

Weight lifters found lack of time for training a very serious handicap. The training of an international weight lifter laid great emphasis on performing a series of low repetitions with very heavy weights.

Problems in Training Oarsmen - Staleness x

Dr. J. R. Owen, Team Manager, Amateur Rowing Assn.

Staleness is fairly common in rowing and is probably more common than is recognised or admitted in other sports as well. As a condition it is psychological in origin with physical manifestations.

When fully developed it may be recognised by lethargy, lack of interest, tiredness and lack of will or even desire to win. At this stage it is too late to do anything about it. Staleness may manifest itself suddenly when a crew or individual fails to reproduce in competition the form shown in training and practice.

The signs of impending staleness most commonly recognised are:-

1. Undue tiredness, out of all proportion to the exercise taken,
2. Insomnia,
3. Lack of interest, not only in the sport itself but in outside interests, and
4. Lack of confidence in the ability to win.

Other less obvious signs include:-

5. An abnormal anxiety about the chances,
6. Slight and increasing irritability about unimportant things,
7. Complaints of various trifling ailments, and
8. Alteration in weight (usually slight progressive loss) unrelated to diet and exercise taken.

Treatment consists in prevention - this is the only thing that is effective. The early signs must be recognised and dealt with, and the causes appreciated and prevented from arising.

It must always be clearly shown that the condition is not physical and the training programme reviewed and the individual(s) checked to see that no illness is developing or infection being incubated.

There are four fundamental causes of staleness, viz: boredom, confidence, the Press and the officials in charge.

1. Boredom may occur during training itself or outside the training period. The training programme should be constantly under review to prevent it becoming dull, and should be drastically altered if necessary. The programme is arranged for the crew, not the crew for the programme. Careful attention should be paid to the organisation of outside interest.
2. Confidence may have two effects - lack of confidence may stem from lack of encouragement, and overconfidence may lead to disillusionment. Honest praise and honest criticism are both necessary in due measure.
3. The Press may effect the crew either by constant unjustified praise or denigration. The effects of Press comments may be discounted if the crew or individuals can be taught to treat them as something of a joke.
4. The Officials in charge are much more commonly at fault when staleness appears than is the athlete himself. The officials in charge should recognise certain basic principles:-
 - a. The word staleness should never be mentioned. The coach should be aware of the possibility but not the crew.
 - b. The coach should always be prepared to discuss the reason for any point in training. If there is no reason for it, why do it?
 - c. The officials in charge must know the crew individually. If they know the crew as people they are in a position to anticipate possible reactions to unforeseen circumstances, and are able to help with significant but unrelated personal problems.
 - d. The officials should keep a close watch on themselves. Their reactions to circumstances will deeply affect the crew. A boring coach makes a bored crew.

There appear to be certain types of individual prone to staleness. They are:-

1. The solitary man - the man who does not mix.
2. The constant grouser.
3. The greedy man.

These characteristics should be recognised as they may put the coach on his guard and permit him to handle the individual with special care.