

STROKEARCS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Athlete Development – Understanding of, and experience with long-term build-up programs for high performance female and male rowers PART 2 2

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Coaching Skills – Developing Your Coaching Philosophy 16

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ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

UNDERSTANDING OF, AND EXPERIENCE WITH LONG-TERM BUILD UP PROGRAMS FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE FEMALE AND MALE ROWERS PART 2

Content

1. Competition as the goal of training and long term build up
2. Factors determining performance in competition
3. The choice of training means and methods based on a physiological analysis of rowing races
4. Selection and application of training means and methods
5. Long term build up
6. Training of talented children
7. Training of talented youths
8. Training of talented juniors
9. Training of adults with a long term build up of performance
10. Long Term build up training for 18 year old novices
11. Periodization of the annual training programme
12. References
13. Abbreviations
14. Glossary

4. Selection and application of training means and methods

The physiological processes relevant to a rowing race are applied to the different forms of training depending on the selection of particular training methods:

- workouts over short distances with maximal speed, such as start sequences or speed training of maximal 10-12 strokes, are alactic. The alactic capacity is important for racing. This part of the training process is highly responsive based on a small potential that is limited by the size of energy depots and the primary involvement of FTF. Therefore this kind of training should be applied for short periods only and to a carefully dosed extent. The development of this capacity in relation to the entire competition is limited though effective in combination with the aerobic potential
- The training of the anaerobic – lactic component is also directed mainly towards competition. Although the size of the lactic ability is also limited it can be trained to a much higher degree than the alactic capacity. Lactic and aerobic capacities should be trained proportionally. As mentioned earlier, and exaggerated lactic training of the racing stages between 250m and 1000m does influence the aerobic capacity. On the other hand, a high aerobic capacity will not be utilized to its full extent during a race if it is not supplemented by anaerobic capacity.
- In the light of the entire training process the aerobic capacity is most important and determining component to be trained.

It is possible to develop aerobic capacity using different methods as can be seen from several successful crews. Although the literature suggests various stimulus thresholds for training, it is generally recommended to work around the aerobic threshold of 4mM.

In the context of this conference I was asked about methods of endurance training in the long term build up in the GDR. For more than 20 years we are practicing aerobic training in the boat in form of extensive long distance training of relatively high volume, and at the aerobic threshold (2mM lactate). The average volume of training session is about 20-25km long distance training (90-120min) with one break to turn around. The average boat speed is selected so that the athlete can keep it constant over the entire training distance. The rating is mostly between 18 and 20 strokes per min, the heart rate 140-160 per min (35-40 beats per 15 sec), and blood lactate about 2mM (Table 1)

boat category	km	rating	heart rate	Lactate
1x	20-25	18	140-148	up to 2 mM
pairs and fours	20-25	18-20	148-156	up to 2 mM
8+, 4x	20-25	18-20	152-160	up to 2 mM

The minor differences between different boats result from the specific character of each boat category, their difference in speed, and the resulting feature of the impulse during each stroke.

The heart rate is taken several times during a training session. Lactate levels are checked every 1-2 weeks. The coach checks the speed of the boat by seeking times at defined check points.

This type of extensive training at a steady work load requires a relatively high volume of work. If sufficient time (4-5 hours) for the recovery is allowed, it is possible to conduct two sessions of this type per day. Towards the end of the training session the average boat speed decreases slightly because the rower gets tired. The heart rate, however, remains constant at the required level. On the other hand, if the boat speed is kept constant the heart rate and lactate will rise. We have kept the heart rate constant to allow a second session a day.

As the energy basis of this type of general endurance training is primarily fat, energy stress are not depleted and replenished before the next training session. The result of such training as the aerobic threshold (blood lactate of 2mM) are:

- highly economical performance of movements
- a well developed oxygen transport system (VO₂ capacity of blood to bind oxygen)
- a well developed mitochondrial utilization of oxygen, and
- fat deposits within muscle fiber bundles (as observed by muscle biopsy).

It is important that the threshold of the stimulus is always reached in order to prevent the long distance training from becoming marathon training (Fig 12)

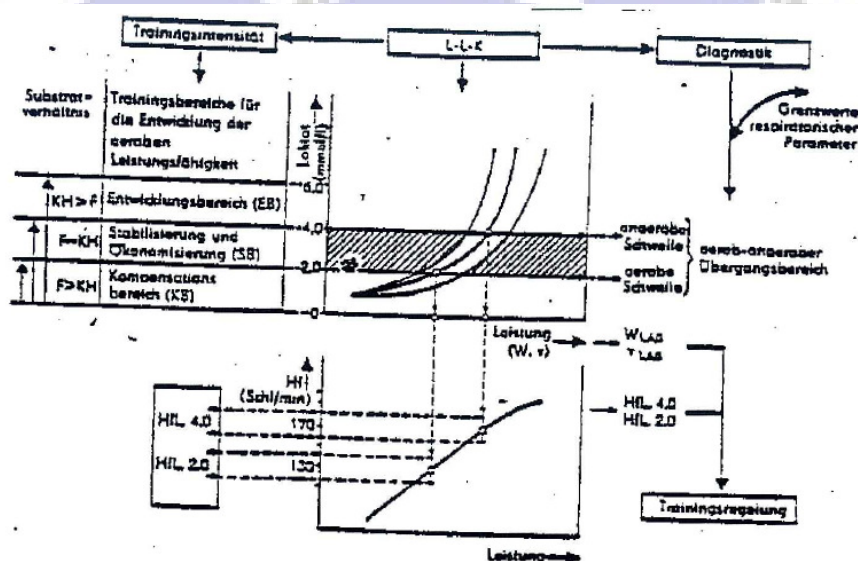


Fig. 12. The importance of the lactate-performance-curve (L-L-K) for the regulation of training, its intensity, and for diagnostic purposes of performance. Abbreviations: EB, area for development; F, fat; Hf, heart rate; KB, area for compensation; KH, carbohydrates; L, lactate; SB, stabilization and economization; W, work load; v, velocity.

Training stimuli can also be directed with a change of the boat category or the structural features of the stroke (i.e. the way of giving the impulse). To try and elevate the intensity of long distance training to the anaerobic threshold (4mM lactate) results in complex consequences. During long term long distance training as a constant rating of 20-22, the boat speed increases mainly as a result of a change in the structure of the stroke (higher input of strength, change in the strength-time curve, changed usage of the various muscle fibers, higher speed during the drive). As a result, the training volume decreases and recovery times increase.

In the GDR, long distance rowing as a method to train the aerobic capacity, starts with 10-15km per training session for young talent in children's rowing groups. Once the athletes are 14-15 years old, the volume of each training session is increased to 20km and further until the senior age where the training volume is maintained.

The training stimulus originates from the increasing boat speed as the result of a steadily increasing stroke efficiency. Impressive results can be achieved in competitions out of this effective long distance training and without special lactic or alactic workouts. For these reasons the alactic and lactic training generally does not start shortly before the racing season (April). The long distance training is continued throughout the racing season, Long distance training comprises about 90% of the entire work on the water while about 4% is intensive work (including races).

Some thoughts to the structural features of the rowing stroke during endurance training. Both Roth & Schwanitz examined the effect of different strength-time curves used in training on the cellular adaptations of muscles during long term, long distance training. Applying the same defined training conditions, they found four typical strength-time curves in training which they represented schematically as forms A, B, C and D (Fig 13).

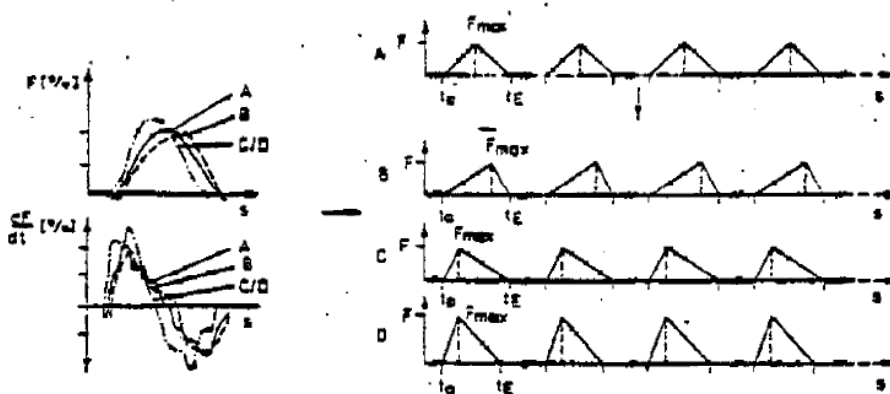


Fig. 13. Representative graphs of different strength - time curves during cyclic movements. Left: Relative strength - time (top) and power - time (bottom) curves. Right: Corresponding schematic strength - time curves. A, B, C, and D are characteristic strength - time curves. Abbreviations used: F, strength; s, time; t_0 and t_E , start and finish of a impulse.

The different types of impulse are characterized by equal areas and differently increasing slopes (A and B are retarded while C and D are steep). This means that although the test persons conduct the same total work or impulse. They do it using different characteristic strength-time curves. The work by Roth & Schwanitz showed that under conditions of identical cyclic movements the different strength-time curves shown in Fig 1 caused different demands on the energy supply. While the A and B type of impulse pattern had the tendency to emphasize aerobic adaptation impulse pattern C and D led to a more anaerobic adaptation.

Similar conclusions can also be drawn from experimental results addressing the demands on the oxygen transport system and the metabolism. As the slope of the strength-time curve increases, VO_2 heart rate and blood lactate rise in parallel. (Table 2 and Fig 14)

Table 2. Dependency of oxygen consumption ($\dot{V}O_2$, steady-state), heart rate (HR), and blood lactate (L, three min after work-load) on the characteristics of different strength -time curves, using untrained test persons. (Type A, medium; type B retarded; and type C, steep slope in strength curve). VP, test person.

Parameter	VP	Impulseform		
		A	B	C
$\dot{V}O_2$ (l·min ⁻¹)	1	2.20	1.90	2.42
	2	2.24	1.25	2.40
	3	2.00	1.80	2.17
HR (b·min ⁻¹)	1	132	140	148
	2	138	144	152
	3	180	142	158
L (mmol·l ⁻¹)	1	6.1	5.0	6.7
	2	6.2	5.8	6.8
	3	7.4	6.1	7.0

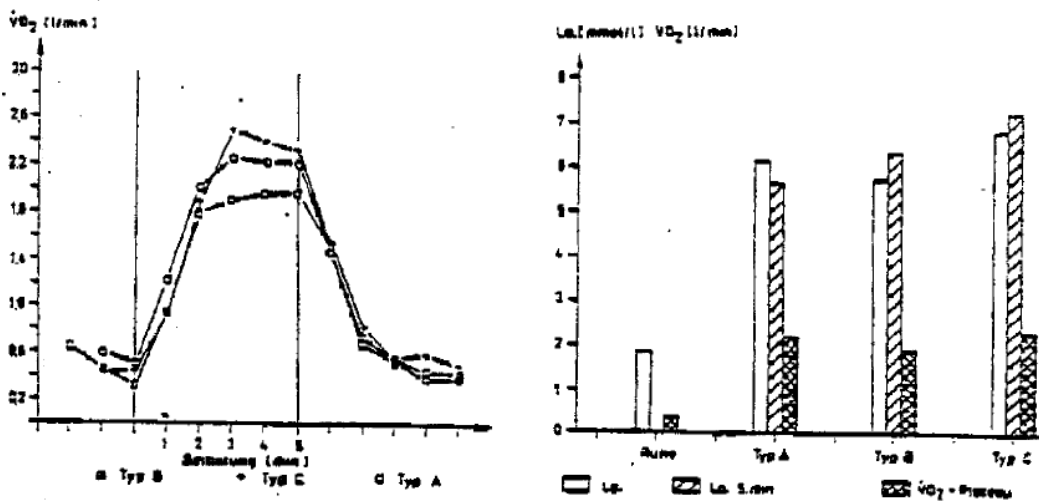


Fig. 14. A: Dependency of oxygen consumption on the characteristics of different strength - time curves during a 5 min cyclic work-load . B: Dependency of steady-state oxygen consumption, and the lactate levels, measured immediately (L_a) and after 5 min rest (L_a 5 min), on the characteristics of different strength - time curves during a cyclic work-load. For types A, B, and C compare with Table 2.

Dependent on the characteristics of the impulse applied during the rowing training (strength endurance training), different morphological and metabolic adaptations can occur. These adaptations take place independently of the distribution of the various muscle fiber types and the intended methodological aim.

In practical terms it is important, whether to emphasize the first or middle part of the drive, or whether the athlete trains in the single or eight. The knowledge of the above will help the coach to avoid unwanted training results.

I should not forget to mention general fitness training. All aerobic training sessions like jogging, cross country skiing, swimming or others, are organized methodically and based on the same principle of long distance rowing (2mM lactate).

The general strength endurance training takes up a special part in the training process as a whole. The exercises are characterized to train local strength endurance abilities (leg, back, and abdominal muscles). During the perpetration period we normally have 203 sessions a week. The intensity is directed by the number of

repetitions of each exercise, the sum of the repetitions of all exercises, and the speed of movements. In general, there are 10-12 exercises each with 300-400 repetitions of a maximal frequency of 30reps/min. Blood lactate and hearty rate may increase slightly (up to 4mM after completion of exercises).

The above describes how the intensity of training sessions for special and general fitness influences the entire training process. It is necessary to organize and guide these complex effects in a proper way.

5. Long term build up
6. Training of Talented Children

The first stage of the long term build up begins with the training of 10-14 yaer old children. Their training depends on their situation at school, and emphasizes:

- the early and continuous guarantee for a squad of suitably trained children through developing love and bond to rowing
- te development of rowing skills and abilities ad their application in competitions.
- The increased development of the basic, general foundations of sport as prerequisite for the later development or rowing performances (coordination, fitness and motor skills and abilities).

The annual ratio of general training to rowing training should be 60 : 40% (Table 3)

Table 3. Training guide-lines for children (45 weeks of training)

Age group (years)	10	11	12	13	14
sessions* per week	3	3	3-4	3-4	4
hours per week	3-4	4-5	4,5-6	4,5-6	5-8
general training† (hrs/year)	90	110	120	120	150
rowing‡ (hrs/year)	60	70	80	80	100
rowing‡ (km/year)	—	—	500	600	800

*A training session as the basic training unit represents an entity regarding its content, time and its organization. †General fitness training comprises games, gymnastics, strength exercises, running, and jogging. Exercises are conducted in a way that aims for a general training preparation for rowing. ‡Rowing includes: A: The development of sculling technique in the single, double, and quadruple scull up to a level that allows competition. B: Rowing training that primarily develops special fitness and racing abilities according to planned race tactics. The basic training method during the preparation stage is the endurance method at the stimulating level.

7. Training of Talented Youths

Centres for high performance (KJS) enable the coordication of sport and school. In these centres there are two groups of athletes aged 14-15.

- a) those who have been a member of the childrens rowing program and thus are more educated already in rowing, and
- b) newly recruited athletes who show good general athletic condition but have not yet rowed. They have to catch up quickly with those in the first group with regards to their rowing skills and abilities. Athletes of both groups are normally at about the same level when they are 15-16 years old.

In general, athletes at this stage have to be educated further in their competitive sculling technique. Competitons are conducted in all sculling categories. More emphasis is put on the 1x and 4x. The technique for sweep rowing at a competitive level is not taught until the athletes are 15016 years old. At regattas for 16 year old rowers there

only two events in sweep oar categories. Special fitness training for rowing is achieved mainly by the long distance method, with a proportion of aerobic and anaerobic training of 90:5%. Strength training is done in form of a strength endurance weight circuit. The technique for lifting maximal weights is taught with power exercises (50-60% of maximal strength). The general fitness training aims for the development of general technical sport skills, conditional and coordinative abilities. It includes gaes, joggin, calisthenics, cross country skiing, etc.

8. Training of Talented Juniors

The aim at this stage is the successful participation at national and international junior championships in the boat categories of the FISA. Athletes specialize in either sculling or sweep oar rowing when they are 17 years old. The coaching is directed towards perfect rowing technique. In addition to their special boat category, all rowers master the 1x and 2- at the competitive level. This enables individual training and testing of rowing skills and abilities.

To develop conditional abilities, the volume of specific training increases, using long distance training as the main method. Competitions start in April. The ratio of aerobic to anaerobic training is 95 : 5%, and strength endurance takes up most of the strength training. Maximal strength training is introduced for the first time as a bloc of 4 – 6 weeks training during winter. General fitness, conditional and coordinative training is conducted all year round, especially in winter. Training means are determined as in all other age groups.

Table 4. Training guide-lines for youths and juniors (45 weeks of training)

Years	15	16	17	18
sessions per week	8-10	8-10	10-12	10-12
hours per week	12-15	12-15	15-18	15-20
general training (hrs)	300	325	400	400
rowing training (hrs)	300	325	410	450
rowing training(km)	2,900	3,200	4000-4500	4500-5000

9. Training of adults with a long term build up of performance

Table 5. Guide-lines for the training of 19 - 21 years old Senior B and Senior A rowers (48 weeks of training)

Age group (years)	19	21
sessions per week	10-12	10-12
hours per week	18	20
general training (hrs/year)	400	450
rowing (hrs/year)	500	550
rowing (km/year)	6,000 (12 km/hr)	7,000-8,000 (13-14 km/hr)

The rates at which training demands increase are determined through permanently controlled adaptation of the stimulating levels of training volume and intensity. The GDR training system is extensive in principle. This demands a relatively extensive, medium sized stimulus. The aerobic capacity is established slowly but stable, and at a high level.

10. Long term build up of training for 18 year old novices

The following represents the main goals, methods and means of a 4 year build up program for 18-year old novices, according to experiences made in the GDR.

Training objectives for the different years:

- 1st Year: Build up of the technical and conditional basis for rowing at the competitive level
- 2nd Year: Reaching top national Senior B level, and approaching the top class at the national Senior A level
- 3rd Year: Stabilization of performance at the national top level, and approaching international level
- 4th Year: Achieving and stabilization of performance at international level

The following is an example of a build up program according to my personal experiences as a coach and that of other coaches.



Four year programme for 18 year old novices to international top class rower

First Training Season: Creating the bases for rowing technique and fitness at the competitive level

Training Objective	Central Issues of Training	Training Means and Methods	Time Ratio (%)
Development of technical rowing skills in single and eight up to the competitive level	Technical training in single and eight until mastered these boats (perhaps C-boats)	Application of training methods for beginners. Combining individual and crew training (single and eight) upon mastering the basics of rowing technique.	70
Continuous build up of aerobic capacity	Conducting more and more long distance training as rowing skills improve	Training distances increasing up to 20km with a stroke rate of 16-20 as rowing skills increase, followed by	
Training of alactic and lactic capacities with the beginning of the regatta season	After mastering the stroke rate at long distance training start with alactic stroke training to improve fitness (starts, fast strokes)	Start exercises, speed changes (ratings)	2
Developing of partial general strength endurance	Beginning of build up of general strength endurance training	Strength training in the group and during circuits	18
Complex general training	General aerobic and coordinative training	Jogging, games, calisthenics	10

Second training season: Achieving top national class senior B, and approaching top national senior A level

Training Objective	Central Issues of Training	Training Means and Methods	Time Ratio (%)
Further stabilization of rowing technique and crew adaptation	Specialized in sweep oar rowing or sculling in different boat categories	Specialization in rowing technique according to talent, talent ability, prospective and individual performance in 1x and 2-	60
Further build up of aerobic capacity	Long distance training of 20-25km depending on boat category, variability	Long distance training, with her of 144-160, lactate of 2, rating 18-20, keeping boat speed as constant as possible, attention to stroke efficiency	3
Build up of lactic and alactic capacities	Third stage of preparation: Start training, speed of movements Training of lactic mobilization 500m, 1000m	Start exercises and 10 stroke pieces during long distance training Work on feeling for boat speed; 500m, 1000m and 2000m	3
Development of general strength and strength endurance	Development of maximal strength General aerobic partial strength endurance of agonists and antagonists	Second stage of preparation (winter): Weight training at 80-100% of Fmax Strength endurance programme, 10-12 aerobic exercises at 4mM lactate, circuit with 1500 repetitions	15
Improved general athletic training as bases for specific performances	General endurance training, training of coordination, stretching and exercises for warm up	Jogging, cross country skiing, games, swimming, calisthenics	19

Third training season: Stabilization of performances at the national top level, and approaching international level

Training Objective	Central Issues of Training	Training Means and Methods	Time Ratio (%)
Specialization in main boat category, fine tuning of rowing technique	Optimizing seating of crew members, emphasizing specifics of each seat and the specific performance in movement	Subjective and objective criteria of harmony, behavior of boat and ability to perform	60
Stabilization of individual and crew rowing performances	Continuation of proof of individual and crew performance	Training in 1x, 2x, and 8+, training in groups, sparring	
Increasing aerobic capacity of movements in the boat	Long distance training with increasing stroke efficiency (stimulus threshold) at a constant stroke pattern	Long distance 20-25km, heart rate, 2mM lactate, rating of 20, time controls Distance pieces, aerobically with 4mM La	3
Extending lactic and alactic mobilization	Start, speed, 10 x 10 strokes with rating of 40, distance pieces of 500m and 1000m	Incorporating of start and speed pieces in endurance training, removing lactate	3
Increasing strength and endurance	Developing Fmax	4-5 weeks cycle of maximal strength training Strength endurance program with 1500 reps	15
Increasing general fitness as basis for specific performance	Further development of strength endurance Strengthening of general ability to perform break in rowing training Arthromuscular balance	Jogging, games, calisthenics	19

Fourth training season: Achieving and stabilization of performance at the international level

Training Objective	Central Issues of Training	Training Means and Methods	Time Ratio (%)
Maximal increase in performance in selected boat category	Training primarily in selected boat category, some training in small boats to develop individual potential further	Improving harmony in selected boat category at increasing boat speed in the transition between aerobic and anaerobic stage (no marathon rowing)	60
Highest possible performance of aerobic and competitive capacity	Optimal development of aerobic and anaerobic performance over the year	Long distance training, 20-25km, rating 20, HF 37-40/15 sec, La 2 to sometimes 4	
Increasing alactic and lactic ability	Alactic performance	Training with lactic mobilization, distance pieces over 500m and 1000m	3
Optimizing the development of general strength and strength endurance	Producing a good ratio of maximal strength to strength endurance Further development of strength endurance	Fmax is not over emphasized, 70-100% Stabilizing aerobic character of strength Endurance at the 4mM La level, circuit training	15
General fitness training for high performance in specific sport	Aerobic development with general equipment Stretching and relaxation, coordinative exercises	Jogging, games, calisthenics, skiing, swimming	15

SOUTH AFRICA

11. Periodisation of the annual training program

The process of training and development of performance has to be planned systematically and in the long term. Such training plan needs to consider natural laws of growth and maturation of athletes, the phases of development of the athlete's ability to perform, as well as the peak of the athlete's performance.

The principles of periodization make use of aim oriented development of the sporting abilities towards a peak performance using the most suitable and appropriate developmental stages of the training year. Periodization considered the following:

- the developmental stage of a squad of a particular age group with regards to morphology and function
- the present level of rowing skills and abilities, as well as training means and methods required for further development
- the changing time periods in training effect on performance
- the right combination and succession of training means and methods, and
- the external conditions according to the time of the year (winter, summer, ice and day light).

Periodization of an annual training program is shown in the following example.



Example of an annual training program for Senior A (European conditions)

Period	Training Objective & Tasks	Central Issues of Training	Training Means and Methods	Weekly Sessions	Training Hrs
1. Prep Phase Sep - Nov	Build up of aerobic capacity	Endurance training, rating 20, HF 35-38	Long Distance 20-25km, 1x, 8+	6-8	12-14
	Improving rowing technique	Structure of stroke, turning points	Correcting movements, video		
	Developing general strength endurance	Local muscle endurance	Strength endurance program 1, 1500 reps, circuit	2	3
	Diverse athletic training	Aerobic development, stretching relaxing	Jogging, games, callisthenics	3	2-3
2. Prep Phase Dec - Feb	Stabilizing aerobic capacity	Endurance training, rating 20, HF 35-40	Long distance, rowing bassin, 20-25km	5	10
	Stabilizing rowing technique	Correcting individual technique			
	Development of strength and strength endurance	Local Fmax	Fmax 80-100% about 200 reps Strength endurance program 2, circuit training	3	6
	Diverse athletic training	Aerobic, coordination, stretching, relaxing	Jogging, cross country skiing, games callisthenics	4	4

SOUTH AFRICA

3. Prep Phase Mar - Apr	Development of aerobic capacity	Endurance training rating 20, HF 37-42	Long distance rowing, 20-25km, 1x, 2-, 8+, La 2 + 10km with 4	6-8	12-14
	Stabilization of rowing technique	Technique in specific boat category Stroke efficiency, stroke structure	Individual and crew technique		
	Developing strength endurance	Local strength endurance	Strength endurance program 3, circuit training	3-2	6-4
	Additional training	Aerobic, coordination, stretching, relaxation	Jogging, games, callisthenics	3	3-2
Comp Phase May - Aug	Developing and stabilizing aerobic	Endurance training rating 20, HF38	Long distance 20-25km, 1x, 2-, and 8+	5	8-10
	Developing alactic and lactic capacities	Alactic series (starts) Distance piece training	10 x 10 str, at 38-40, selected boat 3 x 500 racing pace, or similar	1	1
	Polishing technique at high rating	Fast turning points Stable stroke and movement structure at elevated ratings	Changing in rating, fartlek Feeling for increasing pressure with increasing training	1	1
	Maintaining strength endurance	Local strength endurance	Strength endurance program 4	1	1.5
	Additional training to relax rowing training	Aerobic, coordination, stretching	Jogging, games, callisthenics		

Both training objectives and the amount of time necessary for their achievement (see Table showing an annual training program), require that the preparation period is further sub divided into smaller sections, often referred to as macrocycles (Harre, D. Matwejew). These sections span over several weeks (meso cycle) and contain several complete micro cycles, i.e. training plans on a weekly, daily, or training sessional basis.

If there are two training sessions per day their order of succession is also important for the overall work load. Aerobic training sessions can succeed each other without any problems. An aerobic work loads following an intensive wok load (strength endurance, lactic training session) does even provide and advantage in assisting the removal of lactate. In contrast, it is not advisable to plan several successive work outs with intensive work loads (strength endurance, lactic rowing session), as both the removal of lactate and restoration of energy stores are not yet completed.

In the light of an entire training program and its periodization, the aerobic training is obviously the central part of long term and annual training processes.

Our own experiences as well as those of Matwejew, Roth and Harre, point out that the endurance capacity requires extraordinarily long-term morphological and functional changes and adaptations of the athlete. The volume and intensity of these long term processes need to be planned, secured and developed carefully, using the appropriate dosage and stimulation throughout the entire training program.

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COACHING SKILLS

DEVELOPING YOUR COACHING PHILOSOPHY

In this months' CPD article we are introducing the concept of developing a personal coaching philosophy. A much underutilised concept, coaches rarely take the time to stop and fully consider what their own guiding principles to coaching are and how these will provide the underpinning foundations for their coaching practices.

The development of a coaching philosophy will be shaped by a multitude of factors and experiences will be personal to each coach, with coaches required to reflect on current practices and personal values. Ultimately whether a coaching philosophy is pinned to the fridge door or is stored as a mental note, it can be the single most important influence on how you work and crucially develop as a coach.

Why Coach?

All sorts of people from a variety of backgrounds take up coaching for many different reasons. Knowing why you want to coach will help you to appreciate the different roles and responsibilities of a coach. It will also encourage you to reflect on your own attitudes, beliefs and motives within your coaching practice. This will help you to establish your own coaching philosophy on what you feel is important in coaching.

It is useful to reflect on this at times, as it can help you to make the right decisions. You may however find, that as you gather more experience of coaching your beliefs change. If this is the case, you will need to modify your philosophy accordingly.

When establishing your coaching philosophy you should also consider your motives for becoming a coach. For example, why do you want to get into coaching? For yourself or for others, or a combination of the two? Are you more interested in the long-term development of riders or short-term success? Is your burning ambition to coach a team to win medals at the Olympic Games or simply to help riders improve their skill levels?

Remember that your riders may not necessarily share the same motives as you. For instance, just because you consider some riders to be good enough to join the club team does not necessarily mean that they will want to. Their motives for taking part may simply be to get fit or have fun.

Whatever your reason for taking up coaching, you should always adopt a rider-centred approach. This means acting in the interests of your riders, not your own. If your only reason for becoming a coach is personal satisfaction and gain, you are unlikely to be effective and will soon become disappointed and frustrated.

How Should I Coach?

There are many expectations of you as a coach. One of these is that you will behave safely, responsibly, ethically and equitably. The way in which you behave will reflect your general attitude to coaching and, in the modern coaching environment, there is a need to ensure that you conduct yourself in line with acceptable good practice. This should be consistent with the principles of the British Cycling Code of Conduct.

There is not necessarily one correct way to coach. There are many different ways in which safe, responsible and ethical coaching can be achieved. To be an effective coach you need to be able to draw on an appropriate set of behaviours and act according to the context in which you are operating. Your coaching should always put the riders first, ie it should be rider-centred. This means empowering riders by involving them in making decisions regarding their development and actively encouraging them to take part in their own learning. It requires you to provide leadership, offer guidance, share decision-making and generally guide riders towards selecting and achieving their personal goals.

The way you coach will be influenced by a number of factors, including the following:

- **Your coaching motives** - The reasons why you take up coaching will undoubtedly affect how you coach. For example, if you wish to see young people develop socially and learn new skills, you will adopt a supportive, educational approach to coaching and place an emphasis on personal development rather than competitive success.
- **The riders** - If you adopt a rider-centred approach, as is recommended, you should adapt your coaching style to meet the specific needs of your riders.
- **The situation** - There are some situations in which a particular style of coaching is more appropriate than another. In certain contexts for example, where safety is an important issue, it might be more appropriate to adopt an autocratic and instructional approach to coaching, in order to maintain control and ensure that accidents do not happen and riders behave in an appropriate manner.
- **Your personality** - Coaches are human beings and, therefore, have individual personalities. Some coaches may be extroverted, outgoing and lively in their approach to coaching, while others may be more introverted and go about their coaching in a quiet, calm manner. In truth, personality does not matter, provided that appropriate actions and behaviours are maintained, which relate to the situation.
- **Your knowledge** - The more knowledgeable you are as a coach, the more options you will have available to you to plan and deliver effective sessions. Knowledge will also help you to feel confident and create a positive environment for your riders. A coach lacking in knowledge may come across as low in confidence and may be perceived as lacking skills or the ability of knowing how to deal with certain situations.

As the above illustrates, the context in which a coach operates exists as a result of a number of issues and principles. As a coach, you must seek to identify your own answers to the questions associated with coaching, and create your own set of well thought-out values and strategies to apply during your coaching sessions. These are the backbone of your coaching philosophy.

Coaching Philosophy

It is important for every coach to develop a personal coaching philosophy. Your coaching is strongly influenced by your coaching philosophy, which is what you feel is important in coaching. It is a set of guiding principles that

reflects your personal beliefs, values, motives for coaching and your choice of how you will conduct yourself as a coach. It may provide answers for difficult situations in the future, will reflect your interpretation of what constitutes good coaching practice, and is based on your thoughts and actions regarding issues such as:

- your role in relation to riders and others associated with your sessions, such as parents, other coaches, officials and administrators
- the extent to which your riders are responsible for their own behaviour and development, setting goals and contributing to the design of the programme
- the relative importance of the outcome of competition in relation to the long-term development and well-being of riders
- the importance of adhering to the rules, the meaning of fair play and the use of banned substances to enhance performance
- the intensity of training and competition for children and young people
- the need for a single-minded commitment or the importance of balance in the riders' lives.

Reflecting on what coaching means to you, and why you do it, is important because this information will give valuable insights into your coaching - how you coach now and how you would like to coach in the future. You need to focus on your coaching goals and philosophy, and examine your behaviour to determine what sort of coach you want to become. You may also want to check whether your coaching reflects your philosophy. Are your aims and values apparent in the way you coach?



You may not yet have thought about your philosophy and beliefs (or values) - usually you develop them as you extend your knowledge, interact with people and gain wide-ranging experiences through life. Your philosophy and beliefs will affect your decisions and subsequent effectiveness. Therefore, examining them is important.

Your philosophy may be verbal or, preferably, written and should reflect your own coaching goals, morals and beliefs. Examples of common elements of a coaching philosophy include to:

- have mutual respect between rider and coach
- be open and honest
- be approachable
- be accountable
- educate the rider to become independent
- have mutual commitment for the rider to achieve individual potential
- coach in a simple, structured way that is underpinned by current exercise science
- be clear and critical in assessment
- seek feedback from riders
- be reflective about, and committed to, ongoing learning and development
- be equitable
- work within the rules of the sport.

Underpinning all of your roles as a coach are the British Cycling Code of Conduct, the British Cycling Health and Safety Guidelines for Coaching Cycling and any contract into which you and your riders have entered.

The above article is based on information developed for the new Level 3 coaching qualifications, but is equally as applicable to all coaches, no matter what level they may be coaching at.