



## High Performance Committee 9.6.2025 Report of Discussions and Developments

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| <b>Attendance</b> | Wyatt Allen<br>Liam Corrigan<br>Yaz Farooq<br>Catherine Starr<br>Genevra Stone<br>Josy Verdonkschot<br>Stephen Hap Whelpley (Chair)                                     |
| <b>Agenda</b>     | Discussion of new High Performance Hires and High Performance Structure<br>Review of 2025 Selection<br>Outlook for Shanghai<br>Discussion 2026 High Performance Program |

The meeting was called to order at 12:06PM.

### **Discussion of new High Performance Hires and High Performance Structure**

Chief High Performance Officer Josy Verdonkschot walked the High Performance Committee (HPC) through the new possible hires for the USRowing High Performance team.

The new data scientist is onboard, but not fully operational yet as she finishes up her masters. USRowing has partnered well with the USOPC to utilize their physiologist as a team physiologist. This consultant will work closely with the data scientist to refine the team's physiological and data analytics.

Josy is preparing to find a formal USNT Coastal Coach. Some current coastal coaches in consideration are both qualified, well regarded, and highly decorated at this point.

Josy explained that it is clear Pathways needs improvement. Currently, the National Team's results, talent identification, and talent development all need improvement. There are also some signs that U23 and U19 operations need improvement. U19 operated at a loss this year. For the summer, two coaches were offered part-time positions to provide immediate support to Pathways. Pathways needs to understand all the development paths and the ultimate goal of the USNT so that it encompasses and retains many different athletes. The HPC expressed that it is important to have continuity in some positions related to Pathways in order to truly help develop an ongoing pipeline.

The HPC vocalized that hirings should be public, open searches even if we have good people in front of us. While it may not be formally required, it is good practice and may reveal other options or future possibilities. There was a debate about retaining the current part-time hires as a proof of concept before doing a broader open search or simply beginning the open search right now.

Josy noted that Pathways must be a development path for both athletes and coaches.

After hearing Josy's continued vision for Pathways and considering some feedback from this year's selection at all levels, the HPC suggested the worth of a Chief of Staff role for the National Team that might help to ensure some of Pathways' goals.

As part of the discussion, members of the HPC noted how important it was for Josy to have some contact with National Team recruits, while also understanding how broad of a scope his position currently has. An efficient means of communication and contact is necessary in order to add this to his role.

### **Review of 2025 Selection**

Although selection was discussed at the previous meeting, additional feedback opened up a continued review of selection. The discussion began off of information presented to the HPC by athlete representatives.

The HPC emphasized the need for targeted goals headed into selection to help drive a linear process. Josy noted that it is critical for the selection procedures to be more pointed in order to avoid confusion during the selection process.

In the case of women's sweep, there was a known quantity of returning Olympians and high performing athletes. A threshold of these athletes were onboard and part of the selection process early enough in the year to attend the World Cups. With that known group, there was an initial need to assess whether a pair or four was the best pursuit. Subsequently, it had to be reviewed if doubling up would benefit the bigger boats. These goals helped to drive a straightforward selection. However, one shortcoming for women's sweep was not communicating who was in consideration and why. Some athletes had exceptional World Cup results and that was understandably appreciated in the selection process. Even so, the scope of selection requires transparency of these preexisting assumptions.

Off of this point, Josy noted that World Cup campaigns need to be a smaller group for two reasons. First, a smaller group more efficiently will let us know the capacity of a broader team by demonstrating how top performers can do relative to the world. After that, other domestic athletes can be compared to this standard. Secondly, if someone can secure a position for the World Championships by a performance at a World Cup, then the group going to a World Cup should be an intentionally selected group.

As mentioned in a previous meeting, selection waived a bit too long to determine if the best option was a double or a quad. Early on the fastest double was determined, but it became unclear if those athletes made the quad faster. Selection needs to avoid too many races that go towards something you already know. Josy noted that it is important for selection to not get fixated on proving something.

Josy said that men's sculling selection was relatively straightforward when considering both Selection Camp 1 and Selection Camp 2. He feels that a significant effort is needed on the senior level to demonstrate the importance of men's sculling to the Pathways of U19 and U23. The HPC agreed with this sentiment and appreciated the efforts made on the U19 and U23 levels to prioritize the quad ahead of some other boat classes.

According to Josy, men's sweep needed more clarity in its communications. Athletes expressed to reps that they need to know the decisions that were being made and why. Josy explained that some of the challenges with men's sweep were due to a wrong initial assessment of the depth and speed of that group.

The men's sweep camp also had difficulty with coxswain selection. Although the pre-selection and screening went well, it could still be more thorough. Members of the HPC made recommendations as to how the screening process could be improved next year. During the selection camp, the standards for a coxswain must be more clear and laid out. While there are plenty of coxswains for the number of boats requiring them, the HPC stated that we need to have clear guidelines to help drive development and selection.

The HPC and Josy discussed that, moving forward, a selection panel should review all of the selections, but not include the coaches. Coaches should supply their decisions and information to support those decisions.

Josy asked the HPC to consider whether naming athletes to the team or specific boat classes had a significant difference to the athlete and the team's performance. He noted that the earlier a team is selected, the more things can change over time. The HPC exchanged thoughts on the topic.

### **Outlook for Shanghai**

Josy shared his perspective on some of the crews going into the World Championships. He felt the eights were moving well as well as some of the small boats. He felt a good number of crews could make the finals and a few could be in contention for the medals.

### **Discussion 2026 High Performance Program**

The HPC had heard of a new High Performance Program released at the final preparation camp in Chula Vista, CA. Josy explained that this was a draft and was not meant for circulation. He explained that a good High Performance Program only exists when paired with very intentional selection procedures. The HPC agreed to discuss changes to the High Performance Program and Selection Procedures at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 2:08PM.