High Performance Committee Minutes

10.2.2024

Attendance
Wyatt Allen
Liam Corrigan
Yaz Farooq (absent)
Catherine Starr
Genevra Stone
Josy Verdonkschot (CHPO)
Stephen Hap Whelpley (Chair)
Brett Gorman

Agenda
Review of HPC Charter
2025 U19 and U23 Selection Procedures Discussion
Sharing and discussion of Athlete Feedback from Tokyo
Review of 2028 High Performance Plan Rough Draft

The meeting was called to order at 12:39 PM EST.

Stephen Hap Whelpley called the meeting to order and began with a request for any additional agenda topics. Brett Gorman was present for the duration of the meeting to present the 2025 U19 and U23 Selection Procedures.

Review of HPC Charter

Hap began the discussion around the HPC Charter, which was shared with the group before the meeting. The committee revisited the charter in light of two at-large collegiate coach seats coming to term in December 2025. The HPC acknowledged the contributions of both Wyatt Allen and Yaz Farooq in their current roles. The committee also noted that the terms of the two athlete representatives would end in December 2026. Currently, the committee is unaware of the process for electing or selecting new or renewed members for the HPC. Will Daly agreed to look into the process with the Board of Directors and report back to the HPC.

The HPC also noted the benefit of staggering terms so that paired representatives do not reach their term limits simultaneously (e.g., both collegiate coaching representatives at the same time). This approach would allow for more continuity and a smoother transfer of institutional knowledge.

Hap noted that the charter was updated twice in recent years—once in 2022 to redefine its purpose and again in 2023 to add a U19 representative. The committee briefly reviewed the four main areas on which the HPC votes: 1) National Team Selection, 2) Athlete Funding, 3) Chief High Performance Officer employment, and 4) National Team Coach employment. The complete HPC charter can be found here.

Josy raised the issue of consolidating all high-performance functions under one committee, as the HPC now covers U19 and U23 matters, while Para rowing still operates under a separate HPC. The committee discussed the possibility of adding another seat to cover these responsibilities.

Lastly, the HPC reviewed the voting mechanism outlined in the charter, which uses a plurality rather than a majority vote.

Upon concluding the discussion, Wyatt expressed his willingness to continue with the HPC if needed while remaining open to the idea of new representation.

2025 U19 and U23 Selection Procedures Discussion

The HPC then gave the floor to Brett Gorman to present the proposed 2025 U19 and U23 Selection Procedures. Following an Olympic year, World Rowing returns to a typical calendar with the U23 World Championships in July and the U19 World Championships in early August. This creates a shorter window for USRowing to run selections after the domestic championship seasons. The proposed approach is to hold trials immediately following these domestic championships. For U19s, this would occur on the Tuesday through Thursday after Youth Nationals in Sarasota, FL. For U23s, trials would be held in Mercer, NJ, following the NCAA and IRA championships.

USRowing explored incorporating some trials into Youth Nationals by redefining the youth category as U19, which could aid in developing young athletes. However, community feedback indicated insufficient support for this change. The existing mix of scholastic and club systems poses challenges for talent identification and development. The HPC agreed that creating U19 and U21 categories would help advance young athletes, particularly in small boats, though this year may not allow enough time to make impactful changes.

Due to other obligations, Liam Corrigan left the meeting at 1:00 PM EST.

Scheduling U23 trials right after NCAA and IRA championships presents similar challenges. The community has found past trials in Sarasota, held two weeks after these championships, difficult to manage. Holding trials immediately afterward would make participation more accessible for some crews. The HPC acknowledged that the collegiate system would need to evolve to truly prioritize small boats, although this is a challenge to work on over time. The HPC discussed introducing small boat requirements for athletes attending trials, though only if collegiate programs would support such changes. Brett suggested adding winter and possibly spring ID camps to provide small boat training and talent identification.

One new idea in the selection procedures is to integrate certain boat classes that fail to meet a time standard at trials into selection camps. The goal is not to transfer all boats but to maximize competitive potential by exploring additional combinations at camp. The HPC supported this approach, noting that standards for selection camp boats should match those of trials boats.

For awareness, Josy noted that USRowing events are expected to change at the 2025 World Rowing Conference in March, potentially altering the international competition schedule.

The HPC discussed improving communication around trials, suggesting a required pre-race call for all participants to review the CST implementation. Josy also shared that Tom Rooks at USRowing is collaborating with the Medical Committee on developing practical and scientific heat protocols for community distribution.

Sharing and discussion of Athlete Feedback from Tokyo

Gevvie Stone provided a summary of feedback from athlete surveys, noting that most athletes were satisfied with the training and selection camps. However, the women's sweep group offered some constructive feedback. The HPC discussed the feedback and possible adjustments.

Two key institutional challenges emerged: limited housing in Princeton and the need for athletes to balance professional rowing with employment. Josy highlighted the importance of securing housing near Training Centers. The HPC reviewed feedback on coaching, noting that the National Team would benefit from a coaching team with broader perspectives. Josy emphasized that a cohesive team of coaches with diverse viewpoints is essential, and the HPC agreed.

Yaz Farooq joined the call at 2:06 PM EST.

The HPC then discussed coaching development, acknowledging the need to empower coaches while providing guidance. The committee recognized that past National Team practices shape current teams, each bringing distinct perspectives. The conversation concluded by emphasizing that coaches, like athletes, need support and accountability in order to grow.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:32 PM EST, with plans to reconvene for a review of the 2028 High Performance Plan Rough Draft.