



The Idealised Crew Or Who do you think you are?

These are thoughts on matching the rower to the Seat/Position, and matching rowers to each other to produce the most efficient and cohesive crew?

Irrespective of the usual "I am a Stroke/Bow rower" the different arc angles at the catch in the 6 different positions in the boat does mean that you are ideally looking for different physiques to facilitate the different potential of each position. It is not just the varying arc angles which effect seat selection, but also the fact that the bow pair of rowers sit much higher above the water than the stern four.

In addition to this, there are different demands on each position which influence the ideal combinations of:

- Physique length of reach, sitting height, leg length, etc.
- Physiology strength and endurance
- body weight fore and aft trim of the boat
- Explosive power strength at speed
- speed and smoothness of movement, other qualities of movement;
- Flexibility
- Technical efficiency, that are required for each position.

Stern Pairing

Good technique, and really smooth consistency is what is required from the stern pair.

#6 Stroke Seat

The necessary reach of trunk and arms is 15cm less than would be required in the bow. So there is no need for giants in the stroke seat. The stroke needs to be rhythmic and consistent. The ability to set a clear rhythm and ratio and maintain a steady and relaxed recovery sequence is important. Finally, good technique in the stroke seat helps the whole crew to achieve better technique. Brute power is not a key requirement, fitness and strength with endurance is.

#5 Seat

The catch angle that is possible requires a slightly longer reach than at stroke, and therefore #5 seat may require a slightly taller athlete. #5 needs to reinforce stroke rhythm whilst also having the fractionally longer reach forward than the stroke seat. This requires #5 to have a bit more power than 6 to pull the longer stroke in the same time. The movement quality required of a #5 rower is that of 'flow' i.e. a very 'loose' and 'fluid' quality of movement. Endurance with flexibility, power and strength (and concentration and good technique) is required.

Middle Pairing

The middle pair may not be as tall as the bow pair but they should be the strongest. Such rowers don't always have the best technique, but a surplus of brute power should not be accepted as an excuse for inadequate technique.

#4 Seat

The #4 seat rower will be amongst the taller, stronger, and probably heaviest of rowers in the crew. #4 is regarded as part of the "powerhouse" of the boat and it is important that #4 rowers are not just fit and strong, but explosive (power with speed) too.



Poole Gig Rowing Club - The Ideal Crew



#3 Seat

In many respects the attributes required by #3 are similar to #4, if anything you may also be looking for #3 to be heavier than #4 in order to trim the bows down, however you want this weight to be muscle tissue and not fat!

Bow Pair

What you want is a pair of tall lively rowers whose blade speed and accuracy at the catch are excellent. A bit of weight (muscle) to keep the bow down helps.

#2 Seat

The front two positions in the boat offer the potential of more arc angle at the catch. It is therefore essential that #2 rowers have sufficient length of reach to be able to use this, and they will therefore need to sit taller and/or have longer arms than the stern 4 rowers. They need to be very fit to deliver the larger arc/longer stroke.

The other key requirement for the #2 seat is that he/she must have a very quick placement of the blade at the catch and connection to the water and he/she should therefore be one of the two most explosive rowers in the boat they also need to have excellent technique, especially at the catch, which must be very quick and very accurate – you simply can't afford to be late in, or to miss the front sector of the stroke arc!

The #2 rower can also be considered as part of the 'powerhouse' of the boat. #2 has to be able to pull extra hard at the marks to help get the bow to turn and so reduce the need to use heavy braking at the rudder.

#1 Bow Seat

The bow seat has the greatest arc angle at the catch so, like #2, you need a rower with a tall sitting height and/or long arms and a long trunk, with good speed of movement and excellent blade-work at the catch. In terms of timing it is better that the bow seat takes the catch early rather than later, although of course ideally they need to have spot-on timing! Maintaining technique in big seas makes #1 rower's technical adaptability essential.

Coxswain

You should be looking for the lightest coxes possible! 10kg = 1 boat length in a 600 stroke race.

In terms of weight distribution, it is also essential that the cox must sit absolutely inert and still. You will never see an Olympic Coxswain moving anything but his/her mouth, and miniscule movements of thumb and index finger on the rudder lines!

A good cox has to be a 'Jack of all Trade' and his/her greatest asset is to be able to 'Multi-Task' ! This is not the place for a dissertation on the role and qualities of a cox.