High Performance Committee Minutes
6.14.2024

Attendance
Wyatt Allen
Liam Corrigan
Yaz Farooq
Catherine Starr
Genevra Stone
Josy Verdonkschot (CHPO)
Stephen Hap Whelpley (Chair)
Brett Gorman (Director of High-Performance Pathways)

Agenda
ACC Feedback
Clarification on Spare Policy and Plan
Pathways Explanation
General Discussion

The meeting was called to order at 2:06 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 in order to present the Pathways program to the High Performance Committee.

ACC Feedback
The first topic of the meeting was to share and discuss feedback received through the Athlete' Advisory Council (ACC). Genevra Stone shared that some athletes had questions regarding the selection of support staff for the Olympics. The HPC discussed the limited credentials provided to USRowing for Paris, the overall current needs of the team, and what roles would be more or less limited by the number of credentials.

In this conversation, services for athletes were broken down into both direct and indirect services. Massage and PT operate as direct services to athletes since they require a physical presence to execute them around racing. The HPC agreed that it was necessary to find the appropriate balance of direct and indirect services for athletes.

Josy Verdonkschot noted that two additional credentials were acquired from the USOPC with the explicit designation that they would be utilized for coaches. The USOPC and CHPO saw these credentials as essential in order to support the number of crews we have racing at the Olympics. Beyond the known AO credentials for staff, USRowing will work to acquire temporary P credentials. These P credentials provide limited access for

staff that are not accredited and come with significant restrictions like scope of use, time of access, and frequency.

There was a general discussion that the allocation and definition of accreditations changes with every Olympics, making for a significant logistical challenge.

Clarification on Spare Policy and Plan

Josy Verdonkschot explained the four pertinent credentials for the team: AA, AO, AP, P. As already mentioned, the P credential is a limited, temporary access credential for certain staff. The AA credential is for a fully accredited athlete competing in the Olympics. The AO credential is for a fully accredited staff directly supporting Olympic athletes. Lastly, AP credentials are for accredited spare athletes.

USRowing receives a limited number of AP credentials depending on the number of boats qualified for the Olympics. After racing begins, only AP credentials can enter the venue. Until racing begins, anyone can row in a lineup so long as he or she is on the long list. An athlete from the long list can gain an AA credential if necessary before competition begins, but we have a set number of AA credentials that matches the number of seats in competition. Meanwhile, once the Olympics begins, spares without AP credentials will not be able to join in the competition.

With this information, Josy communicated three different scenarios that the team could face. First, an injury or illness happens significantly before competition begins, and we are able to adjust and plan accordingly. Secondly, the team must utilize someone different as an AP spare in anticipation of a rising acute issue. Lastly, the team encounters a situation that calls for a temporary substitution. The HPC discussed the various scenarios in preparation for them.

Pathways Explanation

At this time in the meeting, Brett Gorman led an explanation and discussion of the plan for Pathways.

To begin, Brett relayed the launch of a new website for USRowing. Within that, the website hosts a new Pathways section, illustrating how athletes can progress in the sport with relation to the US National Team.

Brett took a moment to discuss the current selection camps. She expressed that with the calendar for the year dictated by the Olympics, the U23 camps begin on 7/10 after the Royal Henley Regatta. This helped to remove a common conflict of interest, but was made possible by the later date for the non-Olympic World Championships in St. Catherines, Canada. Under Josy's guidance and the Pathway process, both U19 and U23s are points on a journey rather than end points in and of themselves. While medals are still welcomed, the goal is to continue to grow an athlete's understanding of and skill within the sport. Hopefully, with time, Pathways can align athletes, coaches, and parents to all think about long term development and a matriculation to the senior team.

Pathways has established an online portal for reporting erg scores and background information. Brett noted that while the portal worked well for U23s, it did not translate that well to U19s. Pathways will work to further communication and direction around the use of the portal.

With the implementation of Pathways, the camps will have a more pointed effort of identifying the best developmental fits for camp. At each level, USRowing will encourage and endorse skilled and veteran athletes to pursue small boats when possible in an effort to further their growth, experience, and skill. As a result, selection camps will typically target 20-22 athletes for 12 sweep spots and 6-8 athletes for 4 sculling spots. The number of invitations will decrease if the number of seats for selection is reduced.

Pathways will look to provide common themes as athletes grow and develop. The hope is to take down the specialized silos of each camp so that there is greater unity between camps. The goal of this is to: create a system with progressive steps, retain more athletes through the years, and develop a network of coaches with common understandings.

Pathways will also look to improve the onboarding and offboarding of both athletes and coaches to establish more continuity. This includes a U23 offboarding process to help guide those athletes towards continued progress with the senior national team. Brett noted that offboarding U23s is key, but also finds it critical to improve the onboarding of athletes and coaches. Brett mentioned that the Athlete Toolkit is one element of onboarding for athletes. The Athlete Toolkit is an online platform with 5 modules that cover everything from nutrition to mental health.

One of the most significant components of Pathways is making sure to develop and maintain a better universal athlete database. One that tracks and monitors a training pool: U19, U23, OTP. Once this is established, the HPC noted that it might also be helpful to curate a similar database of coaches and selectors.

At this time, Josy added that the goal is to build a team that builds athletes forward and to move away from the notion of boat coaches and narrow roles.

As U19 representative on the HPC, Catherine Starr gave direct input on the U19 portion of Pathways. She was curious as to the scope of sharing the modules, noting the continued challenge of athletes and coaches feeling included or excluded by USRowing. On the U19 level, Catherine suggested listening carefully to coaches since they dictate the athletes' perspectives. The HPC agreed as a whole that coaching positions should go out to a wider audience. The HPC discussed that positions must be open and that applications must be actively welcomed.

Off of this point, Josy suggested a subcommittee meet to discuss U19 and U23 selection and trials. Brett would make plans to arrange a meeting between herself, Catherine Starr, Gevvie Stone, and Steve Hap Whelpley to dive further into the topic.

The conversation around Pathways continued as Liam Corrigan brought up athletes who were not directly identified through the U23 National Team. The HPC discussed existing ways that these athletes are identified and developed through both USRowing programming and high performance clubs. This year USRowing did not hold Selection Development Camps due to a lack of subscription. Brett noted how Pathways will work to still keep track of athletes not necessarily nominated to a team.

At 3:02PM EST, Gevvie Stone left the meeting.

As Brett works to build this system, both Josy and Brett noted that Pathways also needs the support of a Pathways coach in the future. A Pathways coach would work with Brett to connect with high school and collegiate coaches and to host athlete camps or clinics. The Pathways coach will help with scouting, coaching, identifying, and more.

Following this conversation, Brett left the meeting at 3:15PM EST.

General

To close the meeting, the HPC continued talking about its role and the role of USRowing in developing a National Team.

The HPC acknowledged that it needs to support, promote, and explain USRowing as it is USRowing. Some changes present challenges, but the more we can communicate about them and receive feedback, the better off the changes will be.

At 3:36PM EST, Wyatt Allen left the meeting.

In regards to the National Team, the HPC recognized that if the National Team achieves better retention, it potentially means less turn over. This in turn can make the National Team feel less open and accessible. The HPC discussed what tools USRowing would need to improve in this situation.

There being no other business for discussion, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:42 PM EST.