaging the glutes" will help this process and keep the lower back solid.
- **Breaking the stroke down**
This is the same as the ergo exercise lifting the backside just off the seat through each part of the drive, e.g. "first six inches," straight arms and body stretched forward in the reach forward position.. This emphasises the sequence of "catch and legs first." This can be extended to straight arm rowing with lean back and reach forward to emphasise that the arms come in last during the stroke.
- **Backstops, quarter, half, three quarters, full**
This refers to slide position, starting with fixed seat at back stops, row 20 strokes without and with body swing then introduce quarter (6 inches), half (twelve inches) three quarter and full slide for 20 strokes each. This coordinates the drive so that legs, upper body and arms finish together. Here again, it is important to check engagement of core and the glutes throughout the exercise. Even on the fixed seat rowing check to ensure that the glutes are engaged. Fixed seat rowing is not an arms exercise!
- **Slow rowing**
Set two crews side-by-side and ask them to row 20 or 30 strokes at rate 16 to see who moves the furthest distance in the set number of strokes. This emphasises the importance of the leg drive phase. Repeat asking the crew to engage their glutes (row with their backside) on each stroke.