

2025 U19 Camp & World Championships Review

Event: 2025 U19 Selection Camp and World Rowing Under 19 Championships

Location: Chula Vista, CA and Trakai, Lithuania (August 6–10, 2025)

Audience: High School & Collegiate Coaches, Club Partners, and Families

Overview

The 2025 U19 National Team process aligned with USRowing's High-Performance Pathways strategy under Chief High Performance Officer Josy Verdonkschot, with operational leadership from Brett Gorman, Head Coach of Pathways and U19 Head Coaches Caitlin McClain (women) and Eric Gehrke (men). Competitive Standard Times (CSTs) were integrated across events to ensure internationally competitive speed pre-Worlds. Emphasis was placed on small-boat skill and sculling volume to connect U19 development to U23 and Senior performance pathways.

Key Structural Changes in 2025

- **Smaller Camp Size (per gender):** 21 athletes total — 19 rowers + 2 coxswains.
Exact staffing to field targeted boats and spares: 4- (4), 4x (4), 8+ (8 + cox), + 3 spare rowers (2 sweep, 1 scull).
 - **CST Framework (new in 2025):** Introduced Competitive Standard Times and aligned selection-camp boat speed expectations with the trials-boat standards, using CSTs to verify readiness before team confirmation.
 - **Increased Emphasis on U19 HP Winter Camps (Chula Vista, CA):** Athletes were strongly encouraged to attend Jan 3–6 or Jan 17–20 for physiological testing, small-boat assessments, and technical alignment.
 - **ID & Communication Practices:** Athletes sent regular updates and kept their USRowing profiles current with metrics. Head coaches maintained frequent communication with top athletes and their personal/club coaches to ensure alignment and transparency.
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World Championships Results — Trakai, Lithuania (Aug 6–10)

- **Women's Four (JW4-):** 🏆 Gold — first U.S. JW4- gold since 2018.

- **Women's Eight (JW8+):** 🏆 Silver.
 - **Men's Four (JM4-):** 4th (A Final).
 - **Men's Single (JM1x — Tony Madigan):** 5th — first U.S. JM1X A Final performance since 2018.
 - **Women's Quad (JW4x):** 11th overall (5th in B Final).
 - **Men's Eight (JM8+):** 8th overall (2nd in B Final).
 - **Men's Quad (JM4x):** 14th overall (2nd in C Final).
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Takeaways for Stakeholders

- **Women's sweep strength:** JW4- gold and JW8+ silver reflect strong execution in sweep events and increased focus in senior-relevant boats.
 - **Men's side** — no medal in 2025: The JM4- delivered a strong A-final performance, while the JM8+ finished below internal expectations and is being examined for process and preparation improvements (not athlete depth). *See Transparency & Next Steps for how fixed invite numbers influenced downstream boat options and late-camp selections.*
 - **Sculling development:** The JM4x and JW4x produced solid performances, yet highlighted the U.S. sculling gap versus top international programs. Earlier-stage sculling development must be emphasized to become consistent A-final/medal contenders.
 - **CSTs add clarity:** Performance standards aligned expectations across athletes, coaches, and selectors and provided a competitive target mid-camp though interrupted training phases.
 - **Athlete experience:** Post-camp surveys confirm a positive athlete experience; staff emphasized learning, safety, and support.
 - **Model to replicate (M1x):** The JM1x stands out as a success template; USRowing will better align support for athletes targeting small-boat pathways at U19 and beyond.
 - **Pathways continuity:** U19 outcomes feed directly into U23/Senior opportunities; partnerships with schools and clubs remain essential.
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Transparency & Next Steps

- **Invite & Athlete ID process:** Criteria, cadence, and integration of winter-camp learnings; a candid look at how fixed invite numbers limited internal competition and trickled down to constrain late-camp boat options.

- **Depth development levers:** Expanded early sculling exposure, increased small-boat volume, and CST calibration by boat class.
- **Camp size adjustment for 2026:** While the smaller camp size achieved efficient selection and maximized Worlds training, athlete/coach debriefs and results indicate that adding a few more athletes per gender would increase internal competitiveness and give coaches more options for crew selection. This change will be reflected in 2026.
- **Small-boat alignment:** Building on the JM1x success, formalize guidance and support (ID, training blocks, monitoring) for athletes pursuing small boats, ensuring continuity into U23 and Senior pathways.

Questions or Interested in Future Involvement?

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