

THE SPORT OF ROWING

To the readers of *www.row2k.com*

This will be the last excerpt from my new book to appear on row2k. The next time you read from the book will be from your own copy when it is published in October.

I leave you with the fascinating story of the U.S. men between 1997 and 2004. Many thanks to all the athletes and coaches who shared their memories and their points of view with me. Enjoy.

The following .pdf is in the format intended for the final printed book. The color you see will be duplicated in the limited collector edition. This excerpt is from the fourth of the four volumes.

Incidentally, all the excerpts that have appeared on row2k during the last six months have since been revised as we work toward publication. The most recent drafts are now posted in the row2k archives.

The **limited collector edition** of my new book, *The Sport of Rowing*, from whence have come all these excerpts, sold out in April in about a week. Thanks so much to all of you who have showed such faith in the book.

The paperback **standard edition** remains on sale at:

www.row2k.com/rowingmall/

This edition has all the same content as the collector edition. The illustrations are in black and white, and the price is much more affordable.

Both editions will be published in October.

And remember, you can always email me anytime at:

pmallory@rowingevolution.com

Many thanks.

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155. Mike Teti Begins a Journey

1997 to 2000



Ted Nash Collection

History tells us that the United States produced a magnificent World Champion Eight in 1974. The coach and his cadre of athletes committed to returning Olympic glory to America in 1976 after a twelve-year absence, but a number of circumstances conspired to weaken their efforts in the following two years, with the result being a terribly disappointing ninth place finish in Montréal.⁸⁰³⁹

Later, the 1987 U.S. World Champion Eight would be followed by a 1988 Olympic Bronze Medal performance,⁸⁰⁴⁰ and the 1994 World Champion Eight by a 1996 Olympic

fifth place.⁸⁰⁴¹ In the event closest to the hearts of American rowers, there had been a pattern developing. This should have been weighing heavily on the athletes and coaches as they faced the four-year build to Sydney in 2000.

Indeed, the new U.S. Men's coach **Mike Teti** had himself been bow-seat on the 1987 World Champion and 1988 Olympic third-place boats.

The 2000 quadrennial resembled the Spracklen Era that preceded it in many ways: an exciting new coach, only a few

⁸⁰³⁹ See Chapters 114.

⁸⁰⁴⁰ See Chapter 124.

⁸⁰⁴¹ See Chapter 149.

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holdover athletes, a lot of new talent, and early success.

Bob Kaehler, 2-seat in Spracklen's '96 Eight: "I was really burned out after Atlanta. Teti took the job as U.S. Coach, and I called in March of that year to congratulate him. We had been friends since we were teammates in 1991, and he started calling me every couple of weeks.

"When are you coming back? When are you coming back?"

"I knew that he was having a hard time getting people to return because the Spracklen period had been so grueling. There had been a lot of competitive training. You're racing twice a day, every day, and it gets hard after a while, whereas if you look at some of the other systems, they don't do that. I think the British row more volume but not as intense.

"A little too much psychological pitting people against each other, and what with being separated away at camp, it definitely makes it an uncomfortable environment, whether you're on the top or the bottom. In the end it becomes a cancer. Even though I was on the right side of the equation, I didn't like it.

"I didn't row from Atlanta in July until almost a year later. I think I may have rowed twice for Mike to fill in. All I was doing was running and cycling, maybe five workouts a week.

"I think I finally came back on July 4th, and I rowed from then to September 7, like thirty-seven practices or something? My wife and I had already scheduled a vacation in Cape Cod nine days before we left for France . . . and we *went!* I ran one day for an hour on the beach.



FISA 1997 Video

Cipollone celebrates, Ahrens recovers in 1997!

"But Mike and I talked a lot. I let him know everything that was going on. I said, 'Look, if I don't think this is going to work, I'm not doing it. I'm not going to go and jeopardize all these other guys, all these college guys. They're training. I'm just doing this because you don't have many guys with experience to fill in.'"⁸⁰⁴²

Lac d'Aiguebelette, 1997

Coxswain **Pete Cipollone**⁸⁰⁴³ remembers vividly that first eights final of the Teti era:

Chip: "At Worlds, I got caught on camera steering badly in the repêchage. I expected Mike to tear me apart since he had a reputation for that. Instead, he waited until the oarsmen had left our post-race meeting. Pulling me aside, he very calmly told me what everyone saw on the Jumbotron. He told me I needed to hold up my end.

"Just go straight in the final."

⁸⁰⁴² Kaehler, personal conversation, 2008

⁸⁰⁴³ pronounced "Chip-o-lone."

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FISA 1997 Video

United States Men's Eight
1997 World Champion, Lac d'Aiguebelette
+10°, +20° to -30°, 0-8, 0-9, 0-10
Classical Technique, *Schubschlag*
Elegant back swing to ferryman's finish

Coxswain **Pete Cipollone**,
Stroke **Chris Ahrens** 6'5" 195cm 214lb. 97kg, 7 **Garrett Miller** 6'4" 193cm 216lb. 98kg,
6 **Phil Henry** 6'4" 193cm 207lb. 94kg, 5 **Tim Richter** 6'5" 196cm 218lb. 99kg,
4 **Mike Wherley** 6'7" 200cm 214lb. 97kg, 3 **Bob Kaehler** 6'5" 196cm 216lb. 98kg,
(2 **Sebastian Bea** 6'6" 198cm 196lb. 89kg, Bow **Bob Cummins** 6'2" 188cm 185 b. 84kg)

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“After my performance in the rep, I was sure I would get cut right after the regatta, and that changed my approach. I felt grateful for getting a shot, so I figured I would just go out and do my best.

“Teti called us all together for the pre-race speech. We huddled, each man with his arms around the next, like a circular rugby scrum. He told us to go out and win – to *commit* to getting our bow across the line first. His talk was so good, I was nearly shaking. I wanted to do my part.

“‘**Commitment**’ is a key concept in Mike’s way of doing things. We did not take moves. We made Commitments, and each one was dedicated to something or someone. Earlier in the week, the media had asked the German coach if he was worried about us. ‘The Americans have no speed,’ he replied. This became the object of our Commitment.

“When we crossed the 1,000 meter mark, it was four bows across. We were in Lane 6. The whole field was off to our starboard. There were two holes next to us where the Brits and Aussies trailed, then the Romanians, Germans and Russians on the other side of the course. We were moving as the others faded.

“One deep breath, and I called for the Commitment at 800 meters to go. ‘No speed! The Americans have *no speed!*’

“We moved like we were possessed. In the video, the first stroke of the Commitment is clearly visible.

“The next thing I remember saying was at 700 to go ‘We have the lead.’

“The Romanians charged us once more and nipped us at 500 by a coin toss.

“And then it was just the two of us.

“Both crews sprinted. Stern-pair’s oars looked like they were going to break. **Chris Ahrens** had a cold-blooded look on his face – no pain, no ‘How many strokes are left?’

“Just the look of a guy who had not come this far for Silver.

“Our boat surged. I was looking across at the Romanian 7-man. We were ahead for good.

“My voice gave out with five strokes to go. I sounded like Ned Beatty in *Deliverance*, squealing like a pig. My teammates have been too kind to ever tell that part of the story in public.

“We hit the line, mixing ecstasy with physical collapse. I looked over at the Romanians. A few of them had put their arms up thinking they had won.

“I caught a glimpse of them taking their arms down.

“We celebrated. There were some great quotes on the medal dock. Ahrens, a Gold Medalist from the 1995 Coxed-Four, said, ‘I am going to celebrate this one more. Last time I did not enjoy it enough.’ **Garrett Miller** in 7, never shy about telling me if I didn’t steer a beeline, grabbed me and said, ‘Great course!’

“Our lives changed that day. I am not sure if the other guys felt that way, and I did not figure it out until later. Winning the eight is an addiction. It becomes a baseline by which everything else in your life is measured.

“But those were not our thoughts on that day. We just felt like kings.”⁸⁰⁴⁴

Under Teti’s leadership, “Chip” coxed two more Gold Medal Eights in 1998 and 1999. Only GDR at its height had ever before strung together three in a row.

Easy Speed

Bob Kaehler, 2-seat in 1998 and 1999: “Sometimes you just have a unique combination. I think that the ‘98-’99 boat was just one of those boats that had perfect blending. We were in control. We could do what we wanted when we wanted to. We never lost a race.

⁸⁰⁴⁴ Cipollone, personal correspondence, 2008

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“It’s not that often that you get control in boats where it’s relaxed and easy. You have tremendous power, but it’s just *easy*. It’s not hard. There’s no effort. You’re cruising along. In previous times [1996], it was more like hammer, hammer, hammer . . . hammer as hard as you could, and that was the training mentality during that period. Hammer and survive. The next period was *much* smoother application of power.”⁸⁰⁴⁵

The technique at the beginning of the Teti Era was quite similar to the “easy speed” approach of the 1994 World Champion U.S. crew under **Mike Spracklen** described by Fred Honebein.⁸⁰⁴⁶ Behind Princeton grad **Chris Ahrens**, the post-Spracklen champion Teti boats rowed Classical Technique with a very strong emphasis of acceleration all the way to the finish.

Legs coordinated well with the backs and together they provided the source of effective smooth *Schubschlag* acceleration.

Chris Ahrens in 2000: “The past couple of years when I’ve been stroking the boat, I can initiate things, but then when you feel these seven guys behind you kick in, in some ways they just take over . . . and there’s a sense because everybody’s hitting it exactly together that you’re kind of taken with the group.”⁸⁰⁴⁷

Jeff Klepacki, 6-seat in 1998 and 1999: “We had such a unique dynamic in the eight in those years.”⁸⁰⁴⁸

Ed Hewitt of *www.row2k.com*: “Mike’s best rowing crews were in the late ‘90s; all competence, no tricks, no fretting.”⁸⁰⁴⁹

However, as 2000 approached, the parallels to the experience of the Spracklen crews of four years earlier seemed to multiply. Knowing what happened in Atlanta must have weighed on the minds of many.

Porter Collins, a member of both the 1996 and 2000 eights: “I’m going to show my true character when it comes down to the Olympic final. I’m not going to let it slip through my hands *twice!* It’s something that’s *not* going to happen!”⁸⁰⁵⁰

More athletes with bigger erg scores arrived in the year leading up to 2000. Pressure built. Tension increased.

Everything was about the Olympics. The extensive films taken in practice in the months prior to the Olympics⁸⁰⁵¹ suggest that before most practices, in fact before most competitive *pieces* in practice, the coach reminded the oarsmen exactly what was at stake.

Mike Teti: “You’re racing for a spot on the [bleeping] Olympic Team . . . and the crew that’s gonna make [bleeping] history.”⁸⁰⁵²

And the athletes were listening and responding to the obvious pressure.

Bryan Volpenhein, two-time World Champion by 2000: “An eight is all about who has the biggest [assets], who’s the toughest, and who can make the eight go the fastest.”⁸⁰⁵³

Mike Wherley: “[An eight] is different than most of the other boats because it’s almost reckless in a way. It’s the only boat where you can just haul on it.”⁸⁰⁵⁴

Or can you?

2000 Technique

As it had twenty-four years earlier in 1976, and as it just had four years earlier in

⁸⁰⁴⁵ Kaehler, op. cit.

⁸⁰⁴⁶ See Chapter 149.

⁸⁰⁴⁷ Qtd. by Lewis, *A Fine Balance*

⁸⁰⁴⁸ Klepacki, personal conversation, 2008

⁸⁰⁴⁹ Hewitt, personal correspondence, 2011

⁸⁰⁵⁰ Qtd. by Lewis, op. cit.

⁸⁰⁵¹ 1984 Olympic Doubles Champion Brad Alan Lewis produced a video documentary called *A Fine Balance*.

⁸⁰⁵² Qtd. by Lewis, op. cit.

⁸⁰⁵³ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁵⁴ Ibid.

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1996, the rowing technique changed gradually but materially as the Olympics approached. Force application in particular became indeed “almost reckless,” and the magic, the “easy speed” appeared to disintegrate.

Films convincingly show that it was a group mentality. No single individual or coach was responsible for the change. Nevertheless, it is useful to examine the rowing technique of stroke-seat **Chris Ahrens**, for he had embodied all that was extraordinary in the pre-2000 eights.

Films also show that the change involved the legs at the entry. Instead of complementing the concurrent back swing as they had in earlier years, by 2000 the legs dominated the backs. They completely dominated the first part of the pullthrough, replacing hybrid-concurrency with overlapping-sequentiality, even pure sequentiality, replacing Classical Technique with Modern Orthodoxy.

In 2000, the legs were driven nearly flat by the time the oar shafts were perpendicular to the direction of the boat instead of at the 90% point in the pullthrough of just a year earlier. This was a huge difference, equal in magnitude to the very same change in Spracklen’s eight from 1995 to ‘96.

An increasingly dominating leg drive signals a devolution from smooth-force *Schubschlag* to segmented-force *Kernschlag*. This was yet another tragic example of Rowing History’s Greatest Lesson,⁸⁰⁵⁵ which has been repeated over and over since the very beginnings of our sport.

As it was happening, **Porter Collins** understood well and tried to explain the problem to his coach, Mike Teti: “It’s not like *shoom!* [demonstrating a smooth *Schubschlag* pullthrough with his hand] It’s like *ugggh!* . . . and then come through.”⁸⁰⁵⁶

⁸⁰⁵⁵ See Chapter 18.

⁸⁰⁵⁶ Qtd. by Lewis, op. cit.

Pop and go.

Segmented force application became so ingrained into the team ethos in 2000 that it was even embodied in the coxswains’ exhortations during seat racing that spring.

Pete Cipollone: “*Lock* . . . [pause] . . . *Send!* *Lock* . . . [pause] . . . *Send!* [This two-part refrain was called in cadence with his boat’s two-part pullthrough.]

“Front end! *Front end!*

“Everybody sit up and *Catch!*

“*Lock* . . . [pause] . . . *Send!*

“*Lock* . . . [pause] . . . *Send!*”⁸⁰⁵⁷

Seth Bauer, four times U.S. Men’s Eight Coxswain between 1981 and 1988: “I actually introduced that call to the U.S. Team. **Kris Korzeniowski** specifically taught me to say that in the 1980s.⁸⁰⁵⁸ The intent was to get rhythm into the drive. American crews tended to believe that you just pulled as hard as you could on the drive, and then rhythm happened on the recovery. Korzeniowski flipped that around. He basically said, ‘Don’t worry about the recovery. Get the rhythm on the drive.’”⁸⁰⁵⁹

The unintended result in 2000, however, was rowing in concrete, enormous energy expended without commensurate reward.

By the time the final 2000 boat was picked just weeks before the Olympics in Sydney, it was obvious to all that there were very serious problems.

Teti during a practice: “Something’s not right. There’s something that I can’t see.

“You shouldn’t have to put *that* much effort into rowing steady state and moving the boat.”⁸⁰⁶⁰

Dan Lyons:⁸⁰⁶¹ “Teti was a ball peen hammer. When I rowed, that’s what he was. He was a hammer. A hundred seventy-eight

⁸⁰⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁵⁸ See Chapter 124.

⁸⁰⁵⁹ Bauer, personal conversation, 2009

⁸⁰⁶⁰ Qtd. by Lewis, op. cit.

⁸⁰⁶¹ See Chapters 132 and 144.

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FISA 1998 Video

United States Men's Eight

1997-99 World Champion

Stroke **Chris Ahrens** in 1998

+10°, +20° to -30°, **0-9**, 0-9, 5-10, Classical Technique *Schubschlag*
Concurrent body mechanics, ferryman's finish.

Chin lift was clear evidence of emphasis on strong acceleration to the finish. Note the late arm draw.

pounds of hammer. And he taught his crews to row that way.

"He had some great athletes. He had a good system which in the end did not serve the country well long term."⁸⁰⁶²

Kaehler: "Towards the end, there were a couple of guys out, and we did some seat racing. We were rowing some fast times with these substitutions, and there was a point when I said, 'This is *the boat!*'"

"It ended up not being the boat, but it would have won the Olympics. Coaches are not going to go on one day's performance, but when you're inside the boat, you feel what it's like and you know. You can sense it.

"I believe that sometimes coaches should rely on their top athletes to make assessments from the *inside*, not just what you're seeing visually from the outside, because boat chemistry is an intangible.

"And when you change that . . . when you plug guys in that have huge ergs . . .

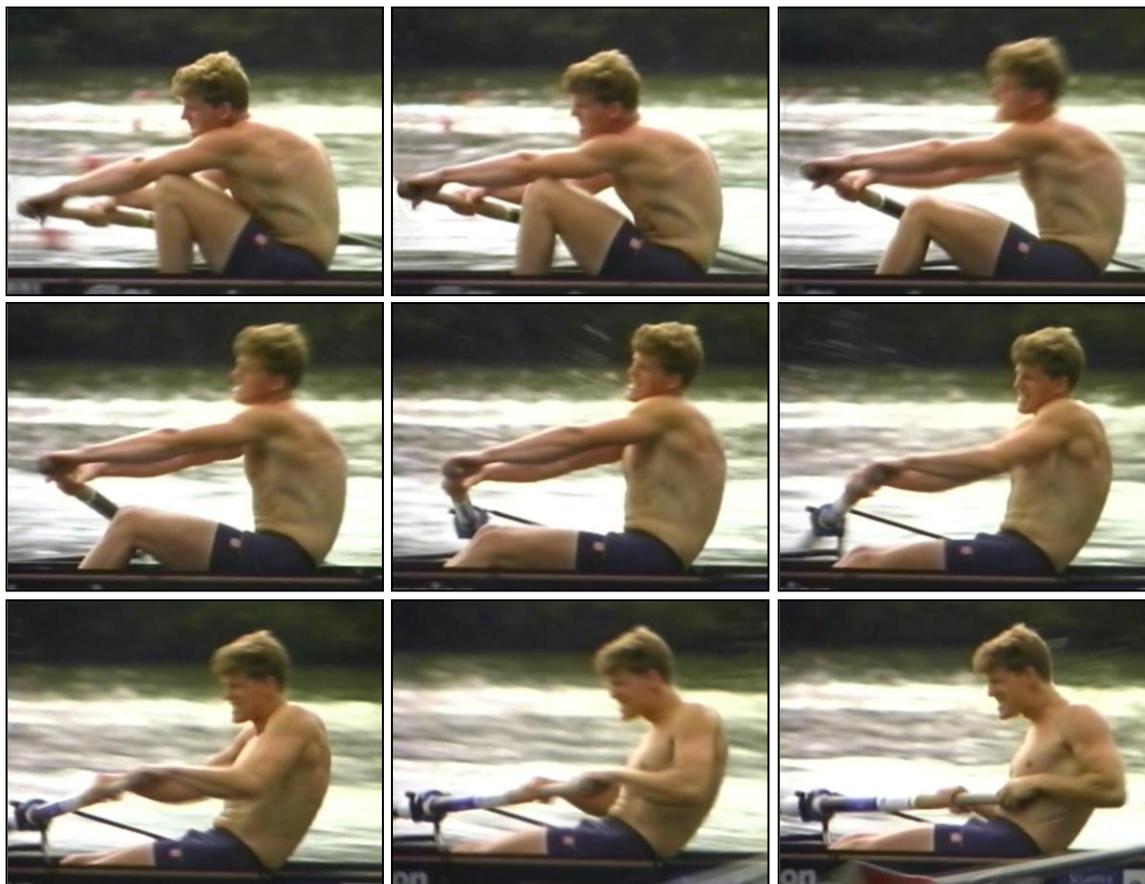
"Fifteen seconds on an erg seems like this *huge* amount . . . but in an eight it could mean *nothing!* When you get to big boats, one guy doesn't mean a lot. You can put in a guy with a 5:50 or a 6:10, but if you've got the other seven guys, and they're all rowing together, it's not going to make a difference.

"Technique is what wins. When you have good power behind technique, that's the whole package.

"The '99 Eight was a dominating boat power-wise *and* technique-wise, and it was

⁸⁰⁶² Lyons, personal conversation, 2009

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Brad Alan Lewis, Director of *A Fine Balance*

United States Men's Eight

2000 Olympic Fifth Place, Penrith

Stroke **Chris Ahrens**, in practice right before Olympics
+5°, +20° to -30°, **0-6**, 2-9, 5-10, Modern Orthodox *Kernschlag*
Hybrid-concurrent body mechanics, ferryman's finish.

Emphasis on catch, and *then* strong acceleration to the finish.

Pete Cipollone: "Lock . . . [pause] . . . Send!"

really technique based on our power. That was just the way it was."⁸⁰⁶³

Ahrens: "We trained harder in 2000. All of our erg scores were better, but I think what you *do* have is that we had a situation where it was clear early in the summer that things were not going great.

"I think that the reason this pattern happens in the eight more than in other boats is

that everybody's thinking 'Okay, what should *I* do to make it better,' and there's not much you can do.

"I think that the eight in many ways is like herding cats in the sense that you've got to have all these people focused in one direction, thinking the same thing, and so when things aren't going well, no one wants to talk about the fact that they aren't going well. You get into this mode of everybody's

⁸⁰⁶³ Kaehler, op. cit.

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FISA 2000 Video

United States Men's Eight
2000 Olympic Fifth Place, Penrith
Coxswain **Pete Cipollone**,

Stroke **Jeff Klepacki** 6'5" 196cm 216lb. 98kg, 7 **Garrett Miller** 6'4" 193cm 216lb. 98kg,
6 **Chris Ahrens** 6'5" 195cm 214lb. 97kg, 5 **Dave Simon** 6'6" 198cm 218lb. 99kg,
4 **Tom Welsh** 6'5" 196cm 201lb. 91kg, 3 **Porter Collins** 6'5" 196cm 192lb. 87kg,
2 **Bob Kaehler** 6'5" 196cm 216lb. 98kg, Bow **Bryan Volpenhein** 6'3" 191cm 225lb. 102kg

trying *really* hard, but all that effort is sometimes going against each other.

"Another problem was the nature of the selection process that was imposed on us because of the fact that the four and pair had not qualified for the Olympics the year before.⁸⁰⁶⁴ That meant that by the time it got down to selection for the Eight, there was no flexibility for Mike to try different lineups, try different stuff."⁸⁰⁶⁵

Klepacki: "We had some *phenomenal* physical athletes come out of the woodwork that spring, like **Dave Simon**, who was a physical *specimen*. The guy had to be in

like the top 1% of the world as far as physical attributes and ability on the erg were concerned.

"There was so much power and juice in that boat with Dave Simon! We rowed something like a 5:32 in flat conditions at a 32. It was *phenomenal!* Oh my God!

"The problem was you're not going to win the Olympic Games rowing 32. So when we got to race cadence at 36 and 38, it was a different outcome.

"So the dynamic got mixed up . . . and then we were on the plane to Australia."⁸⁰⁶⁶

Ahrens: "In 2000, I think we had a lot of bad luck. We got down to Australia, and our oars hadn't made it, so we had to row with different oars. And we couldn't row on a timed course. One thing after another.

⁸⁰⁶⁴ Teti had to send the Trials-winning Coxless-Pair and a Coxless-Four from the Camp to World Cup regattas to qualify them for Sydney. After the Four had qualified, those four athletes were no longer available for the Eight.

⁸⁰⁶⁵ Ahrens, personal conversation, 2010

⁸⁰⁶⁶ Klepacki, op. cit.

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Sometimes there's not much you can do about it."⁸⁰⁶⁷

Klepacki: "Musical chairs over in Sydney. Mike wanted to move me from 6-seat to stroke after the reps and put Chris in 6.

"I said to him, 'Mike you're grasping at straws. If you want to make a move, go pull Wherley from the Four⁸⁰⁶⁸ and put him in the Eight.'

"Obviously, we couldn't do that unless there was a medical reason, so our hands were tied."⁸⁰⁶⁹

Ahrens: "The rep in 2000, I think that was the hardest race I ever rowed in my entire life. It was us and the Romanians battling to win the rep, and we ended up beating them by, I don't know, two or three inches? But that in some ways was the performance that I felt was the most courageous of that crew in the sense that we knew that it was all about effort and pride."⁸⁰⁷⁰

Klepacki: "I think we won the repêchage by a bow ball over the Romanians. It was the hardest I've ever pulled in my *life*, and we went into the final wishing and hoping for the best, knowing that we were a crew that was completely capable of dominating the field and winning a Gold Medal.

"I rowed stroke, and we finished fifth."⁸⁰⁷¹

Ahrens: "I'm not ashamed of our result. It was disappointing personally, but at the same time I think that everybody in that boat put forward a *huge* effort, and I think that crew had the quality of people as people in terms of racing, aggressiveness, competitiveness, toughness. I think the standard was *very* high.

"You had guys who mentally were just incredibly tough and incredibly good at racing, Bob Kaehler, Porter Collins, Tom Welsh, *everybody* in that boat.

"Tom Welsh would go through walls before he was going to stop. Same thing with *all* those guys. That aggressiveness came through in the style of racing that we had, and I knew that in a tough, tight battle, that crew would win."⁸⁰⁷²

National Team Disease

But having the best athletes of a country come together for four years to prepare for a single race, the Olympic final in the men's eights, having them find success in the intermediate years and then failing in the one race that counted was becoming a painful recurring pattern, and not just in the U.S.

Ratzeburg in 1964 and 1972, GDR in 1972, New Zealand in 1968 and 1984, Germany in 1992, the U.S. in 1976, 1988, 1996, and now 2000. Soon the Canadians in 2004 would be added to the list.

Kaehler: "In three Olympics [1992 in the quad, 1996 and 2000 in the eight], it happened to me all three times! The crews that I rowed in the year before were *much* better crews than the ones that ended up going to the Olympics, and the replacements were *solely* based on ergometer scores. Period. *Nothing* to do with technique! Just power, and in a lot of cases, the guys who have the most power are *not* good boat movers.

⁸⁰⁶⁷ Ahrens, op. cit.

⁸⁰⁶⁸ Observers concluded that three-time World Champion Mike Wherley was moved to the Coxless-Four to make way for newcomer Dave Simon, a Brown undergraduate with a 5:41 erg score. In fact, Wherley was pulled from the Eight in order to strengthen the Coxless-Four and qualify the U.S. in that event for the Olympics. Then Olympic rules precluded Teti from returning Wherley to the Eight. Teti has acknowledged this as a tactical error on his part. See Jeff Moag, Mike Teti Opens Up, *Rowing News*, March 2011, p. 47

⁸⁰⁶⁹ Klepacki, op. cit.

⁸⁰⁷⁰ Ahrens, op. cit.

⁸⁰⁷¹ Klepacki, op. cit.

⁸⁰⁷² Ahrens, op. cit.

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“Power ego’ is what it really comes down to. You’re taking guys out that don’t have ergs and putting guys in that have *huge* ergs, and performance goes *backwards!*”

“Coaches can’t help themselves. They do that.”⁸⁰⁷³

Olympic letdowns have not been confined just to Olympic men’s eights. The U.S. women’s eights in 1996 and 2000,⁸⁰⁷⁴ both Canadian single scullers in 1996⁸⁰⁷⁵ and the Canadian women’s pair in 2004⁸⁰⁷⁶ also come immediately to mind.

Over the last 200 years, the pattern is well established. A team that begins with newness and freshness and easy speed rowing *Schubschlag* gradually turns to segmented-force *Kernschlag* when the training intensifies and the pressure mounts. . . . and their world soon implodes.

A human tragedy the first time. And the second. And the third.

But after decades? A century?

Why haven’t we learned?

Post Script

Mike Teti took full responsibility for the

disappointing showing of the crew in Sydney, but so did the athletes.

Teti immediately threw himself into making sure that history would not repeat itself yet again in the next Olympic quadrennial.

Unlike with Mike Spracklen four years earlier, the U.S. gave Mike Teti a second chance. The gods were smiling. On Mike Teti. On the USA.

Mike had learned. He taught everyone to row pairs. He trained them in pairs and selected in pairs, just as Mike Spracklen had.

Teti built slowly, methodically. Fourth in 2001, third in 2002, second in 2003.

A rowing career filled with triumphs and disappointments, including the disappointment of 1988, followed by learning from history, followed by eight years of National Team head coaching experience, including the bitter experience of 2000, all this would form the building blocks for 2004, as will be discussed in the following chapter.



⁸⁰⁷³ Kaehler, op. cit.

⁸⁰⁷⁴ See Chapter 153.

⁸⁰⁷⁵ See Chapter 134.

⁸⁰⁷⁶ See Chapter 152.

Part XVI
The World
Comes Full Circle

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156. Mike Teti Completes the Journey

2001 to Athens in 2004



FISA 1997 Video

1987 World Champion **Mike Teti**

An Un-American Technique

In 2004, for the first time in forty years, the United States won the Olympic Gold Medal for men's eights, and it occurred when a thoughtful coach, a supremely talented stroke-oar and the finest group of athletes ever to sit in a boat for America came together.

The technique that **Bryan Volpenhein**, their stroke, brought to the boat had been developed over three years of rowing in a coxless-pair, with subtle and barely percept-

ible guidance from National Coach **Mike Teti**.⁸⁰⁷⁷

For Bryan and his pair-partner, **Jason Read**, the technique was new.

For Mike, it was the culmination of a two-decade learning curve.

For a large section the United States rowing community, it was a turning away from everything that generation of rowers had grown up believing in.

For the most perceptive among the Old Guard, it was nothing short of the reincarnation of the technique of 1964 Vesper Boat Club stroke **Bill Stowe**.⁸⁰⁷⁸

After forty years, the country had serendipitously come full circle and returned to its Conibear roots.

The Evolution of Mike Teti

I asked Mike about his development as a coach and about the evolution of the 2004 crew.

Teti: "When I was beginning my coaching career, I had the advantage of still rowing on the National Team from '77 to '94. Rowing for **Harry Parker** or rowing for **Kris Korzeniowski** or rowing for **Mike Spracklen**, different things got emphasized, and before I would ever try to teach anything to a crew, I would try it on myself.

"For me, it's [body] preparation,⁸⁰⁷⁹ direct placement, hang the body weight, drive,

⁸⁰⁷⁷ See the Preface

⁸⁰⁷⁸ See Chapter 107 ff.

⁸⁰⁷⁹ a Korzeniowski concept. See Chapter 124.

THE WORLD COMES FULL CIRCLE



FISA 2004 DVD

United States Men's Eight

2004 Olympic Champion, Schinias

Bow **Jason Read** 6'1" 185cm 183lb. 83kg, 2 **Wyatt Allen** 6'4" 193cm 216lb. 98kg,
3 **Chris Ahrens** 6'5" 195cm 214lb. 97kg, 4 **Joey Hansen** 6'6" 198cm 214lb. 97kg,
5 **Matt Deakin** 6'4" 193cm 198lb. 90kg, 6 **Dan Beery** 6'7" 200cm 214lb. 97kg,
7 **Beau Hoopman** 6'4" 193cm 201lb. 91kg, Stroke **Bryan Volpenhein** 6'3" 191cm 225lb. 102kg,
Coxswain **Pete Cipollone**

accelerate, and even when the legs are down, you're still trying to send it.

"If you're at the end of the stroke and you're still prying, then there's still momentum to be gotten out of the boat."⁸⁰⁸⁰

This is the essence of *Schubschlag*.

Here is **Mike Teti** describing how he turns an abrupt *Kernschlag* rower into a smooth *Schubschlag* rower: "Every coach I ever had used to say, 'A little bit quicker

catch.' As a coach, what I found is that whenever I would say 'quicker catch' I would get a more *abrupt* catch, and I didn't want that, so what worked for us in 2004 was for me to say '*slower* catch.'

"Coaches in the launch would look at me funny, and I'd say, 'I don't *mean* that, but by me *saying* that, I'm getting what I want,' which was a little bit more connected and a little bit more patient.

"Definitely what we were trying to get was one motion through the water and a lot

⁸⁰⁸⁰ Teti, personal conversation, 2004

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of time for the recovery, so *massive* acceleration to give us more time.

“When Bryan Volpenhein rows, he searches for that. When he’s racing, even off the start, he’s searching for his pace and his rhythm.

“I think that, like Harry Parker says, the most difficult thing to teach is *feeling*. Bryan has tremendous feel, and he knows what he wants, and if you watch the Olympic final in 2004, that’s basically what he was doing.”⁸⁰⁸¹

The Ballad of Bryan and J.R.

After winning World Championships in the eight in 1997, 1998 and 1999, the fifth place U.S. showing in Sydney in 2000 came as a devastating blow to the athletes,⁸⁰⁸² and no one took it more seriously than **Brian Volpenhein**, bow-seat since 1998. When the team came back from Australia, he left the National Team training center in Princeton and returned to Columbus, Ohio to complete his studies at Ohio State University.

Jason Read had been a peripheral member of the National Team in 2000 and a friend of Bryan’s. Since he was fifteen years old, he had also been a member of his hometown Amwell Valley EMS and Rescue Squad in Ringoes, New Jersey, north of Princeton.

J.R.: “When the Olympic Team left for Sydney, I was disappointed that they only took one port spare and left me home. When the guys did so poorly, it was very upsetting for all of us back in the States to watch because we weren’t there helping the team in any way.

“I remember viewing the Opening Ceremonies in my buddy’s dorm room on the Princeton campus and saying to myself, ‘I’m *never* going to watch this again from home. This is *not* going to happen for Athens.’

⁸⁰⁸¹ Teti, op. cit.

⁸⁰⁸² See Chapter 154.

“I was working hard to finish two degrees at Temple University in Philadelphia, and that fall was my second to last semester. I was also training extremely hard.

“One day I thought to myself, ‘You know what? You should take the spring off and really focus on trying to stroke the eight for the 2001 World Championships in Lucerne.’

“Just then, Mike Teti walked up and asked, ‘So what’s your schedule this spring? Can you go out to Columbus and row with Bryan? We’re getting him back into the sport.’

“I thought to myself, ‘Hey, Bryan’s a great guy. He’s a good friend of mine.’ We had rowed in pre-elite camps together, and it had always gone well whenever we were the stern-pair or the bow-pair together.

“So I said, ‘Okay.’

Columbus, Ohio

Read: “So I was sent out on **Mission Volp** to Ohio State University. This *laissez-faire* approach from Mike was him growing as a coach because that had not been his usual mantra.

“Then after it sank in, I started thinking to myself, ‘Wait a minute. You’re leaving Princeton, New Jersey where you have lots of friends, the Rescue Squad, the Fire Company and a rather intense social and academic schedule at the university?’

“‘Have you lost your mind?’

“So I went out to Columbus not particularly excited.

“It was March. Bryan had a couple of Concept2 smoothy blades with composite handles and a beat-up 1990 Hudson pair we could row. Everything was wood in it, but we made it work.

“Early on when we rowed, we would go out, we’d look around, we’d yell at other boats we practiced with. We were having fun, but we were total buffoons out there.

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“It was a real amateur operation. We literally were on our own to figure things out, get fit, go fast, and eventually lead the eight as the stern-pair at the 2001 Worlds. The irony and the innocence of it all was that we were in the insipient stage of something really revolutionary.

“Fortunately, when **Kris Korzeniowski** was hired [again] by the U.S. after Sydney, he brought a technical aspect to the team in Princeton that we didn’t have from ‘97 to 2000. Just before I left for Ohio, he would coach us occasionally in the afternoons, maybe a couple of time a week. It was always a nice break because you would hear another point of view, and as Bryan and I searched for a direction in Columbus, I remembered the things Kris stressed, things like pushing, hanging your body weight and trying to get momentum onto that oar handle.

“I bought a Speed Coach®. We attached the impeller. We put on a new rudder. I was calling my old college coach, **Gavin White**, occasionally at 5:00 in the morning, to find out about rigging.

“Bryan was trying to finish up school after taking a lot of time off. We rowed once or twice a day on the Scioto River. In the mornings we’d train with the Ohio State women. We would do pieces with them. We felt like part of their team. It was very relaxed setting.

““Bryan and I trained hard, but it was smart training. We’d put in fourteen to sixteen kilometers a day and cross-trained in the afternoon because Bry had school. We had hard days, but it was fun. It was positive.”⁸⁰⁸³

Bryan: “Just to see what it would do, J.R. and I began by exaggerating the hip motion, so it was all legs and *then* the back, basically the way most people row today in the U.S.



Susan Mallory

Jason Read

“For like a year we rowed like that. Jason called it **Italian Style** because if you watch the Italians, their legs are all the way down when their bodies are still all the way forward.”^{8084,8085}

J.R.: “We soon began discussing the importance of ‘pushing, always pushing’ and not ‘PULLING!’ as almost all of us were instructed to do throughout our rowing careers. **James Tomkins**,⁸⁰⁸⁶ and perhaps **Korzeniowski** to a lesser degree, instilled this value.

“‘Just push the boat along, myte,’ [imitating an Australian accent] James would say.

“We would check in with James every few days over the phone. He was coaching the coxless-four back in Princeton and also living at *my* house with his wife, Bridgette. He told us to keep it simple and focus on moving the boat by ‘pushing it along.’

“The fascinating part of this story is that we discussed and made the changes while chatting with James on the phone. We sent

⁸⁰⁸³ Read, personal conversation, 2006

⁸⁰⁸⁴ See Chapter 145.

⁸⁰⁸⁵ Volpenhein, personal conversation, 2005

⁸⁰⁸⁶ See Chapter 131.

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him some video, and he would give us comments by email and phone.”⁸⁰⁸⁷

Bryan: “I learned a lot from James. His approach to rowing is to be really smooth and continuous, really patient with the whole stroke.

“He’s like that in life, too. He surfs a lot. He’s really laid back. His wife is laid back.

“After I met him in 2001 and all the way to 2004, I didn’t care if we won the Worlds or not. All I cared about was making sure that my teammates and I weren’t burned out by the time we got to the Olympics.”⁸⁰⁸⁸

Bryan Volpenhein is not a student of rowing history. When his life came crashing down at the 2000 Olympics, he was only barely aware that something similar had happened four years earlier. He had no idea how many times it had happened in the past.

But to his credit, Bryan Volpehein didn’t need half a century of history to know that he never wanted to experience the pain of 2000 ever again.

Bryan: “All I cared about was making sure that my teammates and I weren’t burned out by the time we got to the next Olympics.

“It’s definitely a wave, and you’ve got to make sure you’re at the peak at the right time.”⁸⁰⁸⁹

J.R.: “When it came to workouts, Bryan always wanted to go on the lighter side, and I think that was James’ influence.

“James stressed being more efficient during all phases of the stroke. He told us, ‘The whole world knows the Americans know how to pull, but pulling is only 50% of the battle. You have to *move* the boat for all the effort you’re putting into it.

“‘Drew [Ginn] and I⁸⁰⁹⁰ know we are going well in our pair when we can row 2:00

minute 500-meter splits at half-pressure at 20 strokes per minute. Just a nice relaxed paddle.

“‘Everything else will fall into place. Keep your eyes on the Speed Coach®, and shoot for that.’

“After that, if the schedule Mike sent us said to do 95% for twelve miles, we would do 65% and just make it *really* good, just being super efficient in every part of the stroke.

“So Volp and I kept trying to figure out how to make that 1990 Hudson pair move. We did a lot of drilling, having this nice suspension between the fingers and the footboards.”⁸⁰⁹¹

Lifeguard Rowing

Bryan: “During 2001 and 2002, we would push the legs and then open the body, push the legs and then open the body, Italian Style, but J.R. had also rowed on the Jersey Shore in lifeguard boats [without sliding seats], so eventually he got us to try, ‘Swing the back like that’s the *only* thing you have to do,’ like in a lifeguard boat.”⁸⁰⁹²

J.R. was not the first person to connect “Olympic rowing” with lifeguard rowing. **Stan Bergman**, long-time rowing coach at Holy Spirit High School in Atlantic City, New Jersey and the University of Pennsylvania, got his start in lifeguard rowing, and **Bob Kaehler**,⁸⁰⁹³ who rowed at Rutgers, was a surfboat fixture in the mid-to-late 1980s. A three-time Olympian and multiple World Champion in the men’s eights, Kaehler was introduced to the surfboat side by a college roommate who coaxed him into trying out to be a lifeguard.”⁸⁰⁹⁴

⁸⁰⁸⁷ Read, op. cit.

⁸⁰⁸⁸ Volpenhein, op. cit.

⁸⁰⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁹⁰ See Chapter 131.

⁸⁰⁹¹ Read, op. cit.

⁸⁰⁹² Volpenhein, op. cit.

⁸⁰⁹³ See Chapter 155.

⁸⁰⁹⁴ Scott Larsen, *Endless Summer*, *Rowing News*, October, 2004, p. 58

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Comcast SportsNet

Ocean City, New Jersey Lifeguard Double

2005 South Jersey Lifeguard Championships

Bow **Dan Garbutt**, Stroke **Matt Garbutt**

+15° to -60°, 0-8, 7-10, pronounced ferryman's finish

Kaehler: “Lifeguard rowing is the greatest. I did it a few years while I was still in college. I went back to it after I didn’t make the Olympic Team in ‘88, and for me it started the ball rolling toward mental confidence, having a dominating summer down at the beach.

“The South Jersey lifeguard circuit? It’s mind boggling what these beach patrol teams come up with talent-wise, and they’ve been doing it since 1908.

“When I won in ‘88, we were the first South Jersey championship *ever* for Cape May, which is not a big town. On our ‘88 squad, our swimmer had won the Pan Pacific in 1988, beating Popov,⁸⁰⁹⁵ and our runner was fifth in the 10,000 meter Olympic Trials, and there was me and Kevin Murphy from the National Rowing Team, all on the same beach patrol in a town which was not a major power as far as lifeguard competition was concerned. When you looked at the

beach patrols in Ocean City and Avalon and Atlantic City and Ventnor, there were always a *bunch* of Olympians.

“That’s the kind of talent you get down there, and I don’t really think people on the outside recognize that.

“When Kevin and I rowed in the US-LAs,⁸⁰⁹⁶ we just barely lost to the L.A. County guys, who were full-time paid professional lifeguards. They wouldn’t even shake our hands after the race. They couldn’t believe that it was possible that people from New Jersey could almost beat them!”⁸⁰⁹⁷

Volp: “Gradually our style went from the extreme leg burst into a more fluid connection between the legs and the body.

“We came to understand that you *have* to carry the power and momentum you’ve created with the leg drive and transfer it to the body swing.”⁸⁰⁹⁸

⁸⁰⁹⁵ Alexander Popov, Russian Olympic Champion in the 50 and 100 meter freestyle swimming events in 1992 and 1996.

⁸⁰⁹⁶ United States Lifesaving Association National Championships

⁸⁰⁹⁷ Kaehler, personal conversation, 2008

⁸⁰⁹⁸ Volpenhein, op. cit.

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J.R.: “We initially incorporated the exaggerated lifeguard swing while joking around on the water with the Ohio State Women’s Varsity.

“Lifeguard rowing was a big part of our breakthrough. It’s the same sport, but it’s a different sport. It’s all about the coordination of the two major muscle groups, the legs and the back. If we were to do vectors, *I believe we would find the swing of the back from the hips is the crucial link.*

“The essence of lifeguard rowing is long suspension and swing. There is no sliding seat and very little leg drive in this form of rowing. [my emphasis]”⁸⁰⁹⁹

Kaehler: “Lifeguard rowing is certainly more than half backs, especially when you do the really long rows, like around the island, four hours. You really have to hang your body weight or you’re not going to make it.”⁸¹⁰⁰

J.R.: “Here’s my feeble attempt at describing the intersection of lifeguard rowing and normal rowing:

“First, the key to maximizing the drive is hips first (almost shooting the bum) while suspending effortlessly from your lats, with the contact points being the feet and the fingers, followed by a strong core-muscle, trunk-based swing of the upper-body. It’s as if the upper-body always has to catch up with the bum, which is already pushing toward the bow.

“Second, the hands should rebound quickly but not hastily as a counterbalance for the very aggressive and pronounced swing. This rebounding motion becomes



Comcast SportsNet

17’ Van Dyne Surf Boat

Fixed seats and footboards, thole pins.

automatic and enables you to shut down the body after the hands have been pushed away from the chest.

“Then there is less than a second to relax with the body already prepared for the catch as you let the boat run out while you coast into the stern.

“I believe it is *essential* to have the body quiet on the recovery, especially while traveling towards the stern - irrespective of stroke rate - so as to avoid stern check.

“Between 2001 and 2003, Bryan and I came to know each other’s strengths and each other’s weaknesses, so we would try to reduce the impact of the weaknesses and just work together. I’d say, ‘Bryan, let’s try this.’ And he’d say, ‘Let’s try that,’ and I would watch the Speed Coach®, and I’d say, ‘Yeah, that’s great,’ and he’d say, ‘J.R., I’m not even pulling. What are *you* doing?’

“I’m going at body weight, Bry,” and the Speed Coach® would go down to about 2:04, 2:03 per 500 at barely over a paddle.

“James Tomkins kept coaching us over the phone, and he was a huge influence on

⁸⁰⁹⁹ Read, op. cit.

⁸¹⁰⁰ Kaehler, personal conversation, 2008

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RowTV, *The Henley Champions 2003*

Princeton Training Center Men's Coxless-Pair

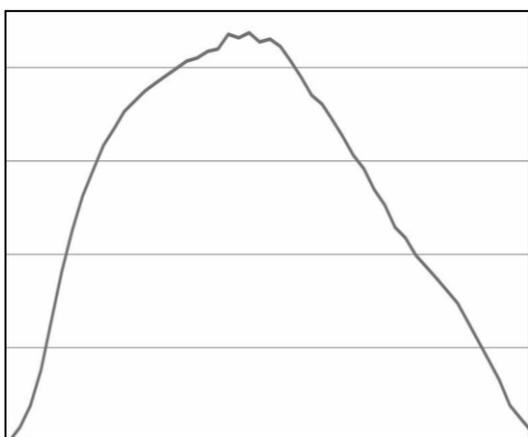
2003 Henley Silver Goblets Finalist

Stroke **Bryan Volpenhein**, Bow **Jason Read**

+10°, +25° to -25°, 0-9, 0-10, 5-10 Classical Technique

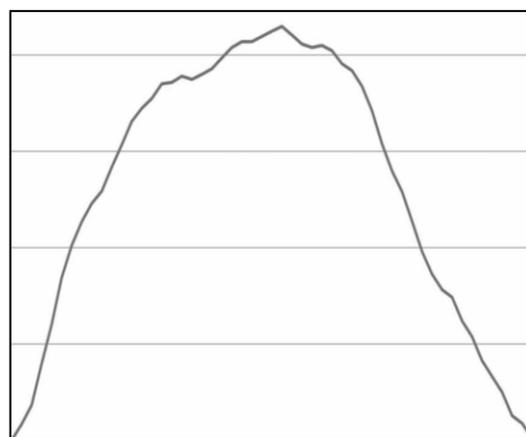
Rhythm was *Schubschlag* with emphasis on swing to finish.

By 2004, layback increased from -25° to -35°.



Author

Bryan Volpenhein
Schubschlag acceleration
declined due to late arm draw.



Author

Jason Read
Schubschlag with same
late arm draw anomaly.

us taking that next step technically from the late-'90's iteration of upright posture and explosive leg drive.⁸¹⁰¹ He would tell us to

⁸¹⁰¹ See Preface.

keep it really light and relaxed, hips first, and then a big swing, lifeguard-style, hanging, hanging, hanging, and then let it go.

“Korzo had also talked about this ‘light feeling,’

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“And it worked. I think we took the best from **Mike Teti**, **James Tomkins**, **Kris Korzeniowski** and **Ted Nash**, and supplemented all that with our own things, with lifeguard rowing and what we discovered on our own in our pair.

“The whole spring of 2001 we had three, maybe four talks with Coach Teti. All of them can be summed up with this statement: ‘I’m acutely aware that my whole career is in the hands of two college idiots . . . because you guys are going to lead the team this year.’

“You know how laid-back Bryan is. Well, I was foaming at the mouth at the prospect of *leading* the National Team. This was my big opportunity. I’d been the smallest guy on every team, the junior team in ‘95, the under-23 team ‘97, ‘98, ‘99, and then being a training dummy in the summer of 2000, but then doing really well in seat racing.

“Sweating profusely, Bryan and I would pass the phone back and forth to each other as Mike stated how fast everyone was moving back on Lake Carnegie. ‘If you guys aren’t really training, you guys are going to get absolutely killed when you get back to Princeton . . . and guess what? There’s going to be no one here to help you.

“‘Then I’m going to get fired, and then I’m going to come after you, and my *cousins* are going to come after you.’

“Our heart rates were in AT-mode after those phone calls.

“We came back to Princeton at the end of May for the speed order trials. Bryan and I won by more than fourteen seconds, and all those other guys had been getting coaching every day.

“We beat all the doubles, too.

“Bryan and I became the stern-pair of the eight that summer. We came in a close

fourth, 3.28 seconds behind Romania, with Croatia and Germany in between.”⁸¹⁰²

Mike Teti: “In 2001, I never called Bryan and J.R. once while they were in Columbus. I trusted Brian, as I always have. When J.R. refers to all the guys they beat at the 2001 speed orders, I only had four guys training in Princeton that spring, and only one of them had ever been in a pair.”⁸¹⁰³

Jeff Klepacki: “J.R. could sell ice to Eskimos.”⁸¹⁰⁴

J.R.: “At Teti’s wedding that fall, **John Pescatore**, another South Jersey Lifeguard Champion, a Penn guy, now the Yale coach,⁸¹⁰⁵ said to me, ‘J.R., stay in the pair with Bryan. Row in the Olympics in the pair.’

“Of course, this was less than a year after John coming off a Silver Medal coaching performance with his guys, **Sebastian Bea** and **Ted Murphy**,⁸¹⁰⁶ but it’s always good to get encouragement like that when things weren’t going all that well in the big boats.”⁸¹⁰⁷

9-1-1

The Ballad of Bryan and J.R. by Jason Read did not take place in a vacuum. Bryan has a degree in philosophy from Ohio State, and in 1999, at the age of 21, J.R. had become the youngest ever elected chief of an EMS and Rescue Squad in the State of New Jersey.

ESPN: “There was perhaps no time in Read’s life that called for his serious side more than on Sept. 11, 2001. That morning, along with hundreds of New Jersey-based

⁸¹⁰² Read, op. cit.

⁸¹⁰³ Teti, op. cit., 2006

⁸¹⁰⁴ Klepacki, personal conversation, 2008

⁸¹⁰⁵ Pescatore resigned in 2010.

⁸¹⁰⁶ See Chapter 137.

⁸¹⁰⁷ Read, op. cit.

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rescue personnel, Read helped set up a field hospital in Liberty State Park in Jersey City. The park sits west of lower Manhattan with direct access to ferry lines certain to be used as part of an emergency evacuation route.

“No patients came.

“As Read and others realized what that meant – the towers fell before the expected patients had time to escape – the rescuers made their way to Ground Zero to assist in searching amidst the rubble.

“‘The amount of destruction was unfathomable,’ Read said, still choking up at the mention of it. ‘We went into the pile searching for survivors, but there weren’t any. Just people’s bodies, not intact.’

“Read stayed at the site for five days, numbed by the images flooding his mind and driven by hope of finding someone still alive.

“‘It was unbelievable to see all the people working,’ he said. ‘There were no turf wars, there were no officers barking orders, it was just everyone working toward a common goal.’

“Drained and exhausted, it took weeks before Read was able to get back on the water. But when he did, he found the peace and serenity of rowing to be a welcome break from the stressful emotions of his job.”⁸¹⁰⁸

J.R.: “In rowing, I used to be motivated to just pummel the opposition. After 9-1-1, it was all about representing our country, wearing the red, white and blue, honor, pa-

triotism, all the values that make us great.”⁸¹⁰⁹

Bryan: “I’m just a regular guy. J.R.’s a hero.”⁸¹¹⁰

Henley, 2003



RowTV, *The Henley Champions 2003*

Cracknell and Pinsent lead by a length with twenty strokes to go.

J.R.: “I can remember certain moments when our pair really moved to the next step, and one of them was at Henley in 2003 against **Matthew Pinsent** and **James Cracknell**, the two-time defending World Coxless-Pair Champion.

“Before Henley, the whole U.S. Team was training at the British National Centre on Dorney Lake at Eton. The British Team was also training there.

“A week before our Henley heat for the Silver Goblets, we did a four times 1,500m workout with **Cracknell and Pinsent**⁸¹¹¹ on

⁸¹⁰⁸ Carrie Sheinberg, [Rower Finds a Balance](#), July 20, 2004, *ESPN.com*

⁸¹⁰⁹ Read, *op. cit.*

⁸¹¹⁰ Volpenhein, *op. cit.*

⁸¹¹¹ 2001 and 2002 World Champions. See Chapter 136.

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the lake, and we got slaughtered, absolutely slaughtered.”⁸¹¹²

Bryan: “We just got demolished by those guys, ten, fifteen seconds in 1,500 meters, and it was like *instant*. They had like lengths of open water in ten strokes. We were hitting buoys and just flopping all over the place.”⁸¹¹³

J.R.: “Teti really laid into us after we got off the water, and that night Bryan went out and got *so* intoxicated that he was vomiting the whole next day. We missed practice.

“Now I come from a college program and a high school program at the Hun School where you don’t drink *at all*, and here I was in England with all their pomp and circumstance with a drunk club rower from a mediocre rowing college. Physiologically and technically, he’s one of the best rowers in the history of our sport from our country and perhaps beyond, but I was looking for anything to say that might rein him in.

“‘Hey, this isn’t the Dad Vails, Bry.’

“So he’s vomiting all over the place the Sunday before the Silver Goblets heat, and I’m thinking to myself, ‘What the heck am I doing?’”⁸¹¹⁴

Bryan: “What made our Henley experience important was that I learned to be a little more fearless because we had to change our strategy in order to race Cracknell and Pinsent again.

“Based on our horrendous showing in our practice with them, we decided that we were going to attack at the beginning of the race a lot harder, and we were going to row a lot higher.

“We rowed at 37½ all the way down the course, just sort of tapping it along and keeping it going, just staying in contact. The attitude was a big change for us, being able to say, ‘To hell with it. We’ve got

nothing to lose. Let’s just relax and race.”⁸¹¹⁵

J.R.: “By 2003, we were getting better at not rushing into the front, and everything within the rhythm of the boat. We would be able to just go bananas and still keep the boat set, everything going *with* the boat, like at the Henley final when we sprinted the last 500 meters.

“That was going to the well and beyond, and we were so close, from open water to a **third of a length** at the end and *moving* all the way!

“We were looking out, doing everything you’re *not* supposed to do. Look at these two college idiots!”⁸¹¹⁶

Pete Cipollone: “I was on the finish line for that race. It was the most exciting experience I had ever had!”⁸¹¹⁷

J.R.: “I thought I was going to soil myself when I got off the water. I’m serious. I thought I was going to lose it because it was a longer race because we were in a pair, and it was a longer race because it was the Henley distance.”⁸¹¹⁸ When I got to the dock, I had a nose bleed. I was spitting up blood, and when I took off my spandex, there was blood on my unisuit.

“I think when Mike talks about ‘super max,’ this was super max, and **Joey Hansen** was pissed off because I’d borrowed his uniform. He called me a pig.

“What was disappointing about 2003 was that you look at us in the pair, and then we got in the eight, and it was just not as distinct. Bryan was in the 5-seat. I was in 2-seat. We should have been stern-pair of that boat. We lost to Canada by .9 seconds, and they were hanging and swinging like *we* should have been.”⁸¹¹⁹

⁸¹¹² Read, op. cit.

⁸¹¹³ Volpenhein, op. cit.

⁸¹¹⁴ Read, op. cit.

⁸¹¹⁵ Volpenhein, op. cit.

⁸¹¹⁶ Read, op. cit.

⁸¹¹⁷ Cipollone, personal conversation, 2008

⁸¹¹⁸ See Chapter 5.

⁸¹¹⁹ Read, op. cit.

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Ed Hewitt, www.row2k.com

First J.R. takes a look . . .

Teti: “Brian rowed in the 5-seat in 2003 because that’s where he wanted to row.”⁸¹²⁰

Bryan: “We later carried that same ‘to hell with it’ attitude into Athens because there was no pressure on us there either, which I think was one of the biggest differences between 2000 and 2004.”⁸¹²¹

Core Strength

J.R.: “Now I’ve always done a lot of stretching because I’m small, and I need to be as long as the other guys, and I need to be able to achieve that in some way, and Bryan was also one of the few guys that did stretch a bit, but as a team collectively, we didn’t stretch at all.

“[A member of the British Team] started talking to us about core muscle strength, and



Ed Hewitt, www.row2k.com

. . . then both take a look!

don’t have any of these essential *muscles*.’

“So we started doing this core strength stuff, and it was the perfect time, going into the Olympic year. **Bob Kaehler**, a Rutgers grad with a master’s in physical therapy from Columbia, a former South Jersey Life-

⁸¹²⁰ Teti, op. cit.

⁸¹²¹ Volpenhein, op. cit.

⁸¹²² See Chapter 144.

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guard Champion and a mentor of mine and Bryan's, ended up verifying this stuff."⁸¹²³

Kaehler: "I've been working with Mike and the team the past year [2007] on strength and conditioning, and that's pretty much what we spend a tremendous amount of time on. As a therapist and a strength and conditioning specialist, I see these injuries on the back end and I see why they happen.

"Core conditioning's a big factor in performance and injury prevention, and it gives you a bit of an extra edge because a lot of guys don't have that natural strength internally, so you want to make sure you're covering all of that."⁸¹²⁴

J.R.: "Bryan brought up core strength to Mike, and he said, 'Bryan, why don't you and J.R. lead the stretching with the core strength.'

"Well, we started doing the exercises, and some of the other guys did, some didn't. Then when we got out to San Diego to train during the Olympic year, as a team we started doing a lot of core stabilization work with the strength coaches out there, using a medicine ball, doing different things, trying to build up the girdle area.

"The results took hold after the World Championships in 2003, and if you compare 2003 and 2004, you can see it made a *huge* difference."⁸¹²⁵

The Sprack Back

Bryan: "The layback of Mike Spracklen's Canadian crew⁸¹²⁶ reinforced our life-guard rowing. At first it was like, 'What are they doing?' At Lucerne in 2002 they got way up on us and we rowed them down in the second half.

"And the same thing happened at Opening Day in Seattle in early 2003. We didn't

think they could row their technique and sustain it for 2,000 meters. We'd catch them whenever we wanted.

"But when it counted at the 2002 Worlds, we *didn't* catch them. At the 2003 Worlds, we *didn't* catch them again, even though we got a little closer, and so we had to accept that they were doing something that we *had* to take seriously.

"For J.R. and me, it started in practice after the 2003 Worlds. It started as a joke in a way, a step beyond our life-guard rowing. We were doing four times 3,000m pieces in pairs at 24, 26, 28 at the Olympic Training Center on Otay Lake, and we would exaggerate the layback, laying down as far as we could, even hitting the rigger in the back, just screwing around, but we could see how it was working. At low cadence you can swing like that and sustain it, and it definitely helped.

"If you watch the Canadians racing in '02 or '03 or even '04, they were not swinging back *that much*, but if you look at us and the way all the other crews had *been* rowing in previous years, we were not swinging *enough*.

"When you talk about length, I always think about how much *time* I'm spending in the water. When I am on the drive, I am thinking how long I can keep my blade accelerating in the water before I *have* to take it out."⁸¹²⁷

Teti: "I *never* use the term 'layback.' It's a passive word. The phrase I prefer is 'body swing' or 'active body swing.'"⁸¹²⁸

Mike Spracklen: "On arriving in Athens for the 2004 Olympic Games, I was walking towards **James Tomkins**⁸¹²⁹ from Australia in the boat house area. 'I see you have brought a lot of Canadian crews', he said. 'Only three,' I replied, referring to the

⁸¹²³ Read, op. cit.

⁸¹²⁴ Kaehler, personal conversation, 2008

⁸¹²⁵ Read, op. cit.

⁸¹²⁶ See Chapter 151.

⁸¹²⁷ Volpenhein, op. cit.

⁸¹²⁸ Teti, op. cit., 2004

⁸¹²⁹ See Chapter 131.

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FISA 2002 DVD



FISA 2004 DVD

The Southern Migration of the Sprack Back

Andrew Hoskins, Canada 6-seat
2002 World Champion, Seville
-25° layback

Bryan Volpenhein, USA stroke-seat
2004 Olympic Champion, Schinias
-35° layback!

eight, four and pair that I was coaching. ‘I have just seen more than that on the water,’ he said as he continued on his way. Then I realized he was referring to the large number of crews that were swinging at the finish.

“Even the USA Eight, our main opposition, were swinging at the finish. It is risky copying a movement without understanding the reason for doing it, but the USA certainly made no mistake and broke the world record in the heat, beating us at our own game by a few feet in the process.”⁸¹³⁰

Technique

Penn A.C. 1986 World Champion **Dan Lyons**:⁸¹³¹ “Before 2004, it was just push the legs, a segmented stroke. When you looked at that 2004 Eight, you knew right away *why* they were winning. They were rowing a connected stroke, which they hadn’t been rowing before, which Mike and Kris hadn’t

been teaching. They had been rowing like Penn A.C. rows. They just had better athletes at that point.

“You could tell they were going to win in Athens because *they had finally learned how to row!* They taught themselves, and if you talk to these guys, they will tell you that. They basically taught themselves how to row.”⁸¹³²

Bryan: “If you watch the tapes from ‘98, when I made my first national team, to now, it was *drastically* different rowing. Back then it was all horizontal and explosive power with no swing. It was all legs, and I was really hunched over and just driving as hard as I could.

“I had *no* idea what I was doing. I was just out there rowing as hard as I could and hanging on for dear life.

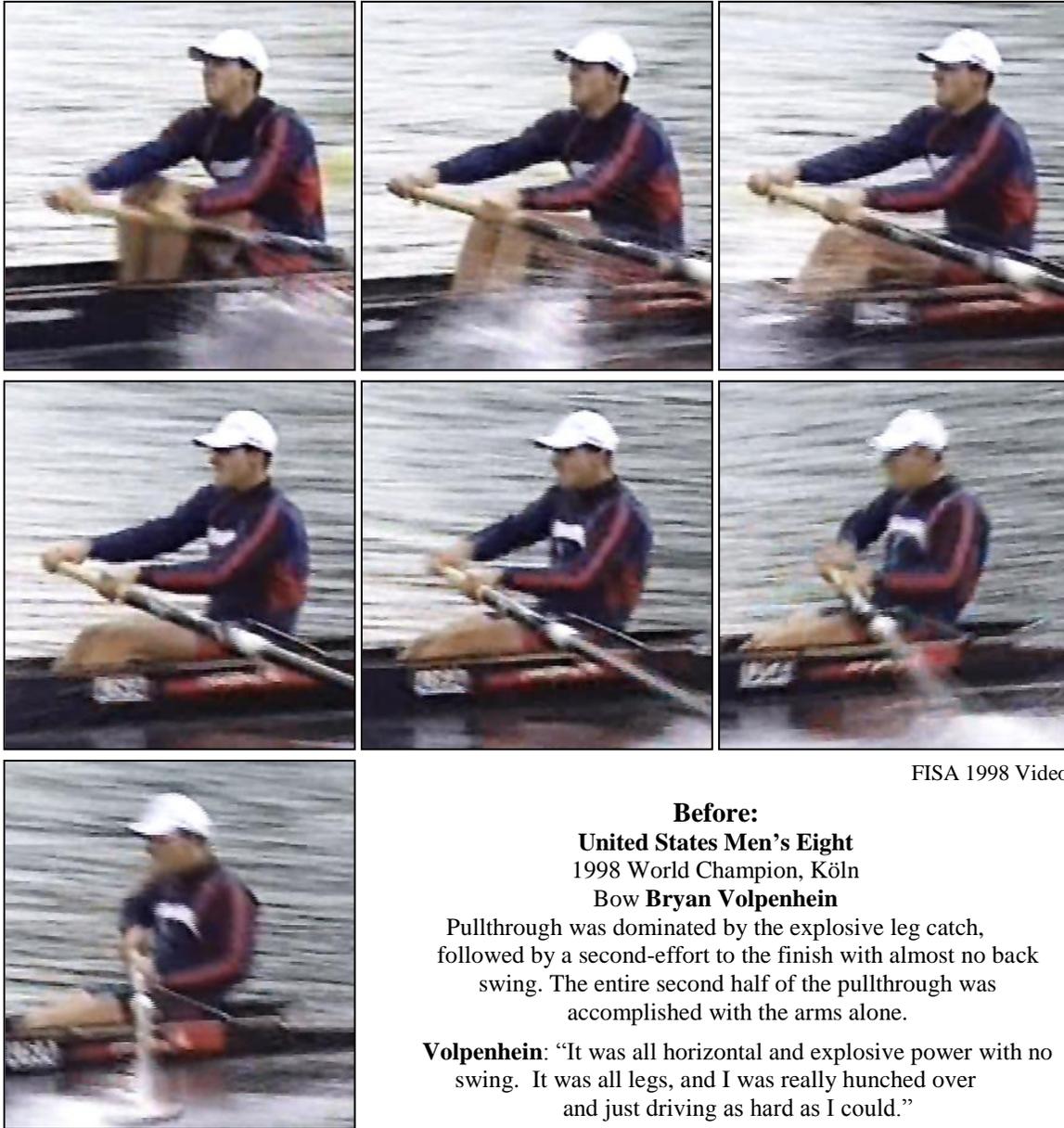
“I think it’s survival. Maybe the way America has rowed the last forty years has something to do with the transition from the club to the camp system, where right away

⁸¹³⁰ Spracklen, personal correspondence, 2010

⁸¹³¹ See Chapters 132 and 144.

⁸¹³² Lyons, personal conversation, 2009

THE SPORT OF ROWING



FISA 1998 Video

Before:

United States Men's Eight
1998 World Champion, Köln
Bow **Bryan Volpenhein**

Pullthrough was dominated by the explosive leg catch, followed by a second-effort to the finish with almost no back swing. The entire second half of the pullthrough was accomplished with the arms alone.

Volpenhein: "It was all horizontal and explosive power with no swing. It was all legs, and I was really hunched over and just driving as hard as I could."

the focus is on selection and performance instead of on developing a rowing stroke over four years that is going to win you a Gold Medal.

"And it's repeated every year! You have to perform or else you're not going to make the team, and the quickest way to do that *seems* to be to pound the catch, be as aggressive as you can the whole time you're there. That's how it was before 2001, ag-

gressive all the time. If your boat was ahead, it didn't matter how it got there.

"And at the time, I *believed* it was right. We all did. I mean it *worked!* We were winning . . .

"Just not when it really counted, as in the Olympic years.

"The American eights before 2000 and even the crews leading up to 2004 were a *lot* different than the crew in Athens. When

THE WORLD COMES FULL CIRCLE



FISA 2004 DVD

After:

United States Men's Eight

2004 Olympic Champion, Schinias

Stroke **Bryan Volpenhein**

+10°, +25° to -35°, 0-9, 0-10, 5-10 Classical Technique concurrent *Schubschlag*

Rhythm was strong acceleration with back swing from catch to release and strong send.

you look at '01, '02, '03, you see a team in transition from our old style to our new style, trying to adapt and really apply to the eight what we were learning in pairs, and that was tough to do because the eight is so much faster. You just want to *pull!*

"There was even a difference in technique between 2003 and 2004. You can even see it in the still pictures. There was a *huge* difference. I think a lot of it had to do with personnel, all the guys understanding, without really talking about it, understanding how to row, how to approach the rowing stroke.

"It was all based on all the work J.R. and I did in our pair! The eight was selecting through a pair matrix,⁸¹³³ and that had

shifted the focus from strictly seat racing to good technique in a pair."⁸¹³⁴

Cipollone: "Everyone remembers it in their own way, and everyone probably likes to think that they were the extra-special secret sauce that made it all happen."⁸¹³⁵

Sebastian Bea:⁸¹³⁶ "By training us in pairs, Mike completely changed the way that the National Team thought. When you have to move a pair, the boat teaches you how to row. You can get away with things in the eight and make things *sort of* work, but you'll never really get the full speed of the boat without learning to move the pair first.

"But once you learn to do that, I don't think it's a conscious decision anymore."⁸¹³⁷

Bryan: "In the pairs and in the fours, we would tell each other when it was good and when it was not good. You're rowing along and the boat comes into a rhythm and starts

⁸¹³³ A "pair matrix" is a series of round-robin competitions in pairs where all the possible combinations of ports and starboards on a squad are raced, points are awarded and a hierarchy of ports and starboards is established, based on the cumulative results.

⁸¹³⁴ Volpenhein, op. cit.

⁸¹³⁵ Cipollone, personal conversation, 2010

⁸¹³⁶ See Chapter 137.

⁸¹³⁷ Bea, personal conversation, 2006

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to move, and somebody will say, ‘That’s it!’ and that’s all you have to say.”⁸¹³⁸

Jeff Klepacki: “Volp’s stroke got *really* horizontal as opposed to lifting off the catch. The shoulders would get engaged pretty early. He missed no water at the front. His catch was direct, so almost no splash or a vertical splash, and he was immediately connected and horizontal the *whole* way through to the finish.

“As he matured physically in those later years, his VO² was in the top 1% of elite athletes. He was 7.1, 7.2 liters, which was nearly unprecedented. There are four people I know of in the world that are at that level, so the fact that he has that capacity, is pulling 5:47 on the erg, and his lactic acid threshold is higher than the rest of the group, you have a very unique specimen who should go home and thank Mom and Dad for the genetic code he’s been given.

“When most of us were starting to count down the clock, he was just getting warmed up.”⁸¹³⁹

Ted Nash: “Mike and I have had a lifetime of debate about boats and styles. Where we always agreed was on reaching into the water sharply but quietly with silent, snug catches, blending, suspending the body weight and continuing the pressure as long as there is water to use. We always agreed on the value of small-boat talent.

“The 2004 crew was well mixed by head chef Teti with sauce, pepper, spirit and logic and stirring all the time.”⁸¹⁴⁰

It is interesting to look at the force curves of Volpenhein and Read earlier in this chapter. Their metaphorical journey through the various approaches to technique apparently did not take them all the way to the perfect parabolas of GDR athletes such as Thomas Lange. Both curves show excel-

lent coordination of legs and back, the beginnings of a symmetrical parabola, but their **late arm break**⁸¹⁴¹ limited acceleration in the last third of their pullthroughs.

Bryan: “Trying to keep accelerating [all the way through to the release] with the increasing speed of an eight is really hard, but I think we did that really well in our eight in 2004. That was one of the *best* things that we did. You’ve got to create momentum and then somehow *hold on to it* for as long as you can, and for a long time it seems like we forgot that as a National Team . . . and as a country!

“Instead, we were all about ‘Get as *much* power as you can as *early* as you can!’ and not hold on to it as *long* as you can.”⁸¹⁴²

The Olympic Lineup

The final 2004 Olympic boating had the many-faceted **Jason Read** in the bow-seat.

The curve of 2-seat **Wyatt Allen** in the 2004 Eight was perhaps the closest to the *Schubschlag* ideal. A product of the club program at the University of Virginia, he went on to win the Diamond Sculls at Henley in 2005.

Ahrens: “I wasn’t around, but the legend was that when Wyatt showed up in Princeton, people thought he didn’t row well and this and that and that he wasn’t strong enough, so they kind of put him in the back. When everybody went out, he’d get stuck in the single.

“Over time, he was doing pieces, and he was *not* at the back of the pack, and then all of a sudden he was winning, and soon he was the best single sculler of all, and also his erg score was really good.”⁸¹⁴³

⁸¹³⁸ Volpenhein, op. cit.

⁸¹³⁹ Klepacki, op. cit.

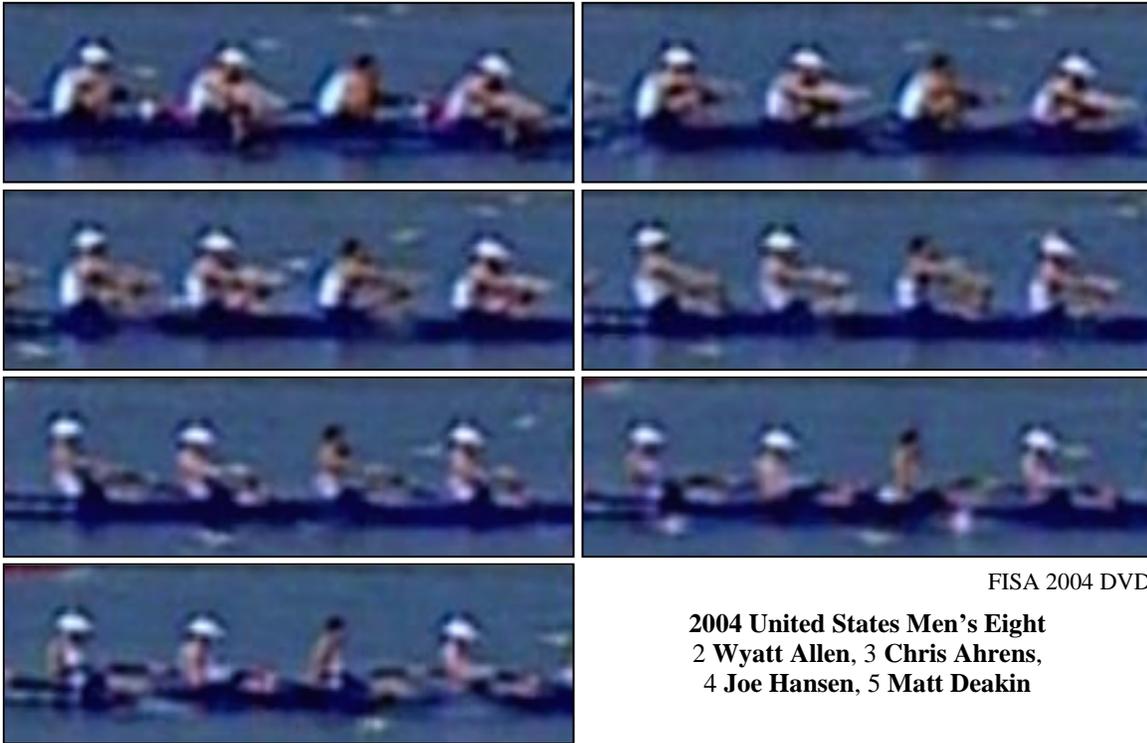
⁸¹⁴⁰ Nash, personal correspondence, 2010

⁸¹⁴¹ See Chapter 168.

⁸¹⁴² Volpenhein, op. cit.

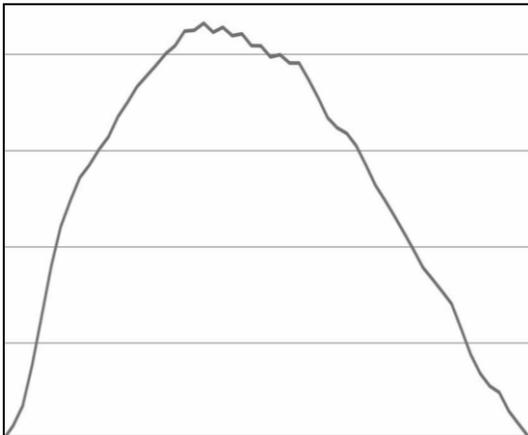
⁸¹⁴³ Ahrens, personal conversation, 2010

THE WORLD COMES FULL CIRCLE



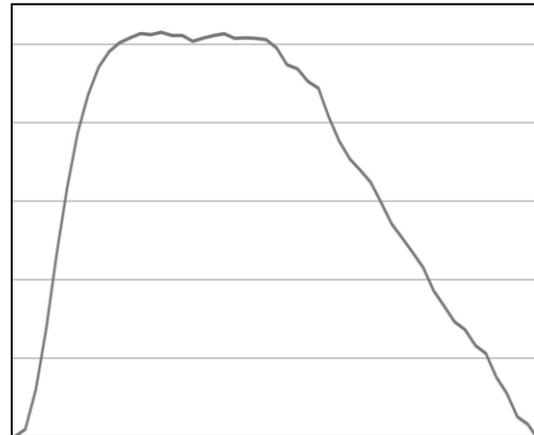
FISA 2004 DVD

2004 United States Men's Eight
2 Wyatt Allen, 3 Chris Ahrens,
4 Joe Hansen, 5 Matt Deakin



Author

Wyatt Allen
 Parabolic *Schubschlag*



Author

Matt Deakin
 Sequential *Kernschlag*

Allen: +5°, +20° to -30°, 0-9, 0-9, 5-10 Classical Technique
Ahrens: +5°, +25° to -35°, 0-9, 0-9, 5-10 Classical Technique
Hansen: +5°, +30° to -20°, 0-5, 0-9, 5-10 Modern Orthodox Technique
Deakin: +5°, +30° to -35°, 0-5, 0-10, 5-10 Modern Orthodox Technique

The 2004 eight was not entirely homogeneous.
 The 4- and 5-seats were sequential *Kernschlag* rowers.

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Chris Ahrens

Three-seat **Chris Ahrens** had perhaps the most improbable journey to Athens of anyone in the crew. He had rowed at Milwaukee Rowing Club and Princeton University, the only product of an Ivy League program in the entire boat.

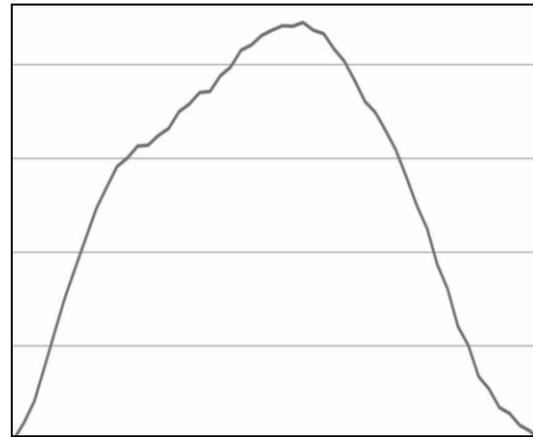
When he joined the team in 1997, he was rowing 0-9, 0-9, 5-10 concurrent *Schubschlag*. When last we saw him in 2000,⁸¹⁴⁴ he was rowing 0-6, 2-9, 5-10 sequential *Kernschlag*. By 2004, he was again rowing 0-9, 0-9, 5-10 concurrent *Schubschlag* with extra emphasis on back swing in the second half of the pullthrough.

Ahrens: “I think there’s a balance between productive effort and nonproductive effort, but I think you can read too much into the technical stuff.

“I think that confidence is a *huge* component of performance. When you’re confident, you can row better because you feel more relaxed and you can apply your power better, and when you go out every day and you post good times, that builds upon itself day by day. You can feel better about being aggressive, and I think that’s a lot of what happened in ‘04.

“Because we didn’t really have any bad rows, our confidence just built, and that manifested itself in the reality that we were rowing better and faster and all those things.

“Whereas in 2000 we had the opposite happening, which was we’d have a bad row and the next day you go out and try harder, and if you have five or six bad rows, all of a sudden it isn’t ‘Well, we just had a bad row, and it’ll come back.’ It’s ‘Oh my gosh, what do we do?’”⁸¹⁴⁵



Author

Chris Ahrens

Schubschlag with strong back swing

Besides Bryan and coxswain Pete Cipolone, Chris was the only other holdover from 2000.

Ahrens: “In terms of dealing with what happened in 2000, I essentially eliminated rowing and the Olympics and sports from my life. I didn’t want to think about it. I didn’t want to talk to people about it. I just want to move on with life, so I got married, moved to New York and got a job.

“I had been working for a year or two, and one day I got out of the shower, looked in the mirror and said, ‘Wow, you have to start working out a little bit!’ So I started working out, and after a little while I decided if I was actually going to spend an hour each day working out, ‘Well, why don’t I see if I can get in reasonable shape?’

“At the same time, the guys who were on the team at that point were doing well. They won a Bronze in ‘02, and they had been close, very competitive, and I knew it would burn me if they were to win an Olympic medal without me in ‘04.

“I didn’t know if I could actually pull it off with my work, but beginning in the fall of ‘02, I started training more intensely, and I figured if by the springtime I could be around 6:00 on the ergometer just training

⁸¹⁴⁴ See Chapter 155.

⁸¹⁴⁵ Ahrens, op. cit.

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on my own, then I'll think about doing it more seriously.

"When I look back now, I realize I was doing things which I think are crazy now, but at the time psychologically I needed to do them because I had the desire to at least get it out of my system and see if I was capable of doing it again.

"Like I would work out in the morning, and I would come home after work and at 8:30 or 9 o'clock row the erg for an hour. Or I would take the train down to Princeton on a Saturday, go row like 20k in the single and take the train back up.

"I went down a couple of times that spring and rowed with the group in some pairs and stuff, and then in the fall of '03 I called Mike and asked him if he would mind if I came down and tried out, and he said that that would be okay.

"So I just showed up in the fall and started training with the guys, and I was living with Chip, and it was nice because he and I are very good friends and we were able to be a bit of a support system for one another, but also it was good because he is a coxswain and I'm a rower and so there was a bit of a separation. I would sleep there at his house, practice, take the train into New York to work and take the train back in the evening, practice again and then go back to his house. Then on the weekends I'd go to my house in New York.

"I did that for a while, and then I took time off from work and was staying in Princeton full time.

"I was really lucky that it all kind of worked, and I was extremely lucky that the people that I worked for and worked with were understanding and allowed me to do it. If they had not done that, there is no way I'd have been able to do what I did. Of all the things that happened to me in '04, I think that was what was perhaps the most extraor-

dinary. I think that was in large part because I work for **Dick Cashin**.⁸¹⁴⁶

"Dick had his own version of 2000, which was '76, where they had won before, had a good crew, and then it didn't work out the way they wanted, so he was perhaps more understanding than other people of what was driving me, and it was extraordinary of him to give me the opportunity."⁸¹⁴⁷

Sitting in front of 3-seat Chris Ahrens in the 2004 lineup were two *Kernschlag* rowers, 4-seat **Joe Hansen** from Oregon State, and 5-seat **Matt Deakin** from Pacific Rowing Club. Deakin's curve is a fine example of relatively smooth rowing with a strong front-half emphasis.

Ahrens: "I think that Joey Hanson is probably the best natural athlete of the group, and when we were in San Diego, whoever rowed with Matt Deakin won.

"In 2003, Joey and Matt won the fall speed order and if they had been allowed to keep rowing together, it wouldn't have surprised me that they had ended up the top pair."⁸¹⁴⁸

Six-seat **Dan Beery** from Tennessee-Chattanooga and 7-seat **Beau Hoopman** from the University of Wisconsin closely matched the technique of stroke man Volpenhein.

Ahrens: "Beau was a consistent performer throughout the year, and it was kind of obvious that we had a mix of guys who just kind of went well together. Beau was tough and consistent and had skill as a rower and wasn't *just* a strong guy, and all of that together with the fact that he went well with Bryan, he was a nice fit.

"Dan was a bit of an unknown coming in. He had been rowing at Penn A.C. the year before and had done well, but no one really knew him. He is a year or two older

⁸¹⁴⁶ See Chapters 111 and 114.

⁸¹⁴⁷ Ahrens, op. cit.

⁸¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

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than I am, so he was the oldest in the group, and Dan and I rowed the pair a lot, and it was just very easy, very natural. It felt very comfortable. We could row square-blade outside-arm for 1,000 meters and have the blades touch only a couple of times. Like Joey, he was just a natural athlete who happened to be rowing. He was somebody who had hand-eye coordination as opposed to a lot of guys who ended up being rowers because they couldn't shoot a basketball.

Dan Beery: "For me, it felt like Mike Teti sort of continually set and reset the framework for what our technique was going to be. It seemed like we were looking to gradually move toward a technique that was both fast and economical. From there, we all sort of started nudging and polishing it into a sustainable rhythm that had an easy flow.

"The biggest asset I think we had as far as the technique went was a very relaxed recovery that gave us time to really pound it on the drive. To me, it seemed like we were looking for length and rhythm, and we tried to find a way to get there by rowing efficiently. Given the amount of time and ratio, it was obviously critical that the balance and timing of the catch was dead on. Otherwise the rhythm gets mushy and everyone gets tired really quickly.

"If you are trying to row with maximum length at 36, it is seriously detrimental to get all the way 'out there' and have the boat fall to one side because the balance is questionable. With guys like Wyatt and J.R. in the bow-pair, we had some excellent power and stabilization, which gave everyone the confidence to continually extend out to full length.

"I guess what I feel like began to occur was that once we established the technique and rhythm, we all began to communicate about how we were going to execute it during pieces . . . such as Chip saying something and we would sort of 'reset' to that

call. Or J.R. would say something like 'down and away' if the water was choppy. A call from Chip to 'sit up' at the finish in a tailwind or swing back an inch farther at the finish in a headwind would just sort of nudge the technique to match the conditions.

"I also remember discussing a lot how the pieces felt. We had great communication, and at the appropriate times someone would say something like 'great ratio on that one' or 'balance was a little off' or 'we're pulling a little to one side,' and depending on whether the comment was positive or something that needed to be corrected, we would work together to fix it.

"I guess, to summarize, it seemed like we sort of found three or four gears, and each one would look technically different . . . at least to me they felt very technically different. One 'technique' at the start, one for moves, one for base, one to start the transition to the sprint ('harden on,' gathering and prepping for the sprint) and then the sprinting gear. I guess it may be my opinion, but it seemed like they were all changed depending on the conditions.

"To me, it even seemed like there were different moves (commitments) during the pieces. One type of move seemed to move the speed (and I'm just generalizing speeds here) from 1:22 per 500 meters to 1:18 per 500 meters for a commitment of the determined amount of strokes and immediately transition back to a base speed. The other type of commitment seemed to drop the speed from 1:22 for 500 meters to 1:18 for 500 meters, and then the move would gradually 'bleed off' back into a normal base speed and rhythm at the end of the move. So, if the move was fast and felt efficient, Chip would let it ride and just naturally drift back to the sustainable base speed.

"So, I'm not sure if that makes any sense, but there it is. Most of this is summarized from the notes I took at the time."⁸¹⁴⁹

⁸¹⁴⁹ Beery, personal correspondence, 2010

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2004

Bryan: “We had these two fast fours in the spring of 2004, and we were searching for a stroke and not really clicking as an eight. Mike was trying to figure out how to put it all together, and I think it sort of came up out of the blue, switching to starboard rig, and asking me if I would do it.

“I said, ‘Yeah,’ and then after that one practice, it was really good, and we just sat down on a bench, and he said, ‘I’ve just got to know if this is what you *want* to do,’ and I said, ‘Yeah, I want to do it.’”⁸¹⁵⁰

Teti: “The guys were so ridiculously fast in 2004. I’ve had three other eights win Gold Medals, and the times that these guys rowed were completely in a new zone. They were off the charts.

“The very first day we put them together, we paddled for six miles, and then the next morning we did a time trial. In flat water at 35-36, they rowed a 3:58 1,500, followed by 4:00, 4:00, and that was it.

“From that point on, I didn’t try to make them better. At 30, those guys were rowing 5:30, 5:32 2,000s. In a three mile piece, they were doing 1:25 500s at a 28. Even when they paddled, the spacing they got without much effort was phenomenal.

“I never changed the rig. I never changed the boat. I never changed a seat. I never changed *squat* from that point on! It just became management.”⁸¹⁵¹

Lucerne, 2004

In fact, training in coxless-fours continued throughout the rest of the spring of 2004, culminating in June on the Rotsee in Lucerne at the last World Cup regatta before Athens.

Dan Beery: “Basically, we had been doing a lot of internal scrimmaging in the



Jason Read

Looking over the stakeboat boy’s feet at the start in Lucerne.

pairs and fours leading up to final selection.⁸¹⁵² There were several matrices that were set up to select an Olympic eight and four. We had three or even four coxless-four lineups that could win on any given day, depending on conditions and the types of pieces we were doing. The entire process was really intense.”⁸¹⁵³

Gradually, the combination of J.R. in bow, Beery in 2, Hoopman in 3 and Volp in stroke rose to the top.

Beery: “Finally, our lineup emerged as the one that was winning the majority of the pieces. I would guess that if we did ten pieces, our lineup might win six or seven of them, so it wasn’t as if our lineup was dra-

⁸¹⁵⁰ Volpenhein, op. cit.

⁸¹⁵¹ Teti, op. cit., 2004

⁸¹⁵² There are echoes here of the training of the 1964 Vesper eight. See Chapter 107.

⁸¹⁵³ Beery, op. cit.

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matically better than the rest of our squad.”⁸¹⁵⁴

Teti sent to Lucerne this top four and an eight made up of the rest of the Olympic aspirants along with a second development eight. The four would meet Britain’s premier boat, including their superstars, Cracknell and Pinsent,⁸¹⁵⁵ as well as Mike Spracklen’s defending World Champion Coxless-Four from Canada.⁸¹⁵⁶ The eight would meet Canada’s two-time defending World Champion Eight.

Teti in 2004: “As coaches, we have to believe, because we have these egos, that we can make a difference with this crew. About two or three years ago I completely changed that philosophy.

“I told the guys, ‘The Canadians believe that they are going to win the Gold Medal because Mike Spracklen is going to lead them to that Gold Medal.

“The Germans believe that they are going to win because Dieter is going to lead them to that Gold Medal.

“I think that you guys are going to win the Gold Medal because you’re just better than they are.

“It has nothing to do with me. It’s not about me. You’ve all been given opportunities. You row fine. You have to assume the responsibility for this now. In my view, my job is done.’

“When I sent the four to Lucerne, I didn’t go. When the guys found I wasn’t going, Bryan said, ‘You’re not going to Lucerne?’

“I got right in his face and said, ‘Do you need me to go, because I’ve got a ticket. I can go.

“Bryan, I think you’re going to win that four race over there because I like the match-up. Let’s look at the standard, the

World Champion Canadian Four. Of the four guys, I think we’re ahead of them in two seats, and in two seats we’re even.

“This is your seventh year on the National Team, Bryan. This is all about you. This is your coming-out party. By the end of the year *everybody’s* going to know who Bryan Volpenhein is.

“If you want me to go over and give you a pep talk before the race, I’ll do that.’

“He looked at me and said, ‘Take your wife to the Jersey Shore, Mike.’”⁸¹⁵⁷

Beery: “At that time, Mike Teti told us that if both of our boats won in Lucerne, the selection process would most likely be concluded, so both boats were highly motivated to succeed (not that that was necessary to motivate us).

“I came through the Penn A.C. system, and I had literally years of experience at my disposal from guys like my college coach, **Bob Espeseth** from the 1986 World Champion four, and **Dave Krmpotich** from the 1988 Olympic Silver-Medal Four, and especially Coach **Ted Nash**.⁸¹⁵⁸

“Leading up to Lucerne, we had a lot of help from Mike (obviously), and Ted worked on our rhythm a lot. **Chris Nielson** – his Cambridge crew has just won the 2010 Boat Race – accompanied us on the trip as the finishing coach. So, we had a lot of good help. I remember particularly that we were trying to sew up certain parts of our pieces to make sure that we were even splitting the third 500, and over time we were able to really develop good rhythm maintenance and solid, even splits at high speeds.

“As we got closer and closer to the race, we began to mesh the ability to maintain the even splits with some pretty amazing short bursts over 250 and 500 meter distances. At that point, I began to be pretty confident about our chances, especially because we

⁸¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁸¹⁵⁵ See Chapter 136.

⁸¹⁵⁶ See Chapter 151.

⁸¹⁵⁷ Teti, op. cit.

⁸¹⁵⁸ See Chapter 132.

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were an unknown quantity as a coxless-four.

“We were only able to carve out a few days to be there before racing started, so we were still reeling a bit as the racing began in earnest, and we struggled a bit through the heats and semis.

Heat 3	
1 CAN	6:00.49
2 USA	6:02.38
3 POL	6:05.33
4 CHN	6:17.54

Semi-final 2	
1 GBR	6:02.57
2 SLO	6:05.24
3 USA	6:06.80
4 CZE	6:09.16
5 ITA1	6:11.67
6 ROM	6:17.09

“I felt like we really didn’t have our best stuff in the earlier races but we began to feel a lot more comfortable as we approached the final.

“I would have to say that during the final race everything came together really well. J.R. and Bryan have great communication, and the whole thing seemed pretty seamless. Beau is like clockwork, amazingly steady, and I certainly felt at the top of my game.”⁸¹⁵⁹

J.R.: “It was one of the most fun races I’ve ever been in. Bryan and I always used to come from behind in international competition until Athens, until we finally figured out how to get things going and could get ahead right away. Even in the national selection regattas, we’d always screw around, and it wouldn’t be until like 800 meters into the race that we could push ahead.

“So in the fours final in Lucerne, we were content just to stay in contact early. Our competition came from **Canada**, the priority boat from a country which was the

defending World Champion in *both* the eights and the fours, and from defending Olympic Champion **Great Britain**, with Pinsent and Cracknell in that country’s *priority* boat.”⁸¹⁶⁰

Beery: “My mindset was simply to expend as much as I could to try to keep us close during the race. I had rowed with Bryan enough to realize that if we were in striking distance at the end of the race, then Bryan could definitely close it out.”⁸¹⁶¹

In the Lucerne coxless-fours final, Australia, Slovenia and Poland were not a factor after 500 meters. Canada in Lane 3 set the pace for Great Britain in Lane 4 beside them, gaining a deck in the first 500 and gradually expanding that out to half a length by 1,500.

The U.S. boat way over in Lane 1 steadily lost ground to leader Canada in the first half of the race, crossing the 1,000 meter mark in third, 2.77 seconds behind the Canadians.

J.R.: “We were just slightly open water down at the 1,000, but Bryan and I, no matter how far down we are, we *always* think we can win. I know if I work really hard, I might be able to make things happen.

“It’s not arrogance. It’s just confidence: We’re in a deficit situation. Let’s make them *pay* for going out so hard!

“During practice, I had rowed stroke and Bryan had rowed stroke, mixing it up, but here I was racing in bow, and **Dan Beery**, ‘Havana Dan,’ aka ‘the Hurricane,’ was right in front of me, and **Beau Hoopman** was in 3.

“Everybody in the other boats knew we were a bunch of clowns because we would party with them after the racing was done, and especially after 2003 at Henley in the

⁸¹⁵⁹ Beery, op. cit.

⁸¹⁶⁰ Read, op. cit.

⁸¹⁶¹ Beery, op. cit.

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“After the race we sat quietly with Coach Nielson, and it was a nice moment for all of us to share . . . It appeared that after all of the difficulties of training and the surrounding tension . . . we were finally on our way.

“There were all sorts of rumors about how and why we had won . . . ranging from the fact that the other boats didn’t see us, or we had an advantage in the outside lane, or that **Alex Partridge** (one of my absolute favorite athletes to race against and hang out with) was hurting.

“The next day J.R. was telling me that Partridge had collapsed his lung,⁸¹⁶⁷ and I was deeply concerned. I asked, ‘When?’

“‘Yesterday.’

“‘Did he get in a fight at the party?’

“‘No. It happened during the racing.

“I said, ‘Man, that is weird, because last night at the party he came up to me with a giant fishbowl he had poured out. It was filled with water and drinking straws, he kept insisting that I drink from giant fishbowl because he said I needed to hydrate.’

“When I think of J.R. talking during the race, shaking Matt Pinsent’s hand on the dock, and Alex Partridge forcing me to drink from a fishbowl . . . I just have to shake my head and laugh. From beginning to end the whole experience was surreal . . . and priceless!”⁸¹⁶⁸

Matthew Pinsent: “These J.R. passages made me cry with laughter. Brilliant stuff!

“I still maintain the U.S. Four would never have had the race they had if they had been between the Canadians and us in Lucerne. No doubt, the lane draw made a difference. Whether it was weather, wind or line of sight, they just had unnatural speed in the last 500.

“If you see J.R. any time soon, tell him a) I said so, and b) I’m really glad they ended up out of the event in Athens!”⁸¹⁶⁹

J.R.: “What was cool about Lucerne was that it sent a loud and clear message that we were not just a one-boat country and that Bryan and I weren’t the only Americans who could row in small boats.

“The Canadian and the British fours were the high hats, the Olympic favorites, and we disrupted their whole summer.

“So then when they put us back in the eight, we had a huge mental advantage. The Canadian and the British fours were their priority boats, and for us it had been just fun!

“Lucerne was *so* critical that summer!!!!”⁸¹⁷⁰

Jeff Klepacki: “I hope that people don’t forget that race. That upset in Lucerne was *so* significant in the realm of world rowing, but it seemed to get overshadowed because they went on to win the eight in Athens. I was hoping that Mike would keep that four together and make it one of the best showdowns in Olympic history.”⁸¹⁷¹

(Later in the summer in Athens, Britain beat Canada by perhaps an inch for the Gold Medal in a race for the Ages!⁸¹⁷²)

Meanwhile, the two American eights did very well at Lucerne, but Canada remained the dominant crew in the world.

1	CAN	5:35.01
2	GER	5:36.98
3	ITA	5:37.14
4	USA1	5:37.26
5	EGY	5:40.88
6	USA2	5:44.03

Beery: “Teti had implied that if both boats won in Lucerne, he would leave the lineups alone. It didn’t turn out that way . . .

⁸¹⁶⁷ See Chapter 136.

⁸¹⁶⁸ Beery, op. cit.

⁸¹⁶⁹ Pinsent, personal correspondence, 2007

⁸¹⁷⁰ Read, op. cit.

⁸¹⁷¹ Klepacki, op. cit.

⁸¹⁷² See Chapter 136.

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and I often wonder what would have happened if he had. No one can say, but I do remember specifically thinking that we were going to win in Lucerne.”⁸¹⁷³

Teti: “And the myth continues that I then put the four into the eight.

“*No!*

“I selected the eight. Then I took four guys out of the eight to go row the four in Lucerne.

“The other thing that people don’t know is that the four that won in Lucerne, well, the other four guys in the eight never lost to them once they all got back from their trip.”⁸¹⁷⁴

Teti on Coaching



FISA 1998 Video

Mike Teti

U.S. National Men’s Coach 1996-2008

Teti: “Not only do I have to select the best athletes, the best boat movers, but they also have to have a certain character and a certain chemistry, and that can’t be forced. That’s something you either have or you

don’t have. That’s not something that you can teach.”⁸¹⁷⁵

On this subject, **Harry Parker** has said: “Rowing is a special skill, and the really good people have it, and the rest of us don’t. There are gifted oarsmen, and you can’t create those people.

“That’s just like me playing golf or tennis or baseball. There’s just *no way* I’d ever excel! It would never happen.

“I don’t think people appreciate that that’s true of rowing also. The really gifted rowers are just *gifted*. Yes, they have to be taught, they have to be coached, they have to train, but what they have is something special, and there are other people who will *never* get it.”⁸¹⁷⁶

Teti: “If you watch that race in Lucerne, our four rowed the same rhythm the eight later rowed, and that was *Bryan’s* rhythm, so technically that’s where I would agree with Harry Parker, who said that if you’ve got a really good stroke, and by good stroke I mean he’s got *everything*, the complete package, then you’ve got the battle 60% won. I really believe that.”⁸¹⁷⁷

In his own time, **Steve Fairbairn** concurred: “I do not coach for any movement of the body. That has all got to come from inside you, laddie, and it comes unconsciously.”⁸¹⁷⁸

Teti: “Coaches will say, ‘You want the legs, back and arms all to finish together.’ I will never *say* that, not because I don’t agree with it, but because I don’t want to confuse them. They’re going to be thinking about their legs, backs and arms instead of getting ahead of the other boat, and I think that eve-

⁸¹⁷³ Beery, op. cit.

⁸¹⁷⁴ Teti, op. cit.

⁸¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁸¹⁷⁶ Parker, personal conversation, 2004

⁸¹⁷⁷ Teti, op. cit.

⁸¹⁷⁸ Fairbairn *On Rowing*, p. 377

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rything you do has to be within the context of racing.”⁸¹⁷⁹

This is pure **Fairbairn** thinking, who long ago wrote, “to think about holding or moving his body in certain positions takes away from his capacity to work the oar. . . . To move the body correctly, the body must move unconsciously.

“Everyone has moved their bodies unconsciously all through their lives. Becoming body conscious is the first step toward *locomotor ataxy* [lack of muscle control].”⁸¹⁸⁰

Teti gets his points across to his rowers more obliquely. “For example, there’s some exercise, some drill to alleviate almost every technical problem in the boat, so instead of saying, ‘You’re doing this, you’re doing that, you’re doing this,’ I’ll just try to figure out some exercise for them to do. That’s one aspect.

“The other aspect is that I’ll shoot video, and a coach will edit the video and e-mail it to the guys, because they all work, and then they watch it, and they can see.

“Look at what you’re doing at the front end compared to, say, Bryan.’ They are bright kids, and they ask questions. I try not to get super-specific.”⁸¹⁸¹

From 1997 through 1999 the United States Men’s Eight won three straight World Championships under Mike Teti, so when they came in only fifth at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, the disappointment was palpable.⁸¹⁸²

In the ensuing years, the Americans steadily improved, coming in 4th, then 3rd, then 2nd, and culminating in a superb Gold Medal in 2004 in Athens.

Teti: “A lot of things came together in 2004. I had five different people in the eight who were significantly better than the guys I had in 2003. We were actually trying to do the same thing that year, but better athletes generally are able to do things in an easier way.

“I also had a group with no undergraduates involved, who didn’t have to take the year off from school, and so we rowed through the whole year, and they were able to get better.

“And they had much more time to spend in small boats, and they were all *really* competent.

“I’ve had eights that won Gold Medals where some guys were a disaster in a pair or just couldn’t row a single, but 2004 was the first eight I ever had that every guy in that boat could move *any* boat, *and* they were powerful, *and* they were really big.”⁸¹⁸³

Mike Teti resists any implication that the difference between 2000 and 2004 was due to a change in technique.

Teti: “We didn’t lose in Sydney because of the technique we rowed. We lost because of some bad decisions that I made.

“The year 2004 was the only time that I had all eight guys for the whole year with NO injuries. That wasn’t true in 2000.”⁸¹⁸⁴

Athens

Nash: “2004 had a lot of chefs, Mike as head coach, and also great help by Korzo, Matt Imes, the late Emil Kossev, several trainers and a few others.

“I think ‘04 was proven in part in Plovdiv, Bulgaria (one of Emil’s homes). We trained there prior to Athens, and it was a key move toward greatness.

“Once there, the crew was loose, happy, fit. Even after a few accidents and the ever-present guards with loaded machine guns,

⁸¹⁷⁹ Teti, op. cit.

⁸¹⁸⁰ *Fairbairn On Rowing*, pp. 377-8

⁸¹⁸¹ Teti, personal conversation, 2004

⁸¹⁸² Refer to Lewis, *A Fine Balance*. In addition, see Chapter 155.

⁸¹⁸³ Teti, op. cit.

⁸¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

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IOC

2004 Olympic Games, Athens

the crew didn't clutch. Mike was superb there. He kept direction but without any whip. Dan Beery once said to me, 'This is so fun. Can we stay in Bulgaria and race it off here?'"⁸¹⁸⁵

Teti: "I'm a little bit different than most people. I don't believe that rowing is the world's greatest sport, like some people say it is. I think that rowing's a sport, a little bit different in some ways from other sports, a little bit similar in other ways, but I don't like the fact that people say it's the world's most grueling spot.

"Come on! Don't tell me it's more difficult than boxing. Don't tell me it's more

difficult than some guy whacking you in your face in the middle of the ring.

"Don't tell me you train harder. Let's call it what it is.

"**Carl Lewis** [9-time Olympic Gold Medalist in track sprints and long jump] came and talked to our guys before the final in Athens, and the first thing that he said was, 'Damn, like you guys are *athletes!*' and I laughed said, 'Carl, *you're* an athlete. That's why we're all rowing, because we're *not* athletes!'

"I mean what high school rowing program in the United States has the best athlete in the school rowing? Probably zero. So we can't ignore that.

"People may call moves in the middle of a race a power-10. We call them *commitments*, and so in the past whenever we'd have these commitments, it was always dedicated to someone. So when we were formulating the race plan in Athens, deciding how we were going to row the final, somebody asked who we were going to dedicate the commitment to, and for the first time Bryan goes, "We're not going to dedicate it to anybody. It's the Olympics! We're taking that move, and we're going into the lead, and it's going to be all over, and we're going to win the Gold Medal! *That's* what it is!'

"I walked up to Bryan, and I kissed him and said, 'Bryan, I've been waiting for seven years for you to say something like that.'"⁸¹⁸⁶

(For everyone privileged to know Mike Teti personally, I am sure they realize that the previous quote has been heavily edited for family audiences.)

Volpenhein: "Carl Lewis actually calmed me down quite a bit. I was really nervous before he came over, and he didn't know anything about rowing or about us or about the history of rowing, and he talked us

⁸¹⁸⁵ Nash, personal correspondence, 2010

⁸¹⁸⁶ Teti, op. cit.

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through our race. ‘Go out and *win!* That’s all you have to do,’ and the simplicity of it was . . . I was really calm after that.

The Heat

Volpenhein: “Our whole crew was *extremely* relaxed the whole regatta. Like before the heat, there was like a five-minute delay, and it was 100° out, and we were telling jokes, hanging out. Compare that to 2000, when there wasn’t a word spoken the whole time, just tension building.

“If your mind is not loose and your emotions aren’t loose, your rowing’s not going to be loose.”⁸¹⁸⁷

Ed Hewitt, taking photos for row2k: “When the men’s eights heats came in to the starting blocks, I had posted up early to be able to get a photo of the crew going off the line because if they win the heat and you don’t get that shot, you don’t see them at the start again for the rest of the regatta.

“They pulled in, and I was keeping a very low profile, and Chris Ahrens says, ‘Row2k - Hey Eddie! How’s it going?’ and waves Chip gave me his standard greeting of ‘Big Ed.’ J.R. chimed in. Bryan did as well, and the guys were waving – so I answered back, and I remember very clearly thinking, ‘Well, either these guys are just *way* too loose and are going to be terrible, or everyone else out here is in real trouble.’

“The other crews were completely different, barking at each other, cursing and rattling their oars in the locks, and these guys were yelling to me like they were my neighbors, which they were.

“It was extraordinary, and so I took my pictures, jumped in the back of a pickup truck headed to the finish line, chased the race, and bolted beyond the finish to get their photo [following page] going under the bridge.

“It was an hour before I got back to the media center and saw they had set a world record, and recalling the events up at the starting line, I just laughed out loud standing there looking at the results page.”⁸¹⁸⁸

The Final

Cipollone: “I felt that the lizard part of my brain was dominating everything that day, that everything was just happening on instinct from practice and having worked together so closely. It was like a perfect machine.

“You can have extraordinary talent. We had that.

“You can have extraordinary training. We had that.

“You can have extraordinary and inspired coaching. We had all of that stuff in spades.

“But on *that* final day, there was also this intangible thing that was saying to us, ‘You know in your heart that you’re going to have the absolute *best* performance that you can possibly have,’ and you don’t really think about whether or not that means you’re going to win. You just think, ‘Now we’re going to go *fast* today.’

“And nobody can summon that on demand. It is still one of the great unknowns in sport . . .

“It’s not widely known, but that morning we got down there nice and early, and everybody kind of went their own way. Everybody did something different. Some guys erged. Some guys stretched. Some guys read a book. Somebody probably went off and took a nap.

“But when we got on the water it was really *hot*, probably 95° or higher, and it was 9:55 in the morning or something, and it was only going to get hotter. Our normal warm-up took about twenty-two minutes and would put us over by the starting line about

⁸¹⁸⁷ Volpenhein, op. cit.

⁸¹⁸⁸ Hewitt, personal correspondence, 2011

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Ed Hewitt, www.row2k.com

2004 United States Men's Eight
rowing into history

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seven or eight minutes before the 10:30 start time, and it started out with six minutes of light to medium steady state below 20 strokes a minute. Then after that we would do a bunch of 15s and get like a hundred hard strokes in before we did the piece.

“So we’re going along. We’re four minutes into our six-minute steady state and we’re sitting down by the bridge⁸¹⁸⁹ getting ready to turn around and finish the piece, and it’s 10:07. It’s *ridiculously* early, and Volp says, ‘Hang on a second.’

“I say, ‘What’s up?’

“He says, ‘Dude, I’m warm.’

“I was thinking, ‘Oh no! This is not a time to have an intraboat squabble about how much warm-up we have to do.’ We had done *no high 15s, no full pressure, nothing!*

“So I said to the guys, ‘Hey, Volp’s feeling warm. How is everybody feeling?’ and from bow down, it just was, ‘I’m good’ ‘I’m warm,’ ‘I feel great,’ ‘Yeah, this is good. Let’s go do it!’

“And I just went, ‘Wow! . . . Okay!’ The unanimity of the guys was just extraordinarily high in terms of ‘Hey, if Volp’s warm, then I’m good. I’m ready to go.’

“And so we pulled out of the warm-up loop, left the five other eights and went and sat under the bridge. The women’s eights race hadn’t even come down yet. That’s how early it was.

“It was weird. When the women’s eights went by, maybe a couple of guys looked out real quick, and I would have thought somebody would have yelled something for the women because I think they

were leading at the time,⁸¹⁹⁰ but we were so focused that nobody even noticed.

“We pulled into our lane something like fifteen minutes early. We were the first crew there by a mile! We did a couple of starts and kind of paddled back to the starting area and waited for everyone else to get there.

“Part of the reason I’ve never told this story is that it’s probably not a good practice for somebody else to try, and it didn’t occur to me until months later that had we *lost*, there would have been some consequences for us not having warmed up, but it was eerie how everybody was so *singularly* focused on the same thing. It was like, ‘Okay, if we’re ready to go . . . we’re *ready* to go.’⁸¹⁹¹

The rest is history.

Ahrens: “I knew Chip and I had a similar experience, which was . . . I think that 2000 had been so caustic in some ways, but at the same time, he and I both thought, ‘Well, let’s go do this and see if we can exorcise some of those demons.’

“I also think that we had a similar feeling which was this was *our* opportunity, and if we were going to go down, we were going to go down on *our* terms.”⁸¹⁹²

Teti: “In the headwind there was just a ton of acceleration and a ton of time. That first 700 meters Bryan was settling in, and then when they were where they wanted to be at the rhythm they wanted, our boat never went up. They just maintained. They were just defending from that point.”⁸¹⁹³

Ahrens: “Our boat race plan was to have a reasonable start but not try and kill ourselves, and then kind of hold them from 500 in to 800 in, which was where historically the Canadians had always taken con-

⁸¹⁸⁹ A bridge separates the warm-up area in the return channel from the race course at about 550 meters after the start. It can be seen clearly in satellite photos. Google map “Schinias, Greece.”

⁸¹⁹⁰ See Chapter 157.

⁸¹⁹¹ Cipollone, op. cit.

⁸¹⁹² Ahrens, op. cit.

⁸¹⁹³ Teti, op. cit.

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trol of the race,⁸¹⁹⁴ and so we thought, ‘Let’s not lose too much at the start, and then hold them from getting too much of an advantage at that point.’ Then in the second 1,000 meters we’ll come back and win the race.

“What ended up happening was off the start we were basically *ahead*, and then when we took this kind of 10-stroke focus to kind of hold them, we just started moving. It was extraordinary because in some ways it felt like a college dual race where you are just moving at will, like a seat a stroke, which in international competition *never* happens. And so all of a sudden after this 10- or 15-stroke little move we were a length up and continuing to press out.

“It was the only time in any major race I’ve had the feeling of saying, ‘Oh my God, we’ve won this race as long as we don’t screw this up,’ which is actually the *wrong* thing to be thinking, but to be at 1,000 meters and basically have clear water and be looking back at everybody *and* to be feeling like we were coming into the strength of our race, I just *knew* we were going to win.

“For the rest of the race, we had a race plan, but we rowed pretty low, I want to say like 35, and just continued kind of practicing the rhythm and keeping the length, and I think we brought it up at the end, but not much, and won pretty easily.

“But it was nerve-wracking in the sense that all these things start coming into your head. ‘Let’s not catch a crab.’ ‘Let’s not have a bobble.’ ‘Let’s not do all these things.’



FISA 2004 DVD

2004 United States Men’s Eight
4 Joe Hansen, 5 Matt Deakin, 6 Dan Beery
 Pulling away from Australia (4), Canada (5),
 and Germany (6) early on.

Note the difference in technique between Beery and the other two.

“Luckily it didn’t.”⁸¹⁹⁵

1 USA	5:42.48
2 NED	5:43.75
3 AUS	5:45.38
4 GER	5:49.43
5 CAN	5:51.66
6 FRA	5:53.31

Nash: “In Athens I recall telling the crew, ‘You have earned it so far. Now help your teammates change their lives forever. – Go win.’

“Later Mike and I would go 100% nuts in the coaching vans taking us up and down the heat and final winning races. Mike had rightfully won, and his crew had been supreme.

“Every man on that crew was a brother to all the others – all plans agreed, and every race flat out. A commitment planned was a

⁸¹⁹⁴ See Chapter 151.

⁸¹⁹⁵ Ahrens, op. cit.

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commitment assured. A proud moment for the USA.”⁸¹⁹⁶

After having pushed the U.S. to a world record before losing their heat by only .61 seconds, the Canadians experienced an injury in their repêchage and seemed to lose their focus. In a repeat of the fate of the U.S. in 1996 and 2000, the two-time defending World Champion Canadian eight was never a factor in the final.⁸¹⁹⁷

Ahrens: “The whole thing of being able to get back to the Olympics and to compete and to win was something . . . you could script it out, but . . . but . . . after it happened I remember actually leaning forward and grabbing Wyatt and saying, ‘I can’t believe we just did that,’ and I *literally* couldn’t believe it!

“For the next couple of nights, I would have dreams that like somehow it *hadn’t* happened. We got disqualified because our boat was too heavy . . . who knows what?”⁸¹⁹⁸



FISA 2004 DVD

Matthew Pinsent hugged a tearful **Jason Read** on the podium.

Mathew Pinsent: “I gave the U.S. eight their Gold Medals that day. I was then an IOC⁸¹⁹⁹ member and specifically requested the men’s eight from the list of ceremonies.

“Of all the guys in the eight, J.R. was crying like a baby – and I knew exactly how he felt!”⁸²⁰⁰

⁸¹⁹⁶ Nash, personal correspondence, 2010

⁸¹⁹⁷ See Chapter 159.

⁸¹⁹⁸ Ahrens, op. cit.

⁸¹⁹⁹ International Olympic Committee

⁸²⁰⁰ Pinsent, op. cit.