

SRC SQUAD TRAINING

Theme Sheet - Timing ergos

Timing is not only about getting the catches together although this does help the overall picture. It is vital for crews to develop a feel for timing throughout the stroke. Probably, the most important stage is to get the sliding consistent and together. If crew members reach front stops together they should more naturally get the catch and drive together and the finish will follow.

Factors spoiling timing throughout the stroke

Recovery

Assuming that the crew has finished the stroke together and the hands have moved down and away together the crew should be set up for the recovery. Reach forward should be followed by steady sliding to front-stops with no last second rush. Stiffness of hamstrings, height of feet and failure to engage core muscles may all contribute to rushing the last 15-20cm of the slide. This stops the boat and contributes to a lost catch. The effect can be further exaggerated by crew members dropping their hands and/or reaching for more at front stops, so that those behind them don't know when to take the catch.

It is important to position your feet so that you can slide forward at a consistent pace throughout the recovery. Also to "drill in" behind the person in front, watching their back rather than their blade. These together should ensure consistent sliding and timing.

The blades should be squared together and as a separate action from the catch. Some coaches advocate squaring as the hands pass the knees, ankles or feet. In coastal conditions these hard and fast rules are difficult to implement. Probably the best rule is to "drill in" behind stroke following their lead. Stroke-men (and Ladies) should always think "square and in" and not allow themselves to be rushed at the catch.

Catch

The main problem here is failure just to lift the hands and drive the legs. Attempting to square and "row the blade in" will lead to a lost catch and failure to row a full length stroke. Thinking of "square and in" as two separate movements will lead to better timing. Similarly, thinking "raise the hands and drive the legs" will ensure a firm connection between the water and leg drive.

Drive

The importance of leg drive with the stroke cannot be over emphasised. The timing and speed of the drive is very much a "feel" issue. Watching the back of the person in front helps but if you are reacting to what you see you are going to be trying to catch up through the stroke. Watching helps to build a picture of the rhythm being set and you simply have to be confident to commit yourself on the basis of what you have seen. In pairs, failure to drive together is immediately evident. Fours are less sensitive but you must be even more aware of those in front of you if drive timing is to be consistent. It is not simply a case of placing the blade and slamming the legs down. You must drive at the same pace as the person in front of you and this will depend on the speed of the boat.

Finish

In many ways this is the easy bit. You can see what others are doing in front of you and follow them through to the finish. It is important to think of drawing long and level and not letting the blade pop out early. If anything you should commit to drawing long and staying in the water fractionally longer than others rather than popping out early. Extracting the blade square then feathering is also important.

Ergo Exercises

The ergo is a really good place to think about timing provided crews are prepared to work together. Ideally, ergos should be set on sliders but having them side-by-side can be valuable in practicing the use of peripheral vision to follow others. In the boat this can translate to watching the backside (sliding), blade handle (squaring), hands (catch), backside (leg-drive), shoulders (finish). The only part missing is the feel of how the boat is moving. This can be part compensated for by placing the ergos on sliders. Individually, you can feel whether you are rushing the last part of the recovery. Joined together you can feel whether others are rushing the slide or not finishing together.

Side-by-side

A steady state piece rowing side-by-side will show up variations in timing. These can be picked up from within but are better identified by a coach or on video from the side. Analysis of video will identify differences and facilitate agreement on correcting faults.

Sliders

Whether fixed together or individually sliders can be a revelation, particularly if a crew is pushed hard during a piece with variations in pace etc. Failure to work together will cause the ergo scores to fall.