

SELF COACHING FOR MASTERS GROUPS

Masters don't get much coaching compared to other training groups.

There are many reasons for this - under 18 year olds cannot row unsupervised for safety and protection reasons and clubs allocate scarce coaching resource according to their priorities.

Whatever the reason (and we can discuss ways to overcome the frustrations of masters athletes in another article) it is clear that if masters are to improve skills and fitness, a degree of self-coaching is needed.

Training plan, practice schedules and goals are different for masters compared to other club training groups. Because finding balance between work and family life as well as rowing training is an individual challenge which can change from month to month.

Few adults respond well to authoritarian coaches - self-directed learning is more flexible and respectful of our age and life-experience.

Framework for coaching masters

In my view, the ideal way for a club committee to set up a masters group for maximum gain based on minimal coaching is to have a robust learning framework.

By this I mean consider the inputs to any learning.

- What is being taught
- How are messages getting to the learner
- Frequency of repetition
- Checking and testing that learning has been successful

In the case of learning rowing or sculling - first the athlete has to have a clear understanding of the rowing stroke cycle and the "pattern" of movement which they are seeking to learn.

Then they have to understand the difference between how they are rowing now and the desired state.

These two stages can be accomplished by using YouTube video resources and printed posters of good technique plus letting the athlete row while being videoed or in front of a mirror so they can see what they are actually doing.

How to self-coach

Decide to focus on a MAXIMUM of 2 technical points per training session. Yes, the fewer the better.

Habits are hard to change and it may take thousands of strokes to make a technical change a permanent feature



of your rowing stroke. You may do an hour of rowing at stroke rate 18 - that's only 1,080 strokes. And so you see the scale of the challenge.

1. Start by actively thinking about the change you are making every - single - stroke.
2. This is conscious movement. Then start to introduce "unconscious" movement. So stop thinking about the change for 5 strokes and then think about it for 5 strokes.
3. After the unconscious 5 strokes, examine how you are moving and if it's correct, then just continue not thinking for another 5 strokes.
4. If it isn't quite right - make a technical change and focus on that for 5 strokes and then go back to not thinking for another 5.
5. Keep switching from thinking about the technique to not thinking about the technique.
6. This is self-coaching in action - but remember, it works ONLY when you know what change you are trying to make.

Read more about self coaching on our website
www.fastermastersrowing.com/self-coaching-for-masters-groups

Tell us what solutions you're finding that work for clubs and masters and share on our Facebook page
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Rebecca Caroe

