High Performance Committee Minutes

12.19.2022

Attendance
Wyatt Allen
Liam Corrigan
Yaz Farooq
Genevra Stone
Josy Verdonkschot
Stephen Hap Whelpley (Chair)

Agenda
Review of Town Hall and Comments Received Regarding Selection Procedures
Discussion of U19, U23, and Senior Selection Procedures
Clarification about Intent of the 2023 National Selection Regatta

The meeting was called to order at 6:30PM EST.

Review of Town Hall and Comments Received Regarding Selection Procedures

To begin, Chief High Performance Officer (CHPO), Josy Verdonkschot, discussed the town hall he held on December 11, 2022 as a preliminary explanation for his overall direction and ideology behind the 2023 Selection Procedures. Josy expressed to the High Performance Committee that there was a broad audience with well over 100 attendees and an abundance of engaged inquiries.

During the town hall, comments were collected and collated by Will Daly and then shared with the entirety of the HPC. Josy worked separately to personally reply to each comment, and the comments were used as talking points for the HPC's discussion.

The comments received came from various members of the USRowing community with the majority coming from U19-related parties and the fewest coming from U23-related parties. A good portion of the comments focused on the reintroduction of time standards, and this consequently drove much of the HPC's discussion.

Discussion of U19, U23, and Senior Selection Procedures

The HPC and Josy began by discussing the Competitive Time Standards (CSTs) and the percentages underlying them. Josy shared both his personal view of having standards as well as his ongoing communications with the USOPC regarding them. In terms of overall ideology, the point of enacting standards is not about the exclusion of individuals, but rather about the direction provided to them. In building the National Team towards better international results, he believes that the United States must create a credible system with clear standards for performance. Off of this, members of the HPC discussed that the establishment of standards can help to inform the decision-making process of coaches and athletes and thereby direct improvement.

The HPC and Josy reviewed why it is essential that CSTs are based on exceptionally favorable conditions; because the relative adjustment is more objective than a “flat water” time being scaled in both directions. This means that, unless conditions of wind, water, air, and circumstance are as advantageous as ones typically present for World’s Best Times, all CSTs would generally be adjusted to be more attainable.

In terms of adjustments made after racing to scale CSTs to the conditions, Josy expressed openness to exploring the possibility of providing updated CSTs prior to racing. The main concern is the ability to make the CSTs more lenient after racing if the weather changes. In other words, he would only lower the bar, not raise it, to make the standards more accessible if he needed to adjust a pre-race CST.

To further illustrate the application of CSTs as currently written in the draft, Josy applied them to 2022 U19, U23, and Senior Trials results last year. The majority of crews would have met the CST with only a couple of boats in each trials not meeting the standard. Those were the same crews that struggled to match the relevant pace of international competition at their respective World Championships.

Echoing some public comments, HPC members inquired as to whether or not CSTs would be applied to camp boats as well. Josy replied that while boats selected at camps will not have one particular day to which the CSTs will be applied, all boats at camp will be consistently evaluated relative to each other and the CSTs throughout the entire selection process. He stated his goal to direct all boats towards CSTs rather than just some boats. The HPC agreed with the principle that all boats will be reviewed in terms of CSTs, and that the difference is in the application on one day rather than numerous days throughout a selection process.

At the previous request of the HPC, Josy continued his conversations with the USOPC in regard to time standards and other selection procedure decisions, and reported to the HPC on those conversations. With reference to CSTs, the USOPC expressed that they could be applied to Olympic boat classes for purposes of funding decisions (but not the right to compete) in light of the Ted Stevens Act. That being said, the Ted Stevens Act would allow for the application of CSTs to selection of non-Olympic boat classes, U23 boat classes, and U19 boat classes because these are not direct avenues to the Olympics and therefore are not protected by the same right to compete. In the case of the LM2x and LW2x, these Olympic boat classes could become camp boats because: 1) there is still open access to the camp via the Winter Speed Order in singles and 2) all athletes still have the ability to trial in other Olympic boat classes (W1x, M1x, W2x, M2x, W2-, M2-).

In regards to the Senior Selection Procedures, Josy presented the HPC with some adjustments to the published draft, based on his goals for this year and feedback from the USRowing community. Despite the significant expense of hosting multiple trials, Josy determined that non-Olympic Trials could be separated from U23s and U19s and moved to a later date at Mercer. This date would likely coincide with the end of the second Senior Selection Camp, allowing the event to also host trials for any NSR boats that did not qualify via World Cup 2. This means that athletes not selected for the National Team at the second Senior Selection Camp could still attend trials in the event that not all boats qualified out of the NSR and World Cup. Additionally, while Josy will still make NSR athletes aware of the relevant CSTs, he decided to remove the application of the CSTs for funding as the majority of NSR boat classes met the CSTs in 2022 at NSR 1 and NSR 2.

On the U19 and U23 level, the HPC asked if there was any flexibility in the location and timing of trials. Through communication with members of the HPC, some representatives of the U19 community expressed concern that if the timing of trials could not be moved, then conducting them in any location other than Florida would be prohibitive due to Youth Nationals. For this year, the timing is restricted by the early naming dates required for the respective World Championships, the necessary dates for the respective selection camps, and other domestic scheduling restrictions. As such, the U19 and U23 trials must retain the planned dates and

location. The HPC recognized the particular challenge this places on U23s who finish their championship seasons close to these dates in locations outside Florida.

After discussing the options for U19 and U23 Trials, Josy explained some of the other changes to the U19 Selection Procedures. The movement of the 4- out of camp and the 4+ into camp not only mimics the U23 structure and promotes continuity, but also provides a platform for enhancing development and greater paths for success. Additionally, the U19 Selection Camp was intentionally reduced in size so that USRowing could work more closely to develop its athletes. The intention is for non-camp athletes to find developmental opportunities through trials, summer racing with clubs, or more pertinent domestic opportunities like development camps. The HPC suggested limiting time standards on U19 and U23 boats in order to keep a more immediate focus on the senior objectives in Paris. Josy said he would review the application of all time standards, but still felt the need to introduce them as a guiding principle.

In summary, Josy again noted that the goal across all of the Selection Procedures is to make athletes better rather than to make their lives more restrictive. The implementation of time standards and the allocation of merit-based funding on the senior level have the goal of objectively guiding athletes toward the commitment and decisions necessary to succeed.

Clarification about Intent of the 2023 National Selection Regatta

To close the meeting, members of the HPC asked Josy for clarification on the intent and scope of the National Selection Regatta in relation to the 2023 Selection Procedures. Josy clarified that he sees two reasons for athletes to attend the NSR: 1) they have relevant speed in one of the boat classes and would like to race it at the World Championships this year; and/or 2) they have not solidified a spot in the first Selection Camp and would like to make another effort to do so. Any competitors are welcome to attend, but if an athlete or team does not have the means to attend or does not have either of those reasons to attend, then it is not a necessary event.

Josy explained that the timing of both the Winter Speed Order and the NSR were chosen in order to try and defray costs for clubs and athletes. The Winter Speed Order was scheduled at the end of a training camp so that athletes could utilize USRowing support rather than personal or independent means. Similarly, NSR was scheduled at the start of a Selection Camp in order to bridge resources for athletes who might attend the race and the Selection Camp. These considerations were primarily made for athletes on the team in 2022 in Olympic boat classes.

In light of Josy's clarification, the HPC suggested that a preliminary naming date for the first Selection Camp be given in March so that athletes and teams could more appropriately evaluate the need for NSR participation.

There being no other business for discussion, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:50PM EST.

.