High Performance Committee Minutes
8.27.2024

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

Agenda
Olympic Review: Lead Up, Execution, Results, etc.
MegaWorlds Takeaways
Trials Review: Time Standards, Crews Results at Worlds, Feedback & Communication

The meeting was called to order at 7:12 PM EST.

Stephen Hap Whelpley called the meeting to order, and the meeting commenced without any additional items added to the agenda in light of the significant topics already established.

Olympic Review: Lead Up, Execution, Results, etc.
The High Performance Committee and Chief High Performance Officer Josy Verdonkschot began by reviewing differences in Olympic preparation this year compared to previous years. All noted that one significant improvement was the earlier selection, which allowed camp crews to train together for an extended period both domestically and abroad, as well as compete in an additional international race. This earlier selection also gave non-qualified boats time to prepare for the FOPQR. Josy and the HPC agreed that any success achieved in this short quadrennial stemmed from three important factors: athlete buy-in, generally solid regatta preparation, and the retention of some Tokyo Olympians.

Josy highlighted that the majority of the team trained together from January to August, roughly 180 days, which facilitated a stronger group dynamic. This allowed USRowing to focus its resources and support effectively.

The HPC and Josy then discussed variations in the crews' final preparation phases, held in Princeton, NJ, and Erba, Italy.

The committee next reviewed the Olympic results. Josy began by restating his primary goal: to qualify 8 boats for the A Finals in Paris. Additionally, he aimed to secure 2 to 4 medals, with an ideal goal of 4 medals. Other objectives included medaling in an event other than the eight and winning at least one gold medal. Some goals were met while others were not. USRowing won a gold medal, placed 8 crews in the A final, and medaled in an

event other than the eight. However, USRowing fell short of achieving 4 medals and secured no medals in the women's events.

The HPC and Josy then reviewed each discipline and boat class.

The committee agreed that the results did not fully reflect the exceptional level of athlete buy-in over the past three years. The discussion then turned to potential shortcomings that may have contributed to these outcomes.

While the HPC recognized that the lack of medals in women's events did not necessarily indicate gender-based issues, they acknowledged some possible cultural challenges within the women's team. The HPC discussed how ownership and resilience could vary across genders or disciplines. However, each crew faced unique challenges during the Olympics.

As the discussion continued, Hap Whelpley suggested pausing further discussion until more feedback and analysis could be gathered. Josy concluded by noting that some view USRowing as a "sleeping giant," but developing skill and talent at the U19 and U23 levels is critical to future success. Without a stronger pipeline, USRowing may only be competitive in the eight. He posed a rhetorical question to the HPC: "What is the future functionality of Pathways?"

Liam Corrigan exited the meeting at 8:15 PM.

MegaWorlds Takeaways

Following Josy's question on Olympic development, the HPC discussed the recent "MegaWorlds," which included U19, U23, and non-Olympic events. While the overall count of 10 medals appeared successful, it may not be a positive indicator for the future since 6 of those events may be dropped from World Rowing's program.

Josy explained that U19 and U23 coaches need a clearer understanding of developmental goals to better fuel USRowing's future success. The HPC then discussed clarifying the objectives of Pathways.

The committee noted that foreign athletes entering the US collegiate system often come from competitive selection systems in their home countries. Since recruitment is based on U19 and U23 results, athletes entering the US system are already highly skilled.

The HPC agreed on the importance of incentivizing small-boat rowing to develop a select group of well-prepared rowers for the future. They discussed the challenge of elevating the value of pairs and singles within scholastic, club, and collegiate programs. Youth Nationals was seen as an ideal platform for implementing changes, but reworking youth events to U19 events remains a significant challenge.

Trials Review: Time Standards, Crews Results at Worlds, Feedback & Communication

Finally, the HPC reviewed trials for the U19, U23, and non-Olympic World Championships. With limited time remaining, the committee focused on the need for improved education and communication. The HPC agreed that better communication around time standards is essential. For instance, USRowing could have reviewed last year's time standards and reiterated this year's objectives prior to the trials. Additionally, with concerns raised about heat during this year's trials, the HPC suggested creating a module on heat-related issues for community safety and event performance.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:21 PM EST.