

Chairman's Newsletter

November 2011



To RRC, RCC and LUBC members, and parents of RRC Junior members...

Safety Focus – Understanding Directions

Have you ever been in a race and heard a marshal call “move to port!” or “move to starboard!”? Whereas coaches may instruct you to “pull red” or “pull green,” the rules of racing require marshals to give directions in terms of port and starboard.

Would you know what to do, or would you have to think about it?

Too late, because you risk disqualification, or worse, a crash, if you do not immediately obey. You must therefore learn what to do automatically. The rules are “pull red” to move to starboard, and “pull green” to move to port. Please commit these rules to memory.

While on directions, you may remember that the port side of the boat is also the red side. You must pass on-coming traffic port-to-port, i.e. red to red. If two boats are on a collision course,

then both must move to starboard (i.e. pull red) and this manoeuvre will ensure that you pass port-to-port!

And of course the starboard side of the boat is also the green side. This is the side that should be nearest the bank. If you think of the bank as being green (which it usually is) then the rule is green side nearest to green bank. But not too near; ideally you should have one oars length from your spoon to the bank.

There has been debate about what terms to use for directions. Some have suggested “bow side” and “stroke side”, or even “left side” and “right side.” The thing is, these terms are ambiguous and they are not recognised internationally. So please do your best to work with the rules as they are; it really is just a matter of getting used to them.

Recent News

Warm congratulations to Chris Edwards who was recently appointed to be Chairman of the North West Regional Rowing Council.

We've had some great results across all sectors of the club at the Pairs Head, the Dee Head, the Fours Head, the Veteran Fours Head, the Northwich Autumn Head and the GB Junior Trials at Boston. Congratulations to all. It is a really thrilling time for the club and bodes well for 2012!

Did you know that racing reports are posted on our website under Results and can also be found in local newspapers (many thanks to Linda Butterworth for this)? Our Captain also posts up-to-the-minute results on Twitter at RRC1894. If you want complete details, then you can always find them on the event or hosting club websites.

Interview with Mike Strother, LUBC Vice President

What is LUBC and how big is it?

Liverpool University Boat Club is one of the oldest and currently one of the largest clubs at the University of Liverpool. With the success of the fresher's fair and the rowing taster sessions we have 90 signed up members this year. The

men's and women's squads are made up of senior rowers with a great amount of race experience and novices who are completely new to rowing or should I say the rowing lifestyle?

Why is LUBC based at RRC?

LUBC does not have its own stretch of water or boathouse and so we rely on RRC to provide exactly those things. We're lucky enough to be able to share one of the best stretches of water in the North West and certainly the best considering its proximity to the university campus.

What else do you get from being at RRC?

At the start of this academic year LUBC and RRC representatives met to discuss what else we can gain from the partnership. Matthew Hackett has been our coach for a number of years, and this year RRC has agreed to help further by offering coaching sessions with other coaches from the club. Already, the senior LUBC men's squad have had a session coached by Chris Wheatley, and other squads have been coached by Kevin Reynolds and Val Edwards, both of which were tremendously helpful [Sam Edwards and Stuart Beards have also been helping]. Another brilliant addition this year is allowing LUBC to share RRC boats. This means we can experience sculling for which we've had brilliant coaching from Val.

What are your ambitions for the year?

As far as both the men's and women's captains are concerned our main ambition for the coming year is to have crews racing at Henley Royal Regatta. The men's squad has had an extremely positive start to this season and are looking to convert what we are currently producing in training to more competitive finishes at HERR, the Runcorn Eights Head, the Chester Head and the BUCS Regatta in preparation for the Metropolitan Amateur Regatta, Marlow Regatta and Henley Royal Regatta. The women are building on a very impressive season last year and wish to break personal records in terms of race wins and finish positions throughout the year; they ultimately hope to bring another trophy from the

Our Website & Facebook

Everyone on the world of Facebook can now start 'liking' all those various items that appear regularly on our website. This will help to promote our club and show that people are using the website, such as reading the race reports posted regularly by Linda. How does it work? When you find a story on our website that you like, maybe because you get a mention, then just click the nearby 'like' button. This will

University's Athletic Union!

What are the problems you face?

Aside from the work on the Silver Jubilee Bridge increasing our travel time, there are other bigger problems we face each year. As we all know rowing can be quite an expensive affair and making our limited funding last the length of the year is probably our biggest challenge; especially when boat repairs and essentials such as cox boxes and minibus hire cause such significant dents in our budget. The issue with our lovely Filippi men's VIII is that replacement parts are a tad on the expensive side and can take a long time to arrive. Another big problem is having enough sweep boats to ensure that all our rowers can get out on the water each weekend. We've managed to find two IVs that were stored in a barn in the Wirral, both of which are in a bad state! Hopefully, once these are functional we'll have more capacity for members! One thing is for certain, we definitely don't seem to have a problem generating interest in the club, so we really can't complain!

How are your squads organised?

Our squads are organised under the supervision of the Men's and Women's Captains and Vice Captains. We are lucky enough this year to have enough coxes to get most, if not all, of the squads on the water at the same time. This usually consists of two senior VIIIs, two novice VIIIs and occasionally a IV or quad. This allows the seniors to focus on increasing boat speed while the novices learn the ropes. The Captains and Vice Captains report any issues that are not directly concerned with training and crews directly to Chris Ambrose, our President, Jo Jeffreys, our Secretary, or myself. All in all, we have a brilliant system to support both the senior and novice crews, which we hope will enable us to achieve more this year than ever before!

automatically post a link onto your Facebook page which all your friends can see. You will also be asked to add a comment if you wish. If you are not logged onto Facebook, you will be asked to log onto Facebook first. That's easy, so let's all do it so that all our friends are up to date with our latest rowing news! Thanks to Stuart Beards for this really handy feature.

Technique Master Class – The Catch I

This is the first in a series of articles which I hope will be interesting and help you to improve your rowing. This first one is about the height of your hands as you move into the catch. There are a lot of other important things going on at the catch but this article is just about the hands.

I'm sure you all know, with a level boat, the height of your hands determines the height of the spoon above the water. Looking from the side of the boat, as you come up to the catch, your hands should ideally follow a path something like that shown below:



Before about 1/2 slide, your hands should be moving at a constant height above the sax board. This will keep the spoon at a constant height above the water, not too high and not too low. Somewhere between 1/2 and 3/4 slide you should start gradually lifting your hands so that the spoon moves towards the water, but still leaving a slight gap between the spoon and the water, about 5 centimetres in calm conditions. The spoon should be fully square from about 3/4 slide. The catch itself is achieved in the last few centimetres before full slide by lifting the hands just enough to drop the spoon into the water. The idea you should have in your mind is that your hands move forward and up into the catch. And yes, that's right, the catch should have happened by the time you have reached full slide!

By how much should you lift your hands?

For a Smoothie scull the spoon width is about 21.5 centimetres, the spoon to water gap just before the catch should be about 5 centimetres, and with a typical gearing of 88:202, the height gain of your hands should be no more than $(21.5+5) \times 88 / 202 = 11.5$ centimetres (or 4½ inches in old money)! Not a lot!!

For a Smoothie sweep oar, the spoon width is 25.5cm, the spoon to water gap is still 5 centimetres, a typical gearing is 115:215, so the height gain of your outside hand should be no more than 14 centimetres (or 5½ inches).

When sculling, you should aim to get both hands at the same height (height of left hand = height of right hand) all the way from after they cross over and right up to the catch. This should be an important part of your focus as you move into the catch.

There are several common ways of getting your hand heights wrong and these are illustrated in the diagrams below.





You delay and then row the spoon into the water.



Your hands lift too high – the spoon goes deep.



You over-reach, often with a lurch of the body and arms.



You row short.

It is also possible to have several of these faults at once, or they may only appear sometimes, for example when you row at higher rate or higher pressure. All of them are detrimental to the movement of the boat through the water. Some reasons are obvious, others are not, but really you do not need to know why!

Why not ask a coach to take a look at you or, better still, to take a video of you to check if you have any of these faults?

Knowing what your faults are, you can then try to correct them while you row. Keep working at it and ask for feedback to check your progress. You can also try some exercises. Two really good ones for the catch are: row the first few inches of the stroke with square blades; and roll-ups (ask a coach to explain if you don't know how to do these). You should be able to do them in a single, but if you do not feel confident or you row sweep, then try them in a crew boat with the rest of the crew holding the boat steady.

Feedback

Please send me feedback. I don't mind if it'd negative, really!

- Is this what you want (or not)?
- Is there something you particularly would like me to cover?
- Whatever!

No pictures were forthcoming from our Small Boats Head so I have no pictures to show you and no prizes to announce, but to be fair, you did not have much notice.

As the next newsletter will be the last one before Christmas, I welcome contributions on a festive theme. Please send them to my Email address below.

Chris Wheatley, Chairman, Runcorn Rowing Club (chair@runcornrowing.com).