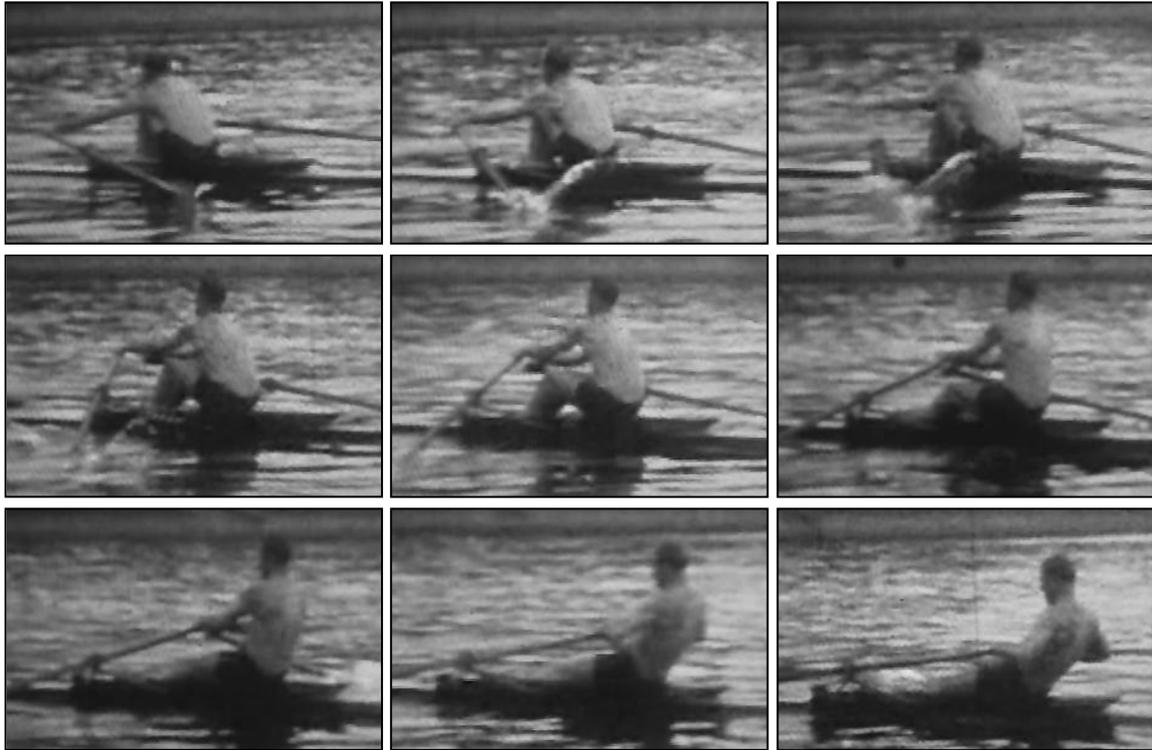


THE SPORT OF ROWING

To the readers of
www.row2k.com



John B. Kelly III

John B. Kelly, Sr.

6'2" 190 cm 190 lb. 86 kg

1920 Olympic Singles Champion

1920, 1924 Olympic Doubles Champion

0°, +30° to -40°, 0-9, 0-10, 0-10

Concurrent *Schubschlag* Classical Technique

with special emphasis on acceleration for as long as possible.

With this latest posting, I am continuing by popular demand my warm relationship with *row2k* that goes back to 2006. You will find other recent excerpts of my upcoming comprehensive history of rowing at www.Rowperfect.co.uk of Great Britain and www.anacc.org, the website of the Ital-

ian National Association of Rowing Coaches.

There are links to all the sites worldwide featuring my book at my own website, www.rowingevolution.com, and I encourage you to visit them all. Details about me and

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my book project are also available at my website.

For six years I have been researching and writing a four volume comprehensive history of the sport of rowing with particular emphasis on the evolution of technique. In these last months before publication, I am inviting the visitors of several websites to help proofread, edit and criticise the near-final draft.

For six years I have followed the footprints of rowing greats. For six years I have gathered their stories. I have been their witness. For six years I have listened and read and asked questions and learned. You will notice that whenever possible, I have let the participants express themselves in their own words. This history is a symphony. They are the orchestra, and I have done my best to be their conductor. This book is my special gift to those who made the history that I merely write.

The Amateurs

One part of recent rowing history, the story of the U.S. men's scullers of 1984, is of particular interest to Americans because it was first described beautifully by **David Halberstam** in his best-selling book, *The Amateurs*. What fascinated me about the story was that Halberstam didn't tell me *exactly* why some people succeeded while others failed. I was also struck by the fact that almost all of the participants objected to Halberstam's retelling of their story. One of them, Brad Alan Lewis, went so far as to write his own book about 1984.

The following draft chapter begins to set the background scene and introduce some of the characters that will figure in the Homeric tragedy that will follow. In the coming weeks on *row2k*, we will see the saga to its conclusion from the rowers' perspectives.

The following .pdf is in the format intended for the final printed book. It is from the fourth and last volume, and of course much has preceded it. In this introduction, I have included the photo sequence of 1920 U.S. Olympic Champion single sculler **John B. Kelly, Sr.**, referred to in the chapter, and in addition, here are some definitions you will need to be familiar with:

Kernschlag and *Schubschlag* are terms coined by scientists from the German Democratic Republic to describe force application in rowing, a concept not often talked about by others but which I consider crucial to truly understanding rowing technique. *Kernschlag* means "solid stroke with a hard beginning" in German, while *Schubschlag* means a surging "thrust stroke."

During the course of my book, I have assembled a **geneological tree of rowing technique** as it has evolved worldwide over the last two centuries. With the benefit of historical hindsight, I have renamed various techniques and styles.

Classical Technique uses the legs, back and arms concurrently (or nearly so) from the entry to the release and is often though not always associated with a symmetrical parabolic *Schubschlag* force curve. Its first proponent was Ned Hanlan, and others have included Steve Fairbairn and the German Democratic Republic.

The **Thames Waterman's Stroke** was the term that George Pocock used to describe the technique of early 20th Century British professional Ernest Barry, his ideal rower. Pocock's writings are the progenitor of Modern Orthodox Technique.

Modern Orthodox Technique uses the legs, back and arms in an overlapping-sequential manner in that order and is often though not always associated with a front-half emphasis *Kernschlag* force curve. Its first proponent was Allen Rosenberg, and on

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the international level its most important advocate today is Thor Nilsen.

The **Conibear Stroke** was a version of Classical Technique used by American colleges during the first half of the 20th Century. It was named after a legendary rowing coach at the University of Washington.

The **Philadelphia dipsy-doodle** was George Pocock's derisive term for legs, then backs sequentiality, which he saw in the rowing on Boathouse Row during the 1950s, the era after the death of Penn A.C. coach Frank Muller.

The **ferryman's finish** is a 19th Century term seldom used in the U.S. It means using your arms to pull yourself back towards vertical at the end of the pullthrough. Many American coaches consider it a serious fault, calling it bucking the oar, but throughout history it has been frequently used with great success. Its biggest proponent in the States was George Pocock.

0°, +30° to -40°, 0-9, 0-10, 0-10

The shorthand below the Kelly photos on the first page and repeated above means:

- His shins were 0° from vertical at entry.
- His body swung from 30° ahead of vertical to 40° past vertical.
- Imagining his pullthrough broken into ten parts, his leg motion began at the

entry and ended at 90% of the way to the release, while his back and his arm motion began at the entry and continued all the way to the release.

I use this format for every photo series throughout the book in order to accurately-compare techniques and track changes.

I need you!

If you find any typos in this chapter, or if you have any questions, comments, suggestions, corrections, agreements, disagreements, additional sources and illustrations, etc. please email me at the address below. Your input will be an essential contribution to what has always been intended to be a joint project of the rowing community, so please contribute. If you and I end up finally disagreeing on some relevant point or another, I will be thrilled to present both alternatives so the readers can decide for themselves.

All my contact info is at my website. I will also be at the World Championships next month on **Lake Karapiro**, and I hope to be at the **World Rowing Coaches' Conference** in London in January.

Or you can email me anytime at:

pmallory@rowingevolution.com.

Many thanks.



The Sport of Rowing

A Comprehensive History

by

Peter Mallory



Volume IV

Plus Ça Change

draft manuscript October 2010

THE ERA OF POLARIZATION

139. The Next Generation of U.S. Scullers

*Jim Dietz – Gregg Stone – Larry Klecatsky – Bill Belden –
Scott Roop – John Biglow – Paul Enquist*

International success for American men's sculling was hard to come by in the post-Rosenberg era, but there were several absolutely unforgettable individuals and enduring stories among American scullers during the 1970s and '80s.

Jim Dietz

According to a 1972 feature article in *Life Magazine*, **James William Dietz** “was a gangling, uncoordinated 15-year-old when he took up rowing to get out of the shadow of an athletically successful older brother.”⁶³⁰⁹

“Dietz’s crew experience began in 1964, when he competed for the New York Athletic Club in all classes of rowing and sculling events. As a high school student, he won all United States and Canadian Scholastic Championships in single and double sculls from 1964 through 1967, and won the first Junior World Championship in single sculls at Ratzeburg, Germany in 1967.

“During his competitive years, Dietz won forty-five United States and thirty-seven Canadian National Championship titles. He was a member of almost every U.S. National Team from 1967 to 1983, including U.S. Olympic entries in 1972, 1976 and 1980.”⁶³¹⁰

⁶³⁰⁹ Bill Bruns & Co Rentmeester, photographer, *The Single Sculler’s Search for Pain*, *Life Magazine*, April 14, 1972, p. 70

⁶³¹⁰ www.umassathletics.cstv.com



Ted Nash Collection

In 1971, he set what was then a world best-ever time of 7:02.43 at the Internationale Rotsee Regatta.⁶³¹¹

All his life, Jimmy Dietz has done everything to the max. He has rowed hard, trained hard, raced hard and talked hard.

⁶³¹¹ See Chapter 74.

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Dominic Keller

Jim Dietz setting the new course record of 7:02.43 on the Rotsee in 1971

His description of all things rowing has always been *Kernschlag*.

Dietz: “The starter says, ‘Partez!’ and – bam! – you’re off. You explode. All the frustrations, all the time that you’ve put into training, it just comes out!

“The first 400 meters is like an all-out sprint. Then you settle into your stroke until you hit the last 500 meters, when you explode again. The 500-meters-to-go buoy is always a different color, and you just watch it moving away. Then you hit 250 meters, and you forget about everything. It’s all out, everything you have. If I’m

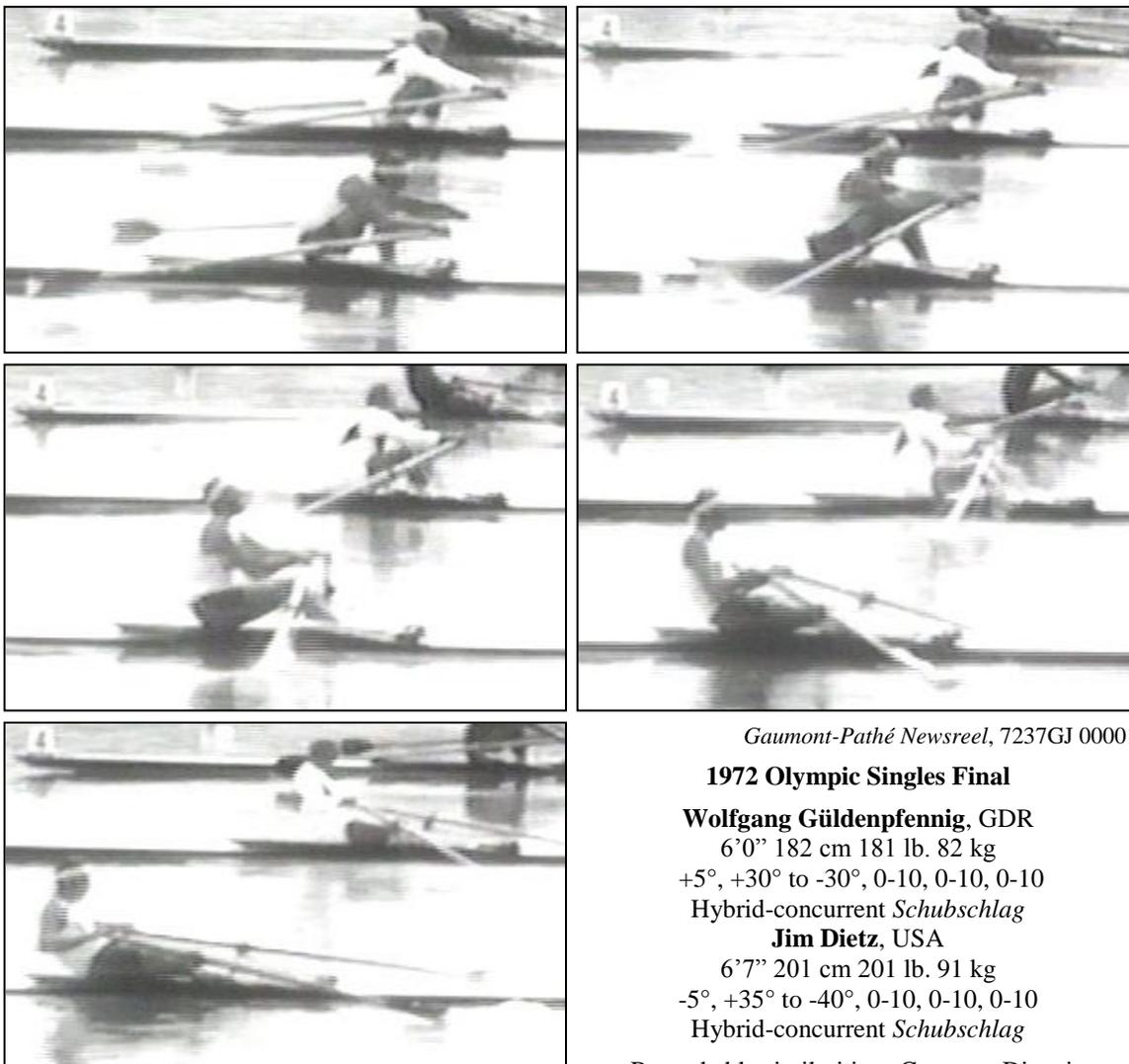
ahead in the last quarter, nobody in the world’s going to beat me.”⁶³¹²

Technique

In his competitive days, the most noticeable aspect of Dietz’s sculling technique was his exaggerated and violent head lift on top of his near-maximal 75° arc of body swing, but closer inspection of Jim Dietz’s technique surprisingly reveals the Classical concurrent *Schubschlag* force application associated with the German Democratic Republic. The aggressiveness

⁶³¹² Bill Bruns & Co Rentmeester, photographer, *The Single Sculler’s Search for Pain*, *Life Magazine*, April 14, 1972, p. 73

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Gaumont-Pathé Newsreel, 7237GJ 00001

1972 Olympic Singles Final

Wolfgang Güldenpfennig, GDR

6'0" 182 cm 181 lb. 82 kg

+5°, +30° to -30°, 0-10, 0-10, 0-10

Hybrid-concurrent *Schubschlag*

Jim Dietz, USA

6'7" 201 cm 201 lb. 91 kg

-5°, +35° to -40°, 0-10, 0-10, 0-10

Hybrid-concurrent *Schubschlag*

Remarkable similarities. Compare Dietz in Photo 3 to Güldenpfennig in Photo 4.

and enthusiasm which marked everything Dietz said and did on and off the water was evenly and skillfully applied all the way to the end of each pullthrough.

In 1972 at Oberschleißheim, Dietz lined up in the Olympic final next to GDR sculler **Wolfgang Güldenpfennig**, 6'0" 182 cm 181 lb. 82 kg, and the similarities were startling.

As is shown in the photos on this page, the very tall Dietz did not compress his long legs fully and instead relied on his long arms

and extra body angle with a distinctive low head position to get his extraordinary length at the entry. In this, he closely resembled 6'5" 196 cm, 227 lb. 103 kg **Stuart Mackenzie** from a decade earlier,⁶³¹³ but whereas Mackenzie's pullthrough had been hybrid-concurrent with emphasis on initial leg drive, Dietz's pullthrough was fully concurrent with a balanced application of legs, back and arms.

⁶³¹³ See Chapter 86.

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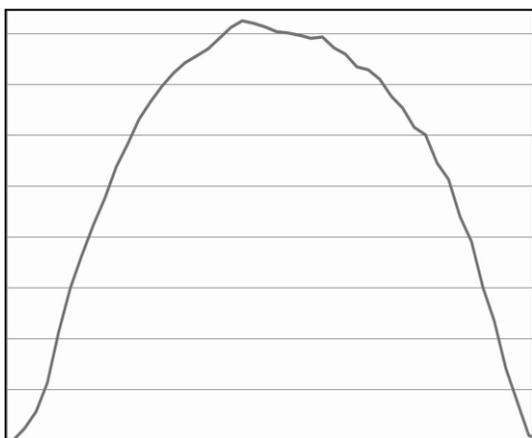
At mid-drive, Dietz closely resembled Gldenpfennig in every way except for the slightly higher raising of the chin. Both were fully committed from fingers to toes. Note Dietz in Photo 3 and Gldenpfennig in Photo 4.

These two scullers moved boats in the same manner, the same basic concurrent *Schubschlag* technique originated by **Ned Hanlan** and used by the great scullers of every era ever since, from **Kelly, Sr.** and **Beresford** to **Ivanov** and **Spero** to **Van Blom** and **McKibbon**.

Dietz: "I do remember 'everyone' telling me that I was way too violent in my sculling, but having read and studied **Fairbairn, Adam** and **Klavora** and having talked at length with **Rosenberg**, I always felt that I had good feel for the water.

"I could feel the acceleration and got excited by it."⁶³¹⁴

Not surprisingly, Jim Dietz's force curve is a near-perfect parabola.



Author

Jim Dietz
Near-perfect parabola

Unlike the 1972 Vesper/Union Olympic coxless-four and their coach, Dietrich

⁶³¹⁴ Dietz, personal correspondence, 2006

Rose,⁶³¹⁵ who carefully analyzed and slavishly and self-consciously copied GDR technique, Jim Dietz seemed to row on pure talent and enthusiasm, but intellectually, intuitively and subconsciously as well, he came to basically the same boat-moving conclusions.

Despite his signature exaggerated head lift and macho talk of explosions, Jim Dietz was a very elegant and effective sculler, and his *Schubschlag* technique set him apart from many of his American sweep and sculling contemporaries who were increasingly embracing Rosenberg-inspired mutant *Kernschlag* Modern Orthodoxy.

In 1967, after he won the Junior World Championship in the single, Jim won the Pan Am Games in the double with **Jim Storm**.⁶³¹⁶ He rowed four years for British *Schubschlag* Thames Waterman's Stroke coach **Ernie Arlett** at Northeastern University in Boston.⁶³¹⁷ Back in the single, he came fifth at the 1972 Olympics, second at the 1974 World Championships, first in the 1975 Pan Ams and third in the 1979 Pan Ams. In 1983, he came second in the Pan Am double with Californian **Curtis Fleming**.⁶³¹⁸

He was still competing in 1984, losing in the U.S. Single Trials and then in the Double and Quad Trials with **Tiff Wood**,⁶³¹⁹ to be discussed shortly.

Gregg Stone

Gregg Stone along with Tiff Wood are remembered as exemplifying a significant segment of American rowing and sculling in the post-Parker/Rosenberg era. Both were

⁶³¹⁵ See Chapter 122.

⁶³¹⁶ See Chapter 87.

⁶³¹⁷ See Chapter 116.

⁶³¹⁸ See Chapter 142.

⁶³¹⁹ See Chapter 140.

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converted New England prep school and Harry Parker-trained Harvard sweep rowers.

A quick look at Stone's technique seems to disclose Modern Orthodox hybrid-concurrent body mechanics and explosive segmented mutant *Kernschlag* force application, but the truth was much more nuanced.

Robert Gregg Stone III is the son of Bob Stone, captain and 4-man of the Eastern and Western Sprint Champion 1947 Harvard crew.⁶³²⁰ Gregg had been bow-seat and Tiff had been 6 on the 1972 Thames Cup Champion Harvard Freshman crew that included four future National Team members,⁶³²¹ but it seemed that all the attention in those days went to **Dick Cashin** and **Al Shealy**, who were destined to become World Champions just two years later as Harvard juniors.⁶³²² Perhaps that encouraged both Stone and Wood to try that much harder for their own share of rowing glory. In the years after graduation, both eventually turned to single sculling after frustrating experiences with National Sweep Selection Camps.

Stone: "Tiff never made much headway at the National Camps despite being a great seat racer, and I wasn't even invited in 1974. Small wonder! I was in the Harvard Jayvee.

"After that summer, Al Rosenberg had pretty much made up his mind on the program to build to Montreal [in 1976], and it didn't include Tiff."⁶³²³

The **Rude and Smooth** Harvard crews of this era⁶³²⁴ were known for incredible aggressiveness when it came to technique, training and racing, and no one had a more competitive attitude than Gregg Stone.

Stone: "I was not an extraordinary athlete. I love athletics and competition, but that is as far as it goes.

"I remember in 1979 one of the National Team coaches commenting after some erg test that I had them stumped – I didn't row well, my ergs were poor, the physiological data wasn't great, and yet I won.

"I guess there still is some mystery to rowing."⁶³²⁵

After he graduated from Harvard in 1975, Stone's determination and strength of will helped him become America's top single sculler from 1977 through 1979.

Stone: "In regards to rowing style, I consider myself practical as opposed to doctrinaire. Obviously I was influenced by the rowing at Harvard. As you have noted, some elements of the Harvard style in our era reflected Al Shealy's rowing style and later that of Rosenberg, who reinforced what Al's father had taught him."⁶³²⁶

"After graduation, I was loosely coached by **Ernie Arlett**, the first U.S. Men's Sculling Coach. Ernie was less interested in angles and application (At Northeastern he had coached Jim Dietz and Cal Coffey,⁶³²⁷ two contrasting styles.) and more in watermanship. This meant a clean finish, blades square until well out, moderately fast away, control of the slide and a catch with fingers, not with arms or shoulders (or back).

Larry Klecatsky

Stone: "In the fall of '76, I was beginning law school and needed rowing for an outlet. **Sy Cromwell**⁶³²⁸ encouraged me to emulate **Larry Klecatsky**, the champion lightweight single sculler. He noted that

⁶³²⁰ See Chapter 63.

⁶³²¹ See Chapter 104.

⁶³²² See Chapter 111.

⁶³²³ Stone, personal correspondence, 2008

⁶³²⁴ See Chapter 114.

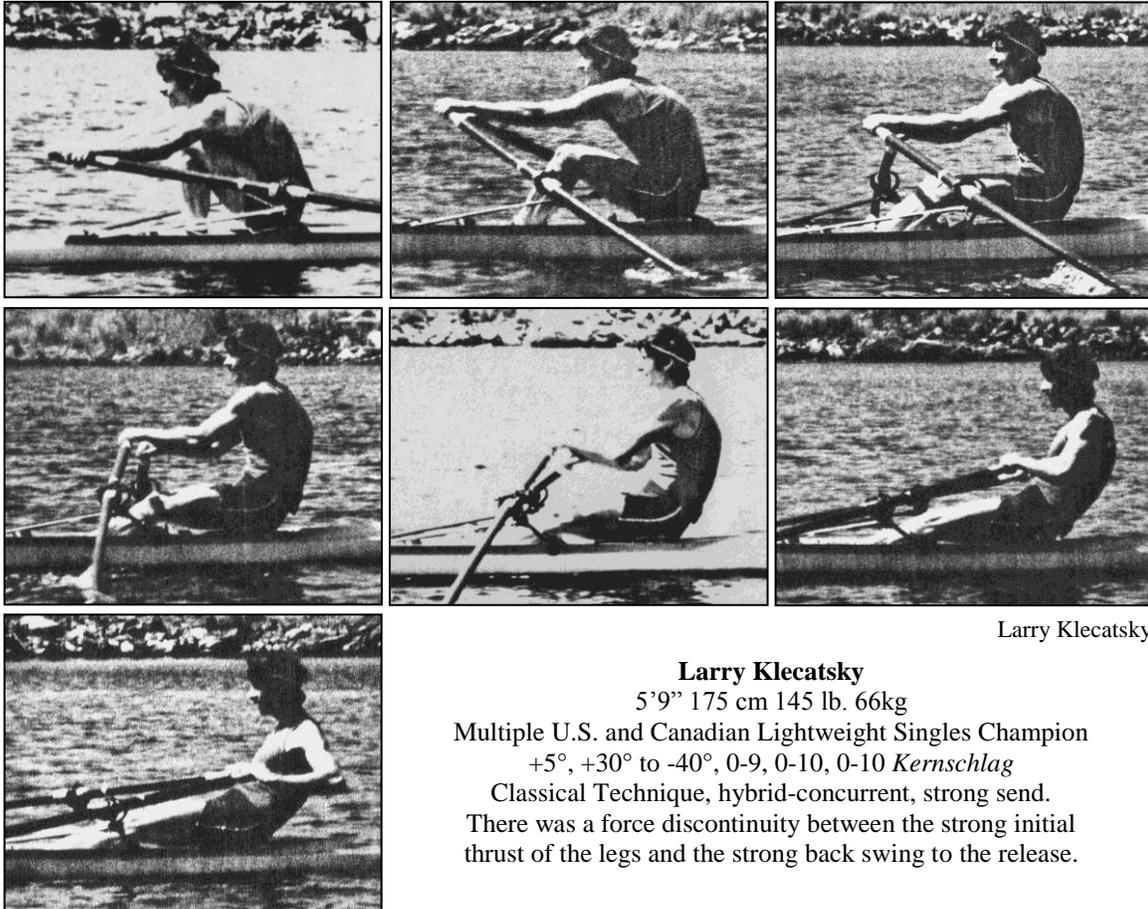
⁶³²⁵ Stone, personal correspondence, 2008

⁶³²⁶ See Chapter 104.

⁶³²⁷ See Chapter 116.

⁶³²⁸ See Chapter 87.

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Larry Klecatsky

Larry Klecatsky

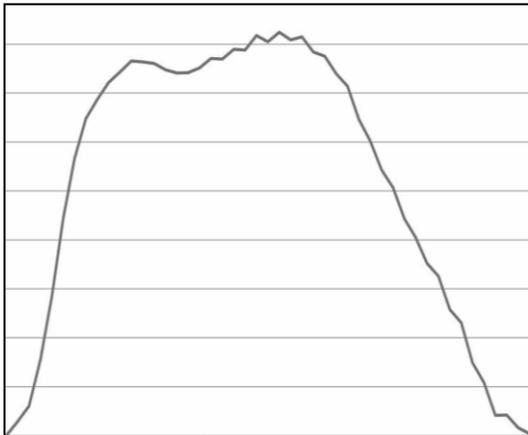
5'9" 175 cm 145 lb. 66kg

Multiple U.S. and Canadian Lightweight Singles Champion

+5°, +30° to -40°, 0-9, 0-10, 0-10 *Kernschlag*

Classical Technique, hybrid-concurrent, strong send.

There was a force discontinuity between the strong initial thrust of the legs and the strong back swing to the release.



Author

Larry Klecatsky
Near-parabola with a notch

Larry, like me, had no visible muscle and went pretty fast with an ultra long stroke.

With my three-inch and twenty-pound advantage over Larry, he thought I could beat him and therefore beat most of the U.S. scullers of the time.⁶³²⁹

Dr. Larry Klecatsky, an emergency room physician, member of the New York Athletic Club and many-times National Lightweight Singles Champion, was a teammate and frequent double partner of Jim Dietz. The two rowed very much the same, with a 70+° back arc.

Larry began his rowing at South St. Paul High School in Minnesota in a double with his brother, Tom. He began winning the U.S. and Canadian lightweight singles titles in 1968 at the age of 27 after completing

⁶³²⁹ Stone, personal correspondence, 2008

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Larry Klecatsky

1969 U.S. National Lightweight Singles Final

Schuylkill River, Philadelphia

Larry Klecatsky (Lane 6) on the way to his second consecutive national title.

On the dogleg course, he is being pressed by 20-year-old newcomer **Bill Belden** in Lane 3.

medical school and internship. Despite his late start, he would go on to set the record for the most career victories in the history of the U.S. Nationals and Canadian Henley.

Klecatsky: “An article counted sixty-four U.S. Gold Medals. I have sixty-one in a shoe box. They said I also won sixty-six Golds in St. Catharines. I found sixty-four in the shoe box.”⁶³³⁰

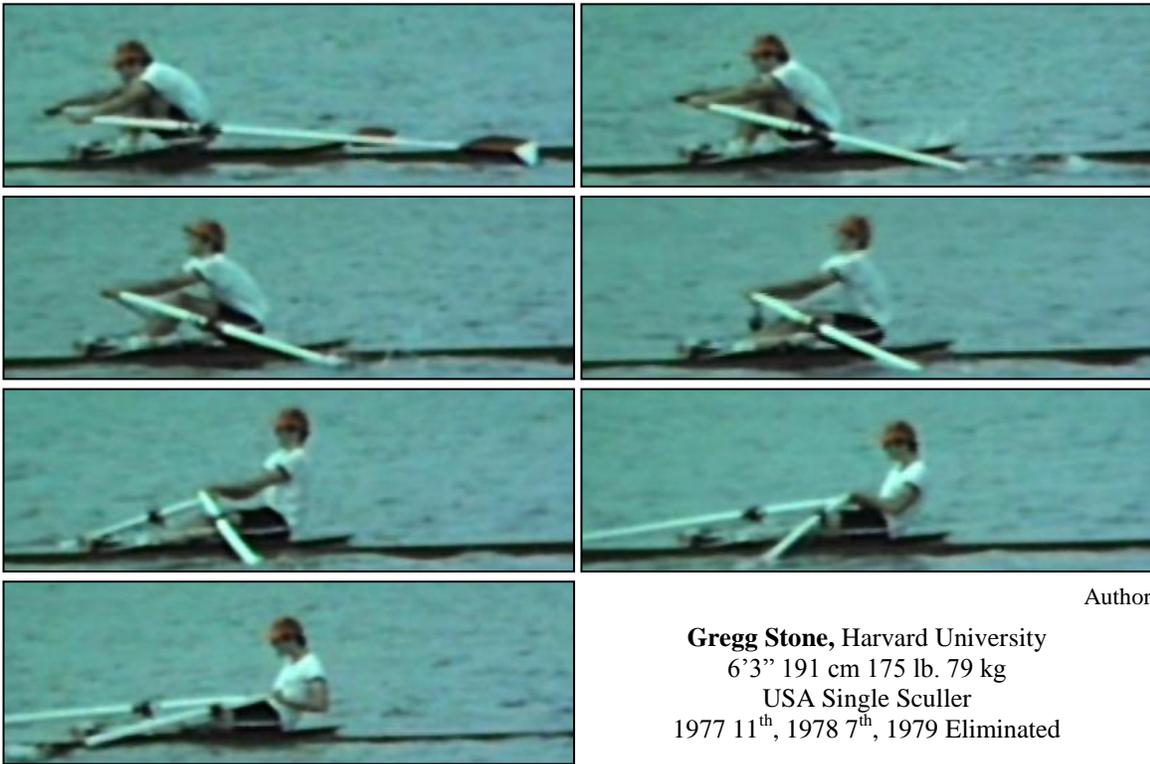
He would also represent the U.S. at the 1976 Olympics in the heavyweight double

with his closest lightweight competitor, **Bill Belden**.

Belden: “Larry has won more Nationals than anyone ever! He is amazing. I don’t think that with today’s structured programs, you will ever again see the numbers of National Championships by individuals from the ‘60s, ‘70s and ‘80s. Club rowing was such a blast. Grab your oars, get in the boat and pull hard. How much better could it get?”

⁶³³⁰ Klecatsky, personal correspondence, 2010

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Author

Gregg Stone, Harvard University
 6'3" 191 cm 175 lb. 79 kg
 USA Single Sculler
 1977 11th, 1978 7th, 1979 Eliminated

Force application was *Schubchlag*, mutating to borderline *Kernschlag* under intense pressure.

-10°, +40° to -20°, 0-6, 0-9, 0-10 Classical Technique, similar to Jim Dietz

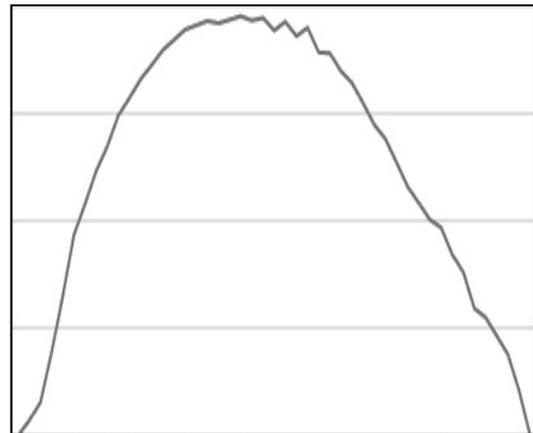
Catch dominated by legs, then back aggressively heaving over to a ferryman's finish.

Technique seems to have been an amalgam of Classical Technique and Harvard aggressiveness.



Philip Mallory

Greg Stone, steady state
Schubschlag, close to a parabola.



Philip Mallory

Greg Stone, full pressure
 Mild *Kernschlag*, still close to a parabola.

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“And Larry was the best of all!”⁶³³¹

Klecatsky: “International rowing gave an aging late bloomer a chance to extend his career. I made fourteen U.S. teams, won twelve international medals, including a PanAm Silver and a World Silver and Bronze.”⁶³³²

Your author had the privilege of rowing against Larry Klecatsky several times, though I never saw him after the first few strokes of any of our 2,000 meter races. I am pleased to have reconnected with him during the writing of this book.

Larry and his wife now live in South Carolina.

Stone: “I tried to follow Sy Cromwell’s advice about Klecatsky’s technique, and Larry was pretty helpful, too, allowing me to go down to NYAC that Thanksgiving and train with him.”⁶³³³

“I really didn’t find my speed until the summer of 1977. Tiff and I were training in a double, in theory for the Worlds, but we went to Henley and were smoked in the final by **Baillieu and Hart**.”⁶³³⁴

“Back in the U.S., we each returned to singles, just for the experience. As soon as I got in my single, about a week before the Trials, I knew something was different and better. A few 500s confirmed that I had the speed to beat Jim Dietz. I didn’t know why it happened (I still don’t.), and I was very afraid the magic would leave before the Trials . . . but it didn’t. I throttled way back in the heats and semis before opening up in the finals and walking by Jim in the third

500. Obviously, the work in the double had tightened my style.

“If we had been in a national system, maybe I could have done all my training in a double and not slowed by the time of the Worlds each year, like I seemed to.

“But we were not, and in a national system, some higher performer on the erg would have been selected ahead of me anyway.”⁶³³⁵

Stone’s Technique



Igor Belakovsky

Stone père et fille

Looking at Gregg Stone row, the impression was similar to that of Dietz and Klecatsky, explosive catches that represented a rejection of the tradition of American scullers from Ned Ten Eyck to Don Spero in favor of what the Rosenberg Style had mutated into. But like with Jim Dietz, appearances were deceiving.

Stone’s force curve was and still is a near parabola to the release, *Schubschlag* at steady state, fading barely into borderline *Kernschlag* during power-10s.

⁶³³¹ Belden, personal correspondence, 2010

⁶³³² Klecatsky, personal correspondence, 2010

⁶³³³ Stone, personal correspondence, 2008

⁶³³⁴ See Chapter 130.

⁶³³⁵ Stone, personal correspondence, 2008

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Stone: “The success of the CRASH-B eights,⁶³³⁶ which I have organized, and general comments throughout those years were that I had a nice rhythm and was easy to follow as a stroke.”⁶³³⁷

Stone’s record in the single at the World Championships was eleventh in 1977 and ninth in 1978. He failed to advance in 1979. With Tiff Wood, Bruce Beall and Al Shealy, Gregg won a Bronze Medal in the quad at the 1979 Pan Am Games.



www.boston.com

Robbie, Gevvie, Gregg and Lisa Stone

Here the plot thickens as we look forward to the 1984 Olympics on Lake Casitas in Southern California:

Stone: “In 1977 or ‘78, I received a letter from **Joe Bouscaren**⁶³³⁸ on the Yale crew. I had never met Joe. Essentially, the letter noted that [Yale Coach] **Tony Johnson**⁶³³⁹ had told Joe and his teammate, **John Biglow**, that if *I* could win in sculling, so could they. I encouraged them both, as well as a number of others, to convert.

“I like to think that by example, direct encouragement, and by organizing the CRASH-B eights, I helped lead a number of sweep oarsmen, including Tiff, Biggie and Suds,⁶³⁴⁰ to discover the joys of moving boats alone.”⁶³⁴¹

Today Gregg is married to the former World-Medalist double sculler **Lisa Hansen** of Long Beach Rowing Association.⁶³⁴²

⁶³³⁶ Boston-based all-star crews.

⁶³³⁷ Stone, personal correspondence, 2008

⁶³³⁸ See Chapter 140.

⁶³³⁹ See Chapter 110.

⁶³⁴⁰ **Andy Sudduth**, Harvard '86, would win Silver in the single at the 1985 World Championships. See Chapter 142.

⁶³⁴¹ Stone, personal correspondence, 2008

⁶³⁴² See Chapter 127.

He still competes worldwide in masters’ singles competitions. She coaches crew at the Winsor School in Boston. They have a son, **Robbie**, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather by rowing for Harvard and a daughter, **Gevvie**, NCAA Champion for Princeton, stroke of the 2006 World Champion U-23 eight, and climbing the ranks of American single scullers while attending medical school.

Bill Belden

Tiff Wood: “In 1980, there was a realization that nobody was going to do particularly well in the single, so everybody starting in the fall of '79 was focused on the team boats, and we had Camp Quad get-togethers in October and November. Everyone was there.”⁶³⁴³

With many U.S. heavyweight scullers pointing toward other events, the way was left open at the 1980 Olympic Singles Trials for Larry Klecatsky’s great rival, 1974 and 1979 World *Lightweight* Singles Champion **Bill Belden**, who beginning in high school in the late 1960s had rowed for several clubs

⁶³⁴³ Wood, personal conversation, 2009

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and for LaSalle College along Boathouse Row in Philadelphia.

As his opponents discovered when he won the 1980 Heavyweight Olympic Singles Trials, Belden was a formidable competitor. He and Klecatsky had had epic battles in the lightweight single at the U.S. Nationals each year during the '70s.

Belden and Klecatsky

Klecatsky: "I raced Bill for the first time in 1968 during one of the Schuylkill Navy match race regattas. It was the best and worst kind of race for scullers, a 'rat race,' stroke for stroke, no letting up. Bill became my nemesis. I won that first race in my hardest row of the year.

"The Navy had stationed me in New York, and I was rowing for NYAC. Every day I had thoughts of Bill down on the Schuylkill River, what he was doing, what I needed to do. Workouts with others or races with others were 'days off' for me. I worked hardest with myself, i.e. against Belden in abstraction.

"Our personal interactions were few. I knew by sight his car, his boat, his wife, his family. I knew he could see the same of me as we arrived at regatta sites. We were amateurs. We had careers and families but were welded together in a mission to measure ourselves, ninety miles apart. Success or failure required each other.

"Almost without exception, Belden or Klecatsky won the lightweight single at the Nationals. We also met in the quarter-mile dash, in doubles and in quads. The only place I could 'own him' was in Canada or in fall head races. He even came to New York and led me down 'my course,' and I would return the favor in Philly."⁶³⁴⁴

Belden: "I thought of Larry obsessively, trying to find the right strategy or workouts to get over the top. His picture was on my

fridge every winter to keep me from getting too big.

"I first beat Larry in 1970, and then chased him for four more years before I finally caught him again at the 1974 Trials."⁶³⁴⁵

Klecatsky: "Bill and I always had great battles at the Nationals. When he won the Trials in 1974 by a little bit and then went on to win the Worlds by *a lot*, I started thinking about how I had been pretty close to him . . . and . . ."⁶³⁴⁶

Belden: "In 1976, Larry and I came in eighth in the heavy double at the Montréal Olympics."⁶³⁴⁷

Klecatsky: "That was a reflective year for me. I beat Dietz twice before the Olympic Singles Trials in May, but Jim's power and skill were too much in the final, which he won. My consolation was twofold: Belden had not made the Olympic Trials final while I had, and we finally talked and created an unbeatable double by American standards, perhaps better than either of us with Dietz.

"We won the 1976 U.S. Olympic Doubles Trials.

"Belden and Klecatsky met every other day in Princeton, rowing in the PM and following AM, and then returning to work respectively in Philly and New York. We used our own equipment (a U.S.-built Pocock), no coaching, some money for pizza and a dorm room (*hot!*) at Princeton. Both of us returned immediately to our respective jobs and families after the Olympic finals in Montréal.

"I won the Trials for the Lightweight Singles World Championship that year after the Olympics. Bill did not enter. In Austria I got fourth in a rented heavyweight boat.

⁶³⁴⁴ Klecatsky, personal conversation, 2010

⁶³⁴⁵ Belden, personal correspondence, 2010

⁶³⁴⁶ Klecatsky, personal conversation, 2010

⁶³⁴⁷ Belden, personal correspondence, 2010

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“Two days after I returned were the heats for five events at the Nationals in Philly. Belden won the lightweight singles final. I settled for two Golds in the doubles and one in the quad.

“I beat Dietz in the November Trials to represent the U.S. in an invitational regatta in Brazil, and I won the head races in the single and with Dietz in the double.

“Bill and I teamed together to win Nationals in the Double and Quad in 1977 when he started rowing for the NYAC.”⁶³⁴⁸

Belden: “In 1977, Jim Dietz and I came in fifth in the heavy double at the Worlds.

“In 1979, I won my second World Championship in the lightweight single and came in seventh in the double with Jim.

“In 1980, I won the Nationals and came in second at the Worlds in the lightweight single. In the heavyweight single I won the Olympic Trials and lost to Phil Monkton of Canada in the heats for the Diamond Sculls after having a great start called back.

“In 1984, I was back in Montréal at the Lightweight Worlds in a double with Larry. We got fourth.”⁶³⁴⁹

Klecatsky: “Back in 1968, I had been the old guy and Bill was young. By 1984 we were both ‘seasoned.’ We won our heat, beating the World Champion Italian crew ‘big’ in heavy wind. A strong tail wind in final had us fourth.”⁶³⁵⁰

Belden: “I had a great fall season after the Worlds in ‘84, won the Head of the



Larry Klekatsky

1981 U.S. Champion Lightweight Double Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Schuylkill, beating Larry in a head race (the only time in my career), but then I hurt my back in early 1985, and it was time to start spending time with my family.

“Altogether I had thirty-two National Championships with Undine, Fairmount and NYAC, thirteen National Teams, seven FISA medals. I had lots and lots of help along the way, especially from my wife Cathy.”⁶³⁵¹

Klecatsky: “Belden and Klekatsky had no telephone visits, letters, cards, parties over the years, yet I felt as close to Bill as any friend or professional colleague, and I still do. Cathy, his wife, and their kids were a family admired at arm’s length.

“There was one telephone call I do recall. Bill was having back issues with radiculitis (pain and tingling down the leg). He possibly knew I had similar symptoms,

⁶³⁴⁸ Klekatsky, personal correspondence, 2010

⁶³⁴⁹ Belden, personal correspondence, 2010

⁶³⁵⁰ Klekatsky, personal correspondence, 2010

⁶³⁵¹ Belden, personal correspondence, 2010

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NBC Sports



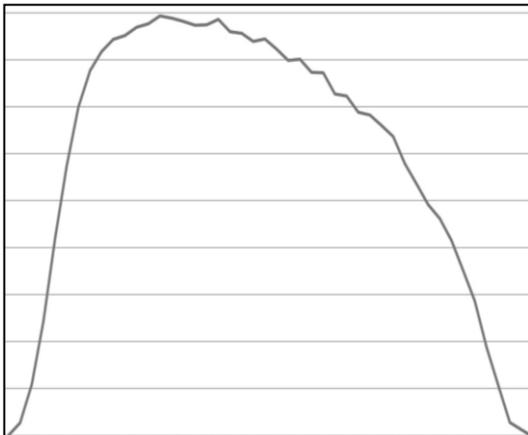
Bill Belden

5'10" 178 cm 157 lb. 71 kg

1974, 1979 World Lightweight Singles Champion

+5°, +30° to -30°, 0-9, 0-10, 0-10 *Kernschlag*

Modern Orthodox Technique, overlapping-sequential, strong send.



Author

Bill Belden

Mild *Kernschlag*, close to a parabola

and he also knew I was a physician. I often served as team physician on early low budget U.S. Teams.

"I was always conflicted when asked for medical advice, up against the masochistic value of 'no pain, no gain' or 'pain is weakness leaving the body.' I know herniated discs are major (I have four), but I found it impossible to prescribe surgery

and/or limited rowing. Bill found a 'real doctor' after our conversation."⁶³⁵²

Belden: "I listened to Larry's advice on my back and got a few more good years out of it as a result.

"There is still not a day that goes by that I don't think of Larry, and that is for forty-two years and counting . . ."

Klecatsky: "A word about lightweights. Insecurity, lack of respect, lack of recognition, dissatisfaction, missing meals, standing in line to weigh in are all motivators. We are 'lightweights', too small, too short, too weak, no coaching, left-over equipment, no funding, no international forum, no second or third place medals, can't stand on a podium even if you win the World Championship,⁶³⁵³ the quintessential underdogs.

"All this said, I think together we raised the bar in U.S. sculling for both lightweights and heavyweights. We could win both lightweight and heavyweight National Championships and World heavyweight Team spots.

⁶³⁵² Klecatsky, personal correspondence, 2010

⁶³⁵³ This has been changed in the years since.

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Author

1975 Long Beach / Mission Bay / ZLAC Lightweight Coxed Four

San Diego Crew Classic Champion

Coxswain **Jeanne Bedford**, Stroke **Rod Johnson** (1975 World Silver, Lightweight Eight), 3 **Author**,
2 **Scott Roop** (1976 World Bronze, Lightweight Eight, 1981 World Gold, Lightweight Single),
Bow **John Fletcher** (3 U.S. Teams, 1979 World Silver, Lightweight Eight)

“Bill, on loan from his family, certainly made me more than I ever expected to be.”⁶³⁵⁴

Technique

Belden rowed a very aggressive but smooth *Kernschlag* Philadelphia version of Modern Orthodox Technique. Leg drive was strong enough to momentarily slow the back swing to a crawl, yielding overlapping-sequential body mechanics, the Philadelphia dippy-doodle,⁶³⁵⁵ but Belden made it work. The arms broke early, and he squeezed hard for a strong send at the finish. He tended to

row about 34 strokes per minute down the course. He won the ‘80 Olympic Trials in the first 500 meters.

In all of rowing history, only nine single scullers from the United States have ever won a Gold Medal in a year-end FISA championship,⁶³⁵⁶ but Bill Belden is one of only two who have ever done it twice.

In his career, he made two Olympic Teams as a heavyweight. He won two World Golds, one Silver and two Bronzes in the Lightweight Single and two more Silvers

⁶³⁵⁴ Klecatsky, personal correspondence, 2010

⁶³⁵⁵ See Chapter 107.

⁶³⁵⁶ **Frank Greer** in 1904, **John B. Kelly, Sr.** in 1920, **John B. Kelly, Jr.** in 1949, **Don Spero** in 1966, **Bill Belden** in 1974 and 1979, **Scott Roop** in 1981, **Kris Karlson** in 1988 and 1989, **Jamie Koven** and **Sarah Garner** in 1997.

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ARD/ZDF

Scott Roop
5'9" 175 cm 154 lb. 70 kg
1981 World Lightweight Singles
Champion, Oberschleißheim

+5°, +35° to -40°, 0-9, 0-10, 0-10 *Schubschlag*
Pure Classical Technique, concurrent, strong send.

at the end of his career in the Lightweight Double with **Paul Fuchs** of Detroit Boat Club.

Bill Belden is a life-long friend of mine. I came in second to him by a heartbreaking two feet, half a meter in the 1971 U.S. Lightweight Singles Dash on Hunter Island Lagoon, my only claim to fame, the closest I ever came to the peak of the mountain.

There is no fiercer competitor or finer gentleman in the sport than Bill Belden . . . except maybe our mutual friend Larry Klecatsky.

Bill and his wife now live in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he is a banker.

Scott Roop

Klecatsky and Belden were only two of several world-class American lightweight single scullers in the 1970s and '80s. The other who won a World Championship was **Scott Roop**, a product of West Side Rowing Club in Buffalo, New York.

Scott was a rower and sculler with pure concurrent *Schubschlag* Classical Technique. His back described a high 75° arc, using steady leg drive and long layback to send the boat between strokes.

Before returning to Buffalo State University, Scott spent a year after high school rowing in Long Beach, California, and he rowed right behind me in a composite lightweight four that won the San Diego Crew Classic in 1975. I had already

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retired from international competition and was coaching the boat from the 3-seat. The three in the boat with me all ended up later medaling in World competition.

In 1976, Scott rowed 7 in the U.S. World Bronze Medal Lightweight Eight behind a Penn sophomore named **Sean Colgan**, who will figure in the following three chapters of this book.

Scott became a member of seven straight U.S. Lightweight Teams, winning World Silver sitting behind **Larry Klecatsky** in the double in 1980.

In 1981, Roop won his World Championship in the Lightweight Single in Oberschleißheim, stalking **Raimund Haberl** of Austria down the course before driving past him and into the lead with 500 meters to go.

In 1982, his last year representing the U.S., Roop finished second to Haberl. His career medal count stood at one World Gold, two Silvers and one Bronze. He had rowed internationally in singles, doubles, fours and eights.

During his coaching career, Scott coached at Princeton, Temple and Brown Universities, for whom he won the IRA in 1995. He coached Brown graduate **Jamie Koven**⁶³⁵⁷ to the Heavyweight World Singles title in 1997.

Koven: “Scott has such a diverse personality. He’s an artist. He totally brings that out on the water. His speeches to us as we’re turning around are like something I’ve never experienced. He always has metaphors and analogies – all the time. He’s really creative. He has such a great time when he’s out on the water. He really makes it fun when you’re working yourself to death.

⁶³⁵⁷ See Chapter 149.

“He says rowing is our form of art. It’s our way of expressing ourselves.”⁶³⁵⁸

Scott is now expressing himself as an full-time artist in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

John Biglow

Whereas Gregg Stone achieved unremarkable international results in the single, his surprise successor as America’s premier heavyweight sculler, **John Biglow** from Yale University, earned a World Bronze Medal in his debut as the American single sculler in 1981.

Stone: “Biggie was the number four erg in the country, and probably better than that on a weight-corrected basis! I had been unranked. Big difference!”⁶³⁵⁹

U.S. Teammate in 1983 and 1984, **Brad Lewis:**⁶³⁶⁰ “Biggie? Great guy! I liked him a lot. I still do. I miss him. I wish I saw him more. He was a total . . .

“On the water, he was really something. He had a pain threshold that was off the charts. He could really push himself . . . *hard!* That was really impressive. It’s always scary when you come up against a guy who you realize is tougher than you are.”⁶³⁶¹

John’s Yale and U.S. teammate, **Joe Bouscaren:** “He’s an aerobic machine.”⁶³⁶²

Biglow’s Coaches

Biglow had been introduced to the sport at Lakeside School in Seattle, Washington. He was well schooled in the Thames Waterman’s Stroke by **Frank**

⁶³⁵⁸ Qtd by Brad Alan Lewis, *Who Is Roop?* *Independent Rowing News*, October 8-21, 1995, pp. 8, 15

⁶³⁵⁹ Stone, personal correspondence, 2008

⁶³⁶⁰ See Chapter 140.

⁶³⁶¹ Lewis, personal conversation, 2009

⁶³⁶² Qtd. by Halberstam, p. 43

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Cunningham,⁶³⁶³ a friend and disciple of George Pocock.

Cunningham: “What I tried to teach my boys at Lakeside was how to protect their backs, to finish the stroke with the arms, back and legs together and how to recover their balance as they changed direction [ferryman’s finish]. Most importantly, in the light of the modern ideas of bladework, I demanded that they listen to their blades at catch and release.”⁶³⁶⁴

But Biglow’s international sculling career came on the heels of his four years rowing in some of Yale University’s finest recent eights.

John’s Freshman Coach, **Buzz Congram**, taught him Classical concurrent *Schubschlag*. The sole variation in fundamental technique from that of Frank Cunningham would have been the elimination of the ferryman’s finish.

Cunningham: “Unfortunately for John, he was always a ready listener, and he had great respect for his coaches over the years. He listened too much and so went in many different directions!

“It is too bad that there was such a large disparity in the various interpretations of the stroke [East and West] during his racing career.”⁶³⁶⁵

In fact, there was little fundamental disagreement between John’s Seattle sculling coaches and his Yale sweep coaches. The Yale Varsity Coach at that time was **Tony Johnson**, a former Syracuse rower with a firm grounding in the Conibear Stroke,⁶³⁶⁶ and, like Cunningham, he considered George Pocock a mentor and friend.

Biglow: “Tony talked about ‘sculling the boat.’”⁶³⁶⁷

When it came to force application, Johnson was definitely a sensitive coach, a *Schubschlag* coach and a small-boat specialist.⁶³⁶⁸

Biglow: “During my junior and senior years at Yale, Tony was nice enough to let me row in the fall in the single and race in the Head of the Charles. In my junior year I got thirteenth, and in my senior year I got eighteenth.

“In that race my senior year, and I remember where it was, I was rowing past Newell Boathouse, and there was a rower coming up on me. I sort of knew who he was. I believe it was **John Brock**, Harvard ‘77, older than I was, and he was coming up on me.

“Then for about ten strokes my boat felt good. It felt light, and I moved out on him . . . but then I lost it, and he came back up and passed me.

“I wondered if that was equivalent to swing in an eight . . .

“Swing can be ephemeral. As much as I rowed through college and afterward, I wouldn’t say that I felt swing in an eight more than, I don’t know, a dozen times. It was a great feeling. I loved it, but it was very elusive.

“In that singles race in my senior year, I think I had a hint of what was to come. I never mentioned it to anyone. I just wondered, ‘Maybe there is something here worth pursuing.’”⁶³⁶⁹

The Eastern coach to whom Cunningham was actually referring was not so much Yale’s Tony Johnson but rather Harvard’s **Harry Parker**, the U.S. Men’s Sweep Coach leading up to the 1980

⁶³⁶³ See Chapter 63.

⁶³⁶⁴ Cunningham, personal correspondence, 2008

⁶³⁶⁵ Cunningham, personal correspondence, 2008

⁶³⁶⁶ See Chapter 46.

⁶³⁶⁷ Biglow, personal conversation, 2008

⁶³⁶⁸ See Chapter 110.

⁶³⁶⁹ Biglow, personal conversation, 2008

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Olympics and the U.S. Men's Sculling Coach leading up to the 1984 Olympics.

Cunningham: "With John, he'd be rowing pretty well, and then he'd go back and row for Harry and lose it all."⁶³⁷⁰

In the coming years, Harry would end up having a profound impact on John's rowing.

Harry Parker and the Olympics

There are more pages in this book devoted to Harry Parker, as athlete and coach, than to any other individual. As I write this, it is safe to say that Harry has had the longest, the most successful and the most influential career of any American coach in history.

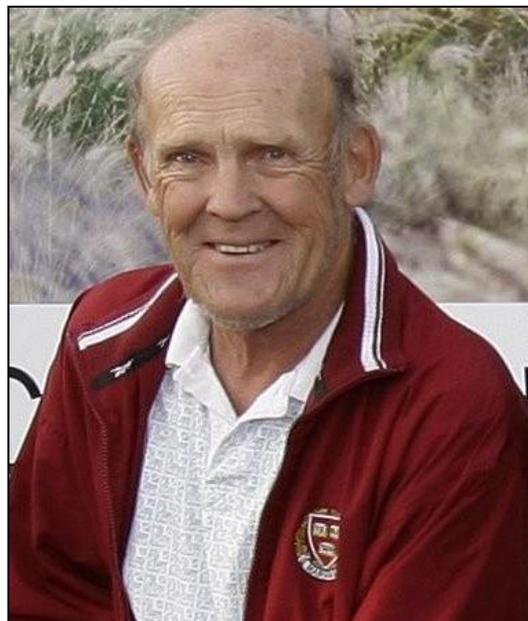
It seems that Harry has always been fixated on the Olympics. His mentor had been **Joe Burk**, who had missed his own chance at Olympic glory in **1940** thanks to World War II.⁶³⁷¹

Harry rowed on a world-best Penn eight for Joe in 1955,⁶³⁷² but by the time that the Olympic year of **1956** rolled around, several crews had surpassed them.

With Joe coaching him, Harry represented the U.S. in the single at the **1960** Olympics, but he finished just out of the medals after a yeoman effort.⁶³⁷³

In **1964**, Harry coached an undefeated Harvard crew only to be the first top U.S. collegiate crew in forty-four years to lose the Olympic Trials. They lost to a club eight, Vesper Boat Club, which went on to win the Gold Medal in Tokyo.⁶³⁷⁴

In **1968**, Harvard won the Trials but was felled by illness and other factors in Mexico City.⁶³⁷⁵



Courtesy Photo

Harry

In **1972**, Harry was the U.S. Sweep Camp coach. He selected a composite crew that won a superb Silver Medal.⁶³⁷⁶

In the ensuing years, in order to allow Harry to properly focus on his first responsibility, his Harvard crews, the U.S. federation chose to rotate the head men's coaching job among caretaker coaches with the unstated but implicit understanding that Harry would resume the top spot for the **1976** Olympics.

Then one of those caretaker coaches, **Allen Rosenberg**, won the World Eights Championship for the U.S. in 1974,⁶³⁷⁷ and all bets were off. Rosenberg was offered a year-round U.S. head coaching position to run through Montréal.

Harry was crushed, but he accepted a lesser job, the job as *women's* head sweep coach. Rather than brooding, he promptly elevated American women's rowing from

⁶³⁷⁰ Cunningham, personal conversation, 2008

⁶³⁷¹ See Chapter 58.

⁶³⁷² See Chapters 65 and 67.

⁶³⁷³ See Chapter 66.

⁶³⁷⁴ See Chapter 107.

⁶³⁷⁵ See Chapter 102.

⁶³⁷⁶ See Chapter 103.

⁶³⁷⁷ See Chapter 111.

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Frinzi/*The Oarsman*

1979 Yale Heavyweight Varsity

Bow **Ted Jaroszewicz** 6'2" 188 cm 185 lb. 84 kg, 2 **Joe Bouscaren** 6'3" 191 cm 180 lb. 82 kg,
3 **Karl Zinsmeister** 6'4" 193 cm 193 lb. 88 kg, 4 **Steve Kiesling** 6'4" 193 cm 200 lb. 91 kg,
5 **Eric Stevens** 6'6" 198 cm 215 lb. 98 kg, 6 **Andy Messer** 6'4" 193 cm 215 lb. 98 kg,
7 **Matt Labine** 6'7" 201 cm 213 lb. 97 kg, Stroke **John Biglow** 6'2" 188 cm 190 lb. 86 kg,
Coxswain **Andy Fisher**

oblivion to Olympian heights, winning World Silver in 1975 and Olympic Bronze in 1976.⁶³⁷⁸

To many, this will go down as Harry's greatest and most lasting contribution to rowing history.

Order was soon restored, however, as the 1980 Olympics approached with the women placed in good hands⁶³⁷⁹ and Harry again the U.S. men's head coach.

Through all of this, in between Olympics from 1963 onwards, Harry had been coaching the Harvard crew. He became a phenomenon, a celebrity, an institution, a religion. Virtually every year for decades he produced legends, perennial champion crews known for their innovative techniques and training, admired and lauded by most, feared by all, copied by many.

Harry Parker became simply Harry, an oracle to be interpreted, a god to be worshipped, revered and feared.

As 1980 approached, Yale had not beaten Harvard in their annual four-miler since Harry had taken over seventeen years before. Even the great Yale eights of 1978

and 1979 with John Biglow aboard were unable to beat Harvard when it counted, which for both crews was the four-miler in New London.

To the American rowing community, but to John Biglow especially, Harry Parker loomed very large indeed.

1979

Biglow: "I went through the 1979 National Team Camp with Harry in Dartmouth before my senior year at Yale. They tested everybody on a Gamut ergometer, and after taking into account our body weights, **Otto Stekl**⁶³⁸⁰ and **Tom Woodman**⁶³⁸¹ were the top, but I scored third or fourth with **Charlie Altekruse**.⁶³⁸² I was surprised because I was new on the National Team scene and I beat a number of other successful rowers.

"After the erg test, Harry put a heart rate monitor on me in the boat. I think he wondered if I was pulling as hard on the water as I had on the erg because my puddle didn't look that big to him. (I was kind of

⁶³⁷⁸ See Chapter 126.

⁶³⁷⁹ See Chapter 148.

⁶³⁸⁰ from Penn. See Chapter 129.

⁶³⁸¹ from Oregon State University.

⁶³⁸² from Harvard. See Chapter 140.

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proud of that because it meant I rowed cleanly.)

“Anyway, I made the eight, and then I got very sick. I was never officially diagnosed with mono, but I think that fits.

“I rowed the spare pair and never raced.”⁶³⁸³

At some point in 1979, Biglow herniated a disk in his back which would nag at him for the rest of his rowing career.

Biglow: “It occurred while I was on a Concept2 erg during a 30 minute piece with about five minutes to go. An experienced orthopedic surgeon in Boston told me that people sometimes herniate a disc when sitting up in bed or passing the butter. It can be due to chronic misuse, poor posture, or genetic factors like a long torso, and it doesn’t become apparent until the last layer of fibrous tissue around the disc ruptures and lets the gel-like cushion out to press on a nerve root.”⁶³⁸⁴

1980

Biglow: “In 1980, which was my graduating year, we had a good crew at Yale. There were four of us who were trying out for the Olympic Team that year, me, **Eric Stevens**, **Matt Labine** and **Steve Kiesling**, the guy who later wrote *The Shell Game*.⁶³⁸⁵ Harry Parker was again the National Coach. At an early-season training camp down in Florida, the four of us decided that if any one of us got cut from this camp, then we would all leave and row in a four in the Trials.

“It turned out that Eric and Matt *did* get cut, while Steve and I did not.⁶³⁸⁶ I withdrew to row the four in the Trials, and when Kiesling decided to stay with the camp, we replaced him with another Yale rower named **David Potter**. I believe that **Seth Bauer** was our coxswain.

“An additional motivation for quitting the U.S. Team in 1980 was that I hadn’t enjoyed it much in 1979. I thought it was ugly, kind of cutthroat. It was not pleasant, and I didn’t want to be part of it again.

“Our Yale four went to the Trials, and we finished way behind the camp boat, but we *did* beat the Harvard boat.⁶³⁸⁷ Then we went back to Gales Ferry to get ready for the Yale-Harvard Race.

“Three days before the race, I got a call from Harry Parker. He said, ‘Well, Otto Stekl’s injured, and we need another rower to stroke, and so I’m calling to see if you could come with us on our European trip.’

“Tony was really upset about this. He said that Harry could have waited until after the Yale-Harvard Race to ask me, and that he was hoping to distract me.

“Anyway, I said yes. So I made the Olympic Team even though I had quit the team first.

“When we went over to Europe and raced in Lucerne, Kiesling was in one four,

⁶³⁸⁶ **Steve Kiesling:** “Matthew, Eric, John, and I could not have agreed in Florida to stick with the Yale four if any one of us got cut from the Camp. Matthew had already been cut after a test piece in the fall of ‘79 (the weekend of Harvard football game) and did not attend the January ‘80 training in Florida. Eric, John, and I all continued with the Camp after Matthew got cut. John and I both continued with the camp after Eric got cut.

“I had been through the straight-four Trials in ‘79, knew how good the camp boats were and figured my best shot at making the team was on my own. John made the decision to stick with the Yale four knowing that I wasn’t going to do the same.” – personal correspondence, 2009
⁶³⁸⁷ always critically important for a Yale crew.

⁶³⁸³ Biglow, personal conversation, 2008

⁶³⁸⁴ Biglow, personal correspondence, 2010

⁶³⁸⁵ For anyone interested in learning more about the special pressures involved in National Team rowing during this era, this book is a *must* read.

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and I was in another, and Kiesling's boat won. Then we went to Hazewinkel, Belgium, trained for two weeks and did a lot of seat racing. **Pete Gardner**, the Dartmouth coach, was in charge of the fours, and I ended up stroking the first four, and the sad irony for Kiesling was that he ended up in the second four.

"Then we went on to race in Amsterdam and Henley, and my boat won both regattas.

"I really enjoyed rowing in that U.S. boat in Europe. It was a *really* wonderful four. **Tom Darling, Otto Stekl** and **Bill Purdy** were in the boat with me. **Bob Jaugstetter** coxed.

"At Henley, when we beat Kiesling's boat, that was sweet because I always thought that he had kind of let us down in choosing not to stay with our agreement for the Trials.

"I don't know if he mentions that in *The Shell Game* . . . ⁶³⁸⁸

"I ended up not being an *official* member of the Olympic Team. I did not get an entire team uniform, and I did not get invited to Carter's ceremony after the Olympics, but I really didn't care about all that stuff. I much preferred the path I took, which was to stay with my friends and race

"And I enjoyed the races.



Bob Ernst/*The Oarsman*

1980 USA Olympic Coxed-Four "A"

Prince Philip Cup Champions, Henley

Coxswain **Bob Jaugstetter**, Bow **Tom Darling**, 2 **Otto Stekl**,
3 **Bill Purdy**, Stroke **John Biglow**

1981

Biglow: "After graduation and our summer racing in Europe in 1980, I came back to New Haven and turned to sculling just to *try* it. I don't think I was running away from sweep rowing. I wanted to scull probably because sculling seemed like a finer art and was also more 'singular.' In other words, I could really be put to the test in single sculling.

"Looking back on it, I didn't really have much sense of what my intentions were. In my first year of sculling, I figured if I could get within twenty seconds of the fastest sculler in the country, then I might have a future.

"I sculled with a friend named **Eric Stevens** who had been the captain of the Yale Crew. We rowed in our singles next to each other up and down the river every day. We'd row roughly seven-eighths power at a low rating. I would try to row lower than he, and that pushes you in a way that keeps you working hard and keeps you measuring

⁶³⁸⁸ **Steve Kiesling:** "I knew the Yale four was going to lose the Trials." – *The Shell Game*, p. 195, but his retelling was far more complicated than that and worth reading in its entirety. The relationship between John and Steve over time was fraught with a kaleidoscope of emotions.

Incidentally, Steve gave John the last word in his book.

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how well you're rowing.⁶³⁸⁹ You try to get ahead and then be comfortable and not run out of breath.

"We did that all fall.

"After several months of this, I went out to Seattle to visit my parents. I think it was early spring, and I ended up calling **Paul Enquist** and asking if I could go rowing with him."⁶³⁹⁰

Paul Enquist

Paul Enquist had begun his rowing career at Washington State University when "as a 6'6" freshman he took part in an open crew tryout after being denied a chance to try out for the basketball team.

"After graduating from WSU, Enquist hung around the University of Washington boathouse looking for a summer rowing program. The 1977 Washington crew [ended up winning] the prestigious Grand Challenge and Visitors Challenge Cups at the Henley Royal Regatta in England, but needed four rowers to complete a third boat for training. Enquist agreed to participate.

"Enquist soon realized he was holding his own against some of the nation's best rowers."⁶³⁹¹

Ted Nash: "In 1979, Paul rowed half a year with me at the Penn Elite Center and really came on stream in the 6-seat of our eight. They won Gold at the **National Sports Festival** in Colorado Springs."⁶³⁹²

"Paul, who was even then a commercial fisherman in Alaska, was ecstatic at the

Sports Festival, and that is a lot to say as he is a quiet, yet friendly giant. He cherished the USA uniforms and the large gathering of all sports.

"He was a sweep rower about to become a sculler."⁶³⁹³

Biglow: "By 1980, Paul was considered the best sculler in Seattle, and he was being coached by **Bob Ernst** [the University of Washington Women's Coach back then]. When I asked to row with him, he kind of paused and said, 'Well . . . have you gotten a lot better?' I must have rowed with him at some time before, and I didn't do very well or something.

"Anyway, he allowed me to come row with him, and Bob sort of ran the workout and coached Paul. He would tell us to row this distance and that rating.

"I was feeling very comfortable rowing against Paul, and I would sort of keep him on my hip and not have to really push too hard. We got down past the Seattle Tennis Club toward Leschi Park [three miles south of the floating bridge on the western shore of Lake Washington], way down towards the old bridge across the lake, and then we turned around and were going to do one long piece at full pressure back to the university.

"When Bob told us to row full pressure, I felt I *had* to if I was going to have integrity about it, so I rowed full pressure, and I pulled *way* ahead of Paul. I just left him so far behind it was embarrassing, and I think Bob was really mad at him.

"I felt bad for Paul, but it was a good sign for me.

"Later that spring, I went up to Boston, and that's when I started to row against the famous **Tiff Wood**⁶³⁹⁴ from Harvard, who had been on National Teams since 1975.

⁶³⁸⁹ This resembles the typical workouts of 20th Century Conibear coaches such as Rusty Callow. See Chapter 64.

⁶³⁹⁰ Biglow, personal conversation, 2008

⁶³⁹¹ Michael McLaughlin, *Where Are They Now: Paul Enquist*, www.seattlepi.com, March 31, 2004

⁶³⁹² a multi-sport championship for the four regions of the USA used to encourage Olympic hopefuls. It had TV coverage, medal ceremonies and Olympic-type gear.

⁶³⁹³ Nash, personal correspondence, 2006

⁶³⁹⁴ See Chapter 140.

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“That’s also when I asked Harry Parker to be my coach, and he accepted me into the Harvard boathouse.”⁶³⁹⁵

Harry Parker 1984 Olympic Sculling Coach

Harry’s bad luck with Olympics continued in 1984. As the “preeminent figure of American rowing,”⁶³⁹⁶ Harry wanted badly to again be the head Olympic men’s sweep coach while he continued to coach Harvard full time. He was the obvious choice, and he assumed he would get the job, but after considerable deliberations the Olympic Committee decided to hire a year-round coach and picked **Kris Korzeniowski**.⁶³⁹⁷

In 1984, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist **David Halberstam** would write a best-selling book about Harry and several of the American male scullers preparing for and competing in the Los Angeles Olympics.

Halberstam: “The fact that the Olympic Rowing Committee had picked a foreigner, scorning the best of the American coaches, had devastated Parker. After years of being unchallenged, he felt betrayed, and he protested the committee’s decision in the most personal terms.”⁶³⁹⁸

In a move reminiscent of 1976, as was discussed above, Harry finally accepted an appointment to a “lesser job” as coach of the Olympic men’s scullers, until then only an afterthought in American rowing.

Halberstam: “He never entirely reconciled himself to his diminished status.”⁶³⁹⁹

Nevertheless, as had been the case with women’s rowing in 1975 and ‘76, having the

great Harry Parker as coach automatically lent instant credibility to a previously under-appreciated and underutilized segment of American rowing. Like he was the pied piper, many remarkable athletes converted to sculling just because of Harry’s presence, and for better or worse, the memorable events that would lead up to the 1984 Olympics would not and could not have happened without Harry.

If there are echoes of Homer’s tragic heroes in this story, Harry Parker would be their **Helen of Troy**, and John Biglow was **Paris**, beautiful prince, obsessed with Helen, destined to slay Achilles.

Biglow in 1981

Biglow: “Even though I had had a successful sweep career at Yale, I was not known as a fast sculler at this point, so when I arrived in Boston from Seattle, I just came out of nowhere.

“There was already a big group of scullers in Cambridge working with Harry. They were going out and doing one-minute pieces. I think they were doing fifteen one-minute pieces the first day I joined them.

“Although I was really champing at the bit and felt like I was eager and ready to go, I remember starting off and really not opening up my throttle all out because I wasn’t familiar with the workout.

“I had heard so much about Tiff, and I remember wanting to stay close to him. I would start slightly behind just to make sure I was being honest about it, and I remember not really caring if I was half a length down because I felt *so* under control, and then I just remember feeling very confident and comfortable that I could beat him if I wanted. I immediately knew it in that *first* workout.

“I actually did get ahead of him in a couple of pieces that day, and he came back to the dock and said, ‘You beat me a few

⁶³⁹⁵ Biglow, personal conversation, 2008

⁶³⁹⁶ Halberstam, p. 162

⁶³⁹⁷ See Chapter 124.

⁶³⁹⁸ Halberstam, p. 163

⁶³⁹⁹ Halberstam, p. 163

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times, John.’ He was really bummed, but he started treating me with respect.

“That was my entry into the national level of sculling.

“There are maybe two or three races in my life that I consider great races that I loved and will cherish in my memory, and one of them was the **1981 Northeast Regionals** against Tiff up in Hanover, New Hampshire. It was a short race, maybe 1,500 meters, and it ended right in front of the Dartmouth boathouse.”⁶⁴⁰⁰

Halberstam: “Wood had gone out very quickly and very hard, at a 38, an unusually high stroke. He had kept it up for the first 500 meters, and for all of that he was only three-quarters of a length ahead. Then in the second 500 Biglow had almost rowed through Wood, but Wood had held on.

“With 500 meters left, when they were almost dead even, Wood started to sprint. That meant Biglow had to respond, and they rowed almost side by side, matching stroke for stroke, neither conceding, each simply trying to put more power into each stroke.

“It was an almost perfect race . . .”⁶⁴⁰¹

Tiff Wood: “It was one of those ‘neither of us is going to quit’ sort of things. There’s a point where you put everything onto it, and usually for me if I do that, it happens.

“John and I developed a great relationship in ‘81. *Huge* mutual respect as competitors, I think driven in part by that race in Hanover. For a losing race, that was the *best* race that I’ve ever had.”⁶⁴⁰²

According to Halberstam, Tiff and John became good friends, members of a two-person exclusive club of fierce competitors who respected one another above all others. Very special experience for both of them.⁶⁴⁰³

Biglow: “Beating Tiff in such a special race qualified me for the U.S. Olympic Festival in South Carolina or North Carolina or someplace, and that regatta might have been my first 2,000 meter races.

“Then came the Trials.”⁶⁴⁰⁴

The New York Times: “John Biglow earned the right today to represent the United States in the World Championships in Munich, West Germany, later this month.

“Biglow, of Yale, was a comfortable 2½-length winner over Tiff Wood of Harvard on the 2,000 meter course in 7 minutes 8.5 seconds. Wood’s time was 7:16.8.”⁶⁴⁰⁵

Biglow: “I remember thinking when I raced in the 1981 Singles Trials, that it was around my third to fifth races ever at 2,000 meters, and then the World Championships in Munich would be my sixth, seventh and eighth races ever. It made me feel very humble. I was thinking to myself, ‘I’m not any more special than anyone else. I haven’t done any more. I haven’t worked harder, but somehow single sculling is working for me.”⁶⁴⁰⁶

Gregg Stone: “The pattern of all American scullers of that era was to have very few races under their belt when they go to their first Worlds. We were amateurs in every sense. My first Worlds was my fourth regatta in a single. In 1985, **Andy Sudduth**⁶⁴⁰⁷ would win a World Silver in his second 2,000 meter sculling regatta!”⁶⁴⁰⁸

Wood: “I was John’s sparring partner until he left for Europe, and we had some great workouts. It was kind of fun, having decided I was not going, helping him get

⁶⁴⁰⁰ Biglow, personal conversation, 2008

⁶⁴⁰¹ Halberstam, p. 81

⁶⁴⁰² Wood, personal conversation, 2009

⁶⁴⁰³ Halberstam, pp. 83-4

⁶⁴⁰⁴ Biglow, personal conversation, 2008

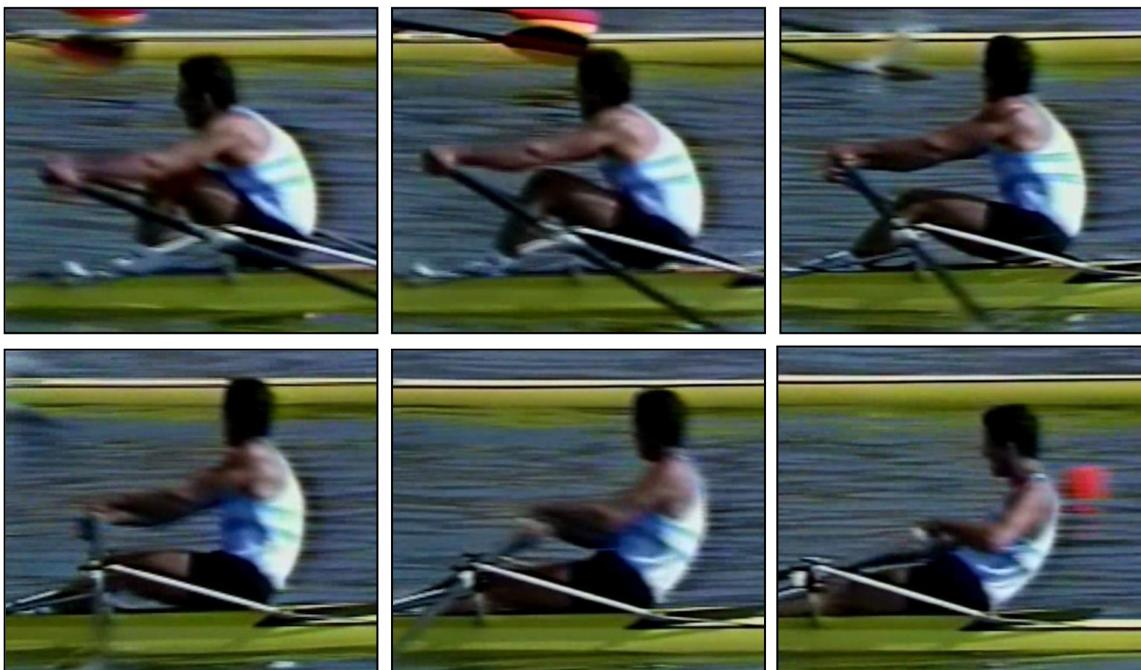
⁶⁴⁰⁵ 2 Rowing Titles to Ivy Leaguers, *The New York Times*, August 3, 1981

⁶⁴⁰⁶ Biglow, personal conversation, 2008

⁶⁴⁰⁷ See Chapter 142.

⁶⁴⁰⁸ Stone, personal correspondence, 2008

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Canadian Broadcasting Corporation



1976-1984 Argentine Single Sculler
Ricardo Ibarra, 6'4" 193 cm 198 lb. 90 kg
 -10°, +25° to -25°, 0-10, 0-9, 0-10, ferryman's finish
 Classical Technique *Schubschlag* force application
 Relatively flat back swing is what caught Frank Cunningham's
 eye, but the change in head height (Compare to the boat in
 the background.) is still significant and hardly negated
 by the very mild ferryman's finish.

Ibarra was a consistent finalist but never a medalist
 in a FISA International Championship

fast by going as hard as I could and pushing
 him."⁶⁴⁰⁹

Oberschleißheim

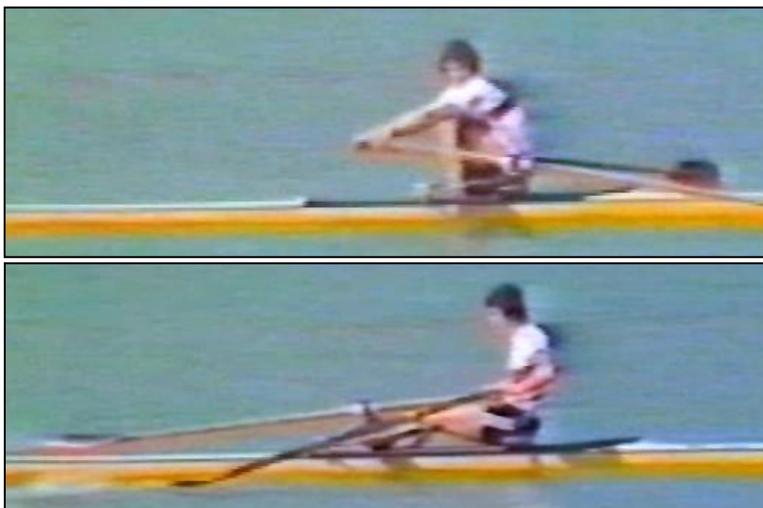
Biglow: "One amazing thing for me at
 my first Worlds in Munich was that I was
 rowing against someone that Frank
 Cunningham looked at films of and said,
 'That person rows *beautifully!*' It was
Ricardo Ibarra from Argentina. Frank

liked how flat his stroke was. He brought
 his hands in and out on a very level plane.

"Ibarra was in my heat, and I fell way
 behind. There was also this Swede, **Hans
 Svensson**, a huge guy [6'6" 199 cm 227 lb.
 103 kg, Falkenbergs Roddklubb], who was
 way out, like five lengths, after 500 meters,
 but near the end of the race I'd passed him,
 and Ibarra was right in front of me to my
 right within a length, and I remember
 thinking to myself, 'I feel very comfortable!
 I can go harder,' and so I did, and I passed
 Ricardo Ibarra!

⁶⁴⁰⁹ Wood, personal conversation, 2009

THE SPORT OF ROWING



USRA

Peter Michale Kolbe
rowing the **Empacher sliding-rigger single** in 1981.
Look carefully.
The riggers and footstretchers moved. The seat didn't.

“I was just dumbfounded. Here was this guy that Frank Cunningham had put on a pedestal, and I was rowing equal to him . . . and very comfortable about it. I was just humbled by it. For the minimal racing experience I'd ever had, I was just blown away.

“The German papers wrote about this, and they described me, and I think the word that they used was *unterlächelnd*, and I think it means kind of quietly smiling, kind of humble. It was very flattering. They were actually correct in describing me if that's what it meant.”⁶⁴¹⁰

The two prohibitive favorites in Munich in 1981 were the GDR sculler, 6'7" 203 cm 210 lb. 95 kg **Rüdiger Reiche**, 1974 World Quad Champion, 1976 Olympic Quad Champion, 1977 World Doubles Silver Medalist and 1979 World Singles Bronze Medalist, and the West German **Peter-Michael Kolbe**, 6'5" 198 cm 210 lb. 95 kg,

⁶⁴¹⁰ Biglow, personal conversation, 2008

with two Golds and two Silvers in World and Olympic singles competition since his international debut in 1975.⁶⁴¹¹

By contrast, Biglow was only 6'3" 190 cm 188 lb. 85kg and at his first World Championship in a single.

In addition, Kolbe was rowing a revolutionary new **sliding-rigger single** built for him by Empacher Bootswerft of Eberbach on the Neckar River in West Germany.⁶⁴¹²

In a normal boat, the footstretcher and riggers are bolted to the hull, and the seat slides along a track. In a sliding-rigger boat, the seat is bolted to the hull, and the footstretcher and riggers slide

as a unit along a track. For the rower, the mechanics of the stroke remain identical, but his body's center of gravity remains in a relatively stationary position in the boat instead of moving up and down the keel.

By eliminating the boat's tendency to porpoise along with eliminating the Newtonian surge of the hull forward as the rower slides toward the stern,⁶⁴¹³ the sliding rigger reduces boat check and hydrodynamic drag. The concept was not new, having been tried several times as early as the mid-19th Century.⁶⁴¹⁴

⁶⁴¹¹ See Chapter 125.

⁶⁴¹² Biomechanist **Volker Nolte** (See Chapter 134.), now of the University of Western Ontario, was instrumental in assisting Empacher in the development of Kolbe's sliding-rigger boat. – Bill Miller, *The Development of Rowing Equipment*, www.rowinghistory.net

⁶⁴¹³ See Chapter 90.

⁶⁴¹⁴ Bill Miller, List of U.S. Patents relating to rowing & training equipment, www.rowinghistory.net

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The Oarsman: “Biglow’s semi-final featured the unknown American and local hero Kolbe facing one another after each had won his heat. The West German, starting carefully in the chop of the first 100 meters, poured it on after that to open a big early lead. The American, not pressing, moved steadily from fifth to third in the second 500, and easily maintained that position for the rest of the race.”⁶⁴¹⁵

The New York Times: “John Biglow of the United States managed a third-place finish in his [semi-final] of the singles competition to advance to the finals.

“But Bigelow’s time of 8 minutes 7.71 seconds was well behind that of Rüdiger Reiche of East Germany, who won the second of two [semi-finals] in 7:50.66.”⁶⁴¹⁶

The singles final was run into a slight cross-headwind with the water a little bouncy, especially in the first 1,000 meters. Kolbe started slowly in his sliding-rigger shell, but by the 250 meter mark he was tied for the lead with Reiche.

Biglow started well, and after the Argentine and New Zealand scullers settled into their racing cadences, the American found himself a solid third by 500 meters gone.

⁶⁴¹⁵ Bob Jaugstetter, Three Medals Highlight U.S. Men’s ‘Rebuilding Year.’ *The Oarsman*, October/November 1981, p. 15

⁶⁴¹⁶ East German Oarsmen Gain 8 Spots in Finals, *The New York Times*, September 6, 1981



USRA

1981 World Singles Championships, Oberschleißheim

1 FRG 7:45.32, 2 GDR 7:48.90, 3 USA 7:51.55,

4 GBR 7:54.71, 5 ARG, 6 NZL

Silver: **Rüdiger Reiche**, GDR, 6’7” 203 cm 212 lb. 96 kg
Gold: **Peter-Michael Kolbe**, FRG, 6’4” 194 cm 185 lb. 84 kg
Bronze: **John Biglow**, USA, 6’3” 190 cm 187 lb. 85 kg

Note the body language.

Biglow: “I remember feeling great honor and *really* small.”

However, Kolbe was by then clearly in first place with more than three-quarters of a length on Reiche, who in turn had open water on the American.

Biglow: “In ‘81, I believe I raced it at something really low, 31, something around there.”⁶⁴¹⁷

In fact, all three of the leaders were low in the slow conditions. Reiche was also at 31, and Kolbe at 29.

Kolbe extended his lead to open water over Reiche by 650 gone. By then Biglow was at least three lengths behind him. These

⁶⁴¹⁷ Biglow, personal conversation, 2008

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margins remained relatively steady to the 1,000.

In the third 500, Kolbe made a big push to extend his lead to well over two lengths over Reiche. Biglow started swinging his back more purposefully to the release, but nevertheless he crossed the 1,500 four lengths behind the West German leader.

After that, he began to move. With 250 to go, Biglow was at 34 and almost overlapping Reiche. As they rowed by the grandstands, the GDR sculler at 35 regained a little bit of open water on Biglow and was closing on Kolbe as the West German savored his last few strokes. The final margins were just over a length between first and second and just over a length between second and third.

The Oarsman: “John’s Bronze was the first U.S. sculling medal since Dietz’s Silver in 1974.”⁶⁴¹⁸

Biglow: “I remember getting on the trophy dock feeling great honor and *really* small. Reiche’s taller, but Kolbe’s got very broad shoulders.

“I remember Harry telling me that during the finals he had been riding in a vehicle with the coach of the fourth-place British sculler **Chris Baillieu**, a member of the 1977 World Champion men’s double with Mike Hart.⁶⁴¹⁹ He was saying something like ‘He can’t do that!’ referring to my not having sculled enough to beat his man.

“Kolbe had won easily, and so we all ended up rowing sliding-rigger boats the next year, and that was a real pain because it gave you blisters on your buttocks.”⁶⁴²⁰

Biglow’s Technique in 1981

Biglow’s immediate success in a single cries out for an explanation. He was not one of the more imposing athletic specimens among the top international scullers of his era. He had done very well in physiological testing with the U.S. Team and had done well enough in seat racing to make the U.S. eight in 1979 and the four in ’80, so he was obviously a boat mover.

What was his technique?

John Biglow no longer rowed the Pocock-influenced Thames Waterman’s Stroke that **Frank Cunningham** had originally taught him.⁶⁴²¹ Nor did he row the Conibear-based, Ratzeburg-influenced high stroke technique that **Tony Johnson** had rowed to two European Pair Championships in the 1960s.⁶⁴²²

Although Biglow lifted his chin, he did not do so nearly to the extent of his two predecessors at the top of the American sculling scene, Jim Dietz and Gregg Stone. Biglow’s head lift, also typical of Harry Parker oarsmen of the era, was merely an idiosyncratic stylization for Biglow and not an indication of segmented force application.

In fact, when at his best he rowed a Fairbairnesque concurrent *Schubschlag* stroke characterized by a strong arc of the back. His sculling technique resembled that taught by the great Philadelphia coach of the 1920s and ‘30s, **Frank Muller**.⁶⁴²³

Biglow’s pullthrough was concurrent with splendid coordination of leg and back motion. His back followed an elegant vertical arc that organically united the pullthrough from entry to release. Arms were straining from the entry but did not noticeably break until the second half.

⁶⁴¹⁸ Bob Jaugstetter, *Three Medals Highlight U.S. Men’s ‘Rebuilding Year,’ The Oarsman*, October/November 1981, p. 16

⁶⁴¹⁹ The coach might have been **Mike Spracklen**. See Chapter 130.

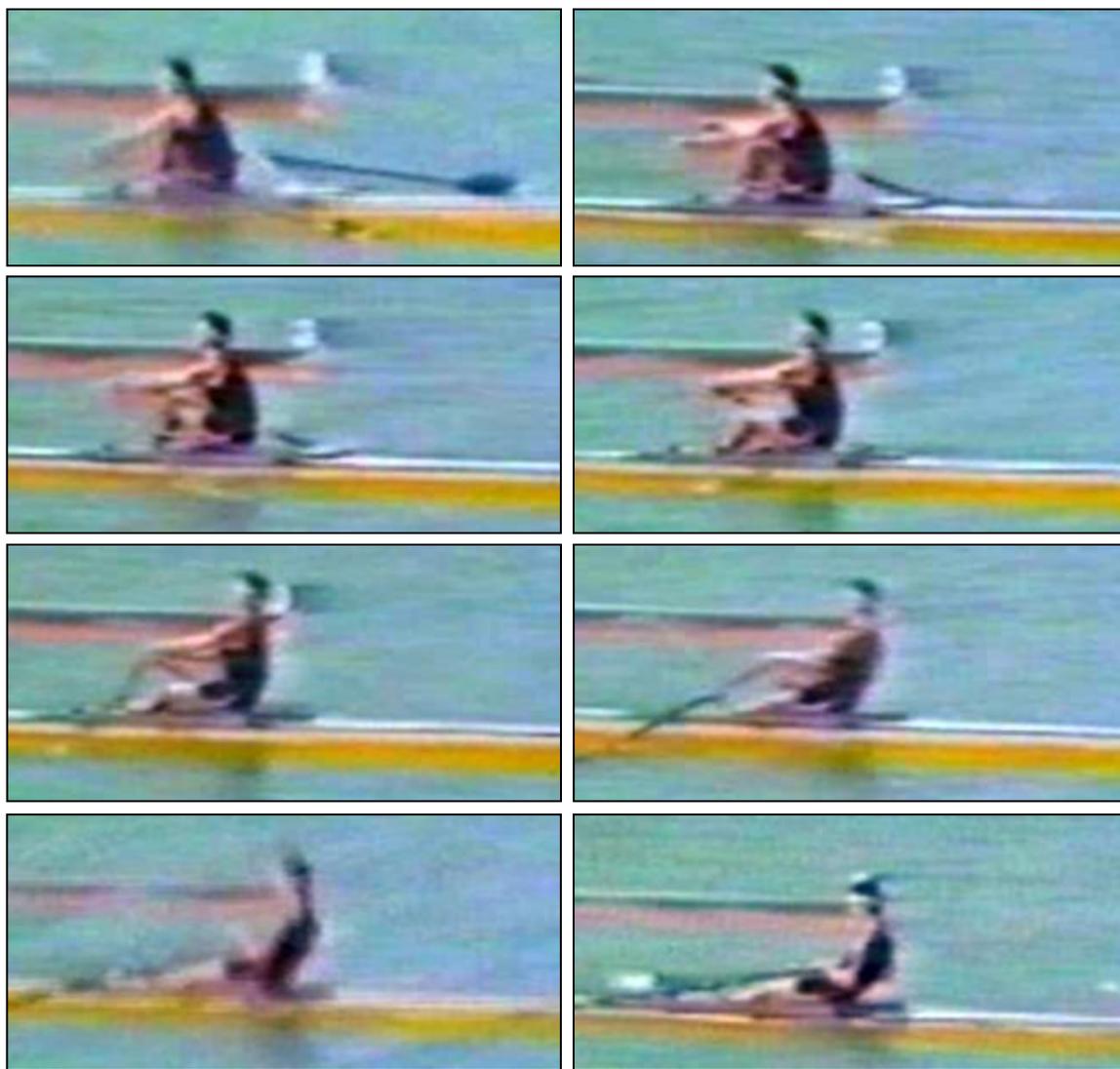
⁶⁴²⁰ Biglow, personal conversation, 2008

⁶⁴²¹ See Chapter 63.

⁶⁴²² See Chapter 110.

⁶⁴²³ See Chapter 56.

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USRA

John Biglow

1981 USA Single Sculler

World Bronze, Oberschleißheim

-10°, +25° to -30°, 0-7, 0-10, 4-10, *Schubschlag*, late arm draw

Classical Technique concurrency with emphasis on back swing

It is useful to compare the photos of John Biglow on the previous page to those of Muller's most famous protégé, **John B. Kelly, Sr.**, in Chapter 56. Kelly compressed a bit more at the entry and might have broken his arms a bit earlier. Biglow might

have lifted and dropped his chin a bit more, but the differences were very small and a matter of personal style. Overall, the resemblance is uncanny.

There is no reason to suggest a direct link between scullers Kelly and Biglow, but

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remember that Muller's teachings followed a main branch of the evolutionary tree of rowing that grew straight up from Ned Hanlan and had encompassed American collegiate rowing from Ellis Ward and Charles Courtney to the 1960 Annapolis crew that signaled the end of the Conibear Era. This technique has spontaneously

recurred many times and in many places throughout the world over the last century.

By the time John Biglow turned his attention to the single in the fall of 1980, these same fundamentals were being applied anew with devastating effectiveness by the **German Democratic Republic**, as was discussed in Chapter 119.

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1982

Biglow: “I always rowed a low rating, not on purpose, but it was just what I could do with my spread and the way I rigged my boat, which was kind of random. When I first started sculling and got my first boat, I didn’t know anything. It must have been rigged a little bit different from normal, so I rowed a low rating, but it worked for me.

“After Munich in ‘81, Harry said, ‘Well, we want to work your rating up, and we want you to feel more stable, so let’s work on fast hands. I want to exaggerate your hands out of bow.’

“So I did that. It felt really funny, rushed, but it’s interesting to me that it was the opposite of Harry’s Stop & Shop style,⁶⁴²⁴ and it was similar to what Frank Cunningham had been talking about to me in high school, but for different reasons. Frank had always said to get your weight out of bow quickly because if the bow is riding down in the water it’s more wetted surface.

“But it’s interesting to me that Harry eventually brought me to a place where Frank Cunningham wanted me to row.

“That’s where I ended up. Faster hands.”⁶⁴²⁵

Biglow’s Technique in 1982

Biglow’s technique had evolved slightly but significantly between 1981 and 1982. Besides the faster hands and higher rating, the major difference was the increasing dominance of the legs in the first half of the pullthrough, leading toward Modern Orthodox hybrid-concurrency.

The Australian television commentator in Lucerne described his pullthrough as “awkward,” and with his initial leg pulse

and chin lift at mid-stroke, his technique looked more frenetic than that of the other two medalists, Reiche and Yakusha. Reiche especially rowed a typical GDR heavier load, and so his pullthrough appeared slower and more disciplined. With his lighter load, Biglow relied on speed through the water and accordingly looked to be busier and working harder.

Biglow: “I think the sliding-rigger boat required a different touch, and this may have influenced any changes from 1981. In 1982, I was still rowing strong, but I did not like the sliding rigger. However, it was more forgiving regarding checking at the catch.”⁶⁴²⁶

The whole rationale of the sliding rigger was to keep the weight of the sculler’s body from traveling along the keel. This made a rush into the entry position less likely to disturb the horizontality of the hull and the flow of the boat.

But the little-appreciated, unintended and unexpected consequence of the sliding-rigger boat’s personality was that it also strongly discouraged extreme explosiveness in initial force application. Especially in the first ten strokes of a race, no matter how much tape you sat on, too strong an entry hit would cause the sculler to unceremoniously lift off his seat, which was immovable, and land on the front deck. This will be discussed further in Chapter 140.

At the 1982 World Championships in Lucerne, all six finalists, including John Biglow, were rowing sliding-rigger boats. Kolbe had chosen not to defend his title, so the favorite became **Rüdiger Reiche**.

Biglow: “In off-Olympic years, especially on the Rotsee, the championship regatta was quiet. You could really get to feel close to your competitors.

“I couldn’t speak German, and Reiche couldn’t speak English, but when I walked

⁶⁴²⁴ See Chapter 102.

⁶⁴²⁵ Biglow, personal conversation, 2008

⁶⁴²⁶ Biglow, personal correspondence, 2008

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my boat down to the water we would pass *right* next to each other, and he would wink at me. I loved that.

“Later at the Olympics in 1984, I never felt that close to the other athletes.

“I remember going into the heat in 1982, and I hadn’t really thought through all the details, like if I would get a better lane if I raced *hard* in the heat even if I was going to lose. Harry just said, ‘Race hard. Let’s see what you can do.’

“So I raced hard.

The Heat

Biglow: “Reiche was out ahead of me, but I came back on him, and it was *really* close at the end.

“We were neck and neck, like it had been with Tiff in the Northeast Regionals, where you row next to someone for thirty strokes and your legs really start to burn. If they’re a little bit ahead or a little bit behind, you can sort of ease up just a little bit, but if they’re *right* next to you, it really keeps you honest.

“I think he had to work really, really hard to beat me, and it was, I’m thinking, 0.1 seconds.

“Somebody said that they heard Reiche ask his coach, ‘What are we going to do now?’

The Final

Biglow: “In the final, when I raced Reiche again, I remember thinking I never go off hard enough.



USRA

Rüdiger Reiche, Dynamo Potsdam
1981, 1982 GDR Single Sculler

“‘I’ve got to go off hard,’ I thought, but I couldn’t do it! It seemed like an impossibility.⁶⁴²⁷

“I went off the start, and Reiche was out to a length on me really quickly, and then the race unfolded.”⁶⁴²⁸

Vasily Yakusha, 6’4” 194 lb. 209 lb. 95 kg, Centraliy Sportiviy Klub Armii Minsk, the 1980 Olympic Singles Silver Medalist, took the lead in the first 500 and then dropped his rating to 29 as Reiche pushed past him by half a length before the 1,000. In the third 500, Biglow rowing 33 separated himself from the rest of the pack, and at 1,250 he raised his rating to 36 and began to move on the two leaders.

⁶⁴²⁷ It turns out that it was indeed an “impossibility” to go off the line hard in Biglow’s sliding-rigger boat. See the extensive discussion in Chapter 140.

⁶⁴²⁸ Biglow, personal conversation, 2008

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Biglow: “I started my sprint with 750 to go because Harry Parker told me to. He said, ‘So far, no one has ever been able to come back on you. You’ve rowed faster than everyone in the last 500, so why don’t we start the sprint earlier?’ So we did, and I found that I actually was at my limit.”⁶⁴²⁹

As the three leaders crossed the 1,500 meter mark, Biglow had moved past Yakusha into second place, only a half-length down on Reiche.

Yakusha then made his own move with 400 to go, raising his stroke rate to 37, repassing Biglow and moving up to within just a meter of Reiche at the finish line.

Biglow, also at 37, was unable to close on the GDR sculler and finished just over half a length behind the first two boats, earning his second consecutive World

Championship Bronze Medal.

Biglow: “I never knew that I had been ahead of the Russian with 500 to go. I thought I always was behind him. He was way over on the other side of the course.

“It was a pretty exciting race to rewatch.”⁶⁴³⁰

Biglow’s performance in Lucerne would be the high water mark of his international career. In all of history back to 1893, Biglow’s accomplishment of two international heavyweight championship single sculling medals had only ever been equaled by three other Americans, **Jack Kelly, Jr.** after World War II and **Don Spero**⁶⁴³¹ and **Seymour Cromwell**⁶⁴³² during the American sculling heyday of the 1960s.⁶⁴³³

⁶⁴²⁹ Biglow, personal conversation, 2008

⁶⁴³⁰ Biglow, personal conversation, 2008

⁶⁴³¹ See Chapter 87.

⁶⁴³² Ibid.

⁶⁴³³ It has recently been surpassed by American **Michelle Guerette**, World Bronze Medalist in 2005 and 2007, Olympic Silver Medalist in 2008.