High Performance Committee Minutes

11.20.2023

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

Agenda
Coxswain Selection Interviews
Updates to Olympic Selection Procedures
Direct Athlete Support Update off of Fall Speed Order & PanAms
Discussion of Coaches for Selection Camps

The meeting was called to order at 9:04 PM EST.

Coxswain Selection Interviews

The High Performance Committee began by discussing how coxswain selection would happen during this Olympic year. A significant number of coxswains have expressed interest in participating in the 2024 Olympic Selection. The selection camps cannot accommodate all the coxswains with interest. Therefore, a preliminary selection must happen. Chief High Performance Officer Josy Verdonkschot suggested interviews to start the process.

The discussed plan is to have each coxswain concisely interviewed as a supplement to his or her credentials and submitted materials. Current National Team athletes will provide questions for the interviews, but then the HPC discussed asking the ACC representatives to conduct the interviews. This way the interviews would involve an athlete representative, but not a current athlete. Hopefully, this approach would limit any potential biases that could exist. The interviews would be recorded and shared with athletes for their review and additional feedback. A member of the HPC also pointed out that potential coaches should have input on coxswains. However, it was discussed that coaches' opinion should not be a leading opinion early on in this selection.

Presently, this approach would require 12 different interviews. Josy proposed fifteen minute interviews spread across the ACC reps (Robin Prendes, Taylor Ritzel, Dariush Aghai, Genevra Stone, and Sara Hendershot). One member of the HPC also offered that Mary Whipple could help with interviews considering her expertise as a former Olympic coxswain.

Updates to Olympic Selection Procedures

The main updates discussed regarding the Olympic Selection Procedures pertained to the Men's eight (M8+). Following the missed qualification at the 2023 World Championships, USRowing had inquired as to whether or

not the M8+ had to go to trials. At that time, the USOPC had recommended that the M8+ remain a trials event in light of the original draft of the Olympic Selection Procedures.

However, after significant feedback from athletes and other members of the USRowing Community, the USOPC and USRowing determined that the M8+ would be best selected at a USRowing selection camp. In speaking with current athletes, it became clear that they would prefer a selection camp because it would ensure the best athletes get together and are selected through a fair process.

In light of the unrest and uncertainty around a M8+ trials as well as the direct feedback from athletes and the community, the HPC agreed to make the M8+ a boat that would be selected at a camp. The HPC also believed that this approach stands the best chance of building a competitive boat for the Olympics.

Direct Athlete Support Update off of Fall Speed Order & PanAms

The Direct Athlete Support (DAS) discussion began by a summation of the two pertinent fall events. Josy explained that PanAms was successful but hard work for both the athletes and coaches. Going into the Pan American Games, Josy anticipated a reduction in medals due to increased efforts by the Central and South American countries. Nonetheless, we came away with the same medal count as qualification regatta with the addition of two more medals through the Women's and Mixed eights. The main critical feedback is that we could have used the event to develop more younger talent. However, the selection timeline made this difficult.

Fall Speed Order was a little later than anticipated in the calendar year due to scheduling conflicts at the venue. In consideration of this change of date, the event followed a simpler format due to the increased risk of adverse weather. All events went from time trials to 7 boat finals. Additionally, the event ran the A and B finals of singles back to back followed by the same gender's pairs to ensure the best comparison of competitive results. Josy and the HPC agreed that this was a good format for this event, but then had differing opinions on whether or not this format could be applied to the Winter Speed Order as well.

In reviewing the results and the remaining stipends for allocation, the HPC agreed with Josy's decision to award stipends for anyone over 92% of the competitive time standard for their event. Of those that competed and were not already receiving DAS, the HPC determined that Maggie Fellows, Kate Knifton, Sam Melvin and Alex Karwoski would receive stipends based on their Fall Speed Order results.

As for PanAms, Josy felt that only the pairs and singles should be considered in light of the consideration given to Fall Speed Order where those were the only events. Looking at both the international competition as well as other pertinent US entries at the PanAms, like the M2- composed of participants from the World Championships, it was determined that the two additional crews to receive funding were the W2- and M1x. This means that Isa Darvin, Hannah Paynter, and Jacob Plihal would receive DAS.

The final consideration was that Sophia Luwis should receive funding based on her performance at the 2023 World Championships and her candidacy for the LW2x, a priority boat class. In total, this would make for 56 stipends with these 8 additions.

Discussion of Coaches for Selection Camps

The HPC decided to postpone the discussion of selection camp coaches until after Josy has a meeting with each of the disciplines and genders to gather feedback. His inclination is to run the camp with two coaches for the men, two coaches for the women, and one selector for both. These coaches would need to select an eight, four, and quad. It may turn out that additional coaches are required with the selection of both women's doubles as well. Regardless, Casey Galvanek will be the lead coach for the men, and Jesse Foglia will be the lead coach for the women.

With regards to the selector, Josy would still like to find the best people for this position. It would require experience with both international and domestic rowing. Ideally, the selector is not a current or former coach of any of the athletes involved. Dan Roock worked out well for last year's selection. A person like Gregg Stone would also be a valid possibility. The HPC agreed with these sentiments.

It was also discussed that there would not be a staggered and progressive selection this year. Athletes will need to choose a path in terms of sweep or scull.

In Closing

The HPC decided the next meeting would occur in late December or early January after Josy had met with the athletes. At this meeting, the HPC would discuss potential coaches for selection camp, finalize the format for the Winter Speed Order format, engage on the topic of selection camp formats, and possibly get a debriefing on the new Pathways project from Brett Gorman.

There being no other business for discussion, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:05 PM EST.