Rowing Physical Preparation

Where to Begin?

Mobility, stability and trunk conditioning

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Preamble

The information supplied in this document has been developed by Ben Haines Coaching Services upon the request of the client, Pulteney Grammar School. It is intended only as a precursory document and therefore does not contain the required detail to begin and execute a strength and conditioning program, performance based or otherwise. This document was designed based on the initial information provided by the client and its purpose is to provide an overview of a potential method for achieving the communicated objectives. If the client decides to proceed with this document, it will provide the basis for an appropriately designed strength and conditioning program that contains the necessary detailed information to deliver such a program to the desired population group.

Ben Haines
Mobility

To be able to perform the Rowing stroke effectively and efficiently the athlete must be able to produce sufficient strength and power through the complete stroke. This can be easy at the end of the stroke but much more difficult at the catch given the mobility required to reach this position. Excellent hip and thoracic mobility are fundamental building blocks in physically preparing the Rowing athlete. Below are some drills that can be used to develop these areas.

Thoracic Mobility

1. Supine archer
2. Kneeling Reach up and through
3. Thoracic Crunches (use a rolled up towel)
4. Seated broomstick rotations (knees together!)

Hip Mobility

1. Kneeling stretch
2. Lying hamstring stretch
3. Rice picker squat
4. Squat with overhead reach

Assessing mobility – do you have enough?

Thoracic Mobility

Hip Mobility

Can you perform a squat (feet shoulder width, arms straight in front) until the crease of your hips is below the top of your knees? Heels must remain flat, back must remain flat, knees track with toes.

Combined Mobility

Can you perform an overhead squat with a broom stick until the crease of your hips are below the top of your knees? Heels must remain flat, back must remain flat, knees track with toes and broomstick stays inside footprint.

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Stability

Whilst stability is crucial around a number of joints in Rowing perhaps the most important is the scapular. A lack of stability around the scapula joint is a strong indicator for injury in the Rowing athlete and will also have a negative effect on performance. It is crucial that the ability to control the movement of the scapula unloaded and with external loaded is developed before targeting general strength and power using the upper limbs.

Scapular instability can be detected in a number of simple assessments with the single arm wall push-up a reliable and easy to administer test. Any movement of the scapular away from the desired set position such as elevation, depression or ‘winging’ during the test is a sign on the athletes inability to control their scapula during movement and must be addressed via appropriate training.

A large number of young athlete’s problems are rectified quickly with basic drills as they become aware of how to purposefully control their scapulae. However, in some cases the athlete may lack sufficient strength or motor control to perform this movement well any may require extensive training to rectify.

Training

A large number of drills can be used to train and improve scapular stability with horizontal pulling movements the most specific and therefore facilitating the greatest transfer to the Rowing athlete.

However to alleviate boredom and to ensure a well-rounded athlete is developed scapular stability should be trained in horizontal pushing, and overhead movements as well.
Examples are given below

Dumbbell alphabet

Scapular Lat Pulldown

Scapular Seated Row
Trunk Conditioning

To successfully train for and compete in Rowing the trunk must be strong enough to cope with the forces subjected to it in the course of the rowing stroke and the number of times it is repeated. Sufficient trunk strength will enhance performance and reduce the risk of associated injuries. Below are some exercises that can be used to assess and train trunk strength.

**Prone Extension/Bridge**

**Side Bridge**

**Double leg Hold**

**Standards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Prone Extension/Bridge (s)</th>
<th>Side bridge (s)</th>
<th>Double Leg Hold (s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>≥ 180</td>
<td>≥ 180</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Training**

Prone bridge/Side bridge:

Timing: 15s – 180s
Mode: un-resisted/resisted/perturbations/dynamic limb movement

Double leg hold:

Timing: 15s – 180s
Mode: single leg/double leg/isometric/dynamic

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