

DIFFERENT STROKES

79. The Soviet Union

The Soviet System – The Moscow Style – Igor Grinko

Early History

In the early 1950s when the athletes of the Soviet Union emerged from behind the Iron Curtain as an instant power in world rowing, their program and their history had been largely unknown to the West.

Evgeni Samsonov, 5-seat in the 1952 Olympic Silver Medal **Krylya Sovetov**²⁹⁸⁹ **Moscow Eight** and later Soviet National Coach from 1956 to 1977²⁹⁹⁰: “In 1960, we celebrated one hundred years of rowing in Russia. Actually Peter the Great²⁹⁹¹ brought rowing to our country, but as a sport it has existed since 1860.”²⁹⁹²

Ukrainian coach and rowing historian **Gennadii Ochkalenko**: “The first racing boats and rules were brought to Russia in the 19th Century by the foreign businessmen, engineers and students. The first English-style rowing club was built in St. Petersburg in 1860.

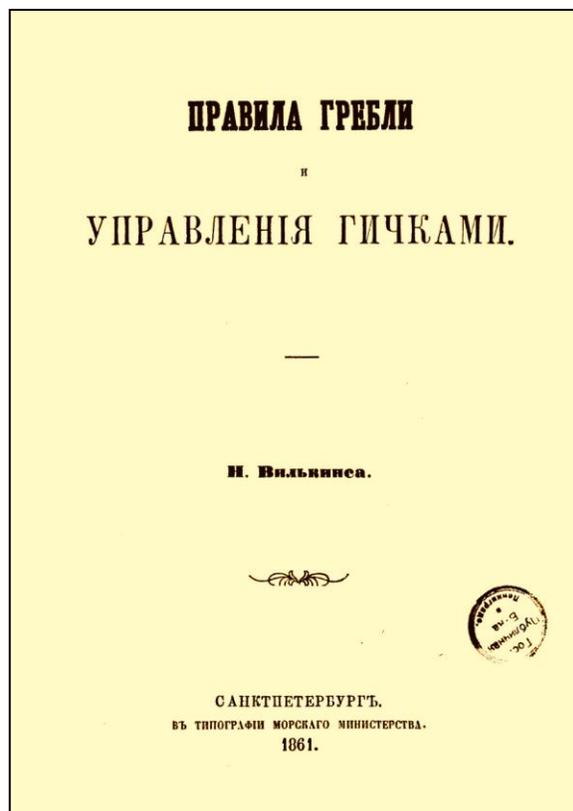
“The first Russian rowing manual was published in St. Petersburg in 1861 by Nicholas Wilkins. Called *Rowing Rules and Gigs’ Management*, it was based on the English book, *The Principles of Rowing*

²⁹⁸⁹ “**Soviet Wings**,” the air industry and university sports club in Moscow, per Ochkalenko, personal correspondence, 2011

²⁹⁹⁰ Ochkalenko, personal correspondence, 2011

²⁹⁹¹ Pyotr Alexeyevich Romanov, Czar Peter I of Russia, reigned from 1682 to 1725.

²⁹⁹² Qtd. by Lanouette, *Volga*, pp. 125-6. While details remain sketchy, a bit more is known of the origins of rowing in Russia, See Dodd, *World Rowing*, pp. 263-9



Ochkalenko

Rowing Rules
&
Gigs’ Management.
N. Wilkins.
St.-Petersburg.
The Navy Ministry Printing House.
1861.

and Steering by Egan and Shadwell.²⁹⁹³
Wilkins acquainted Russian sportsmen with

²⁹⁹³ See Chapter 6.

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the racing principles and rules and translated basic rowing terminology into Russian, very successfully by the way.

“The second Russian rowing manual was published in 1889 by the Moscow River Yacht-Club. Called **Manual of Rowing and Sailing with Application to Swimming**, this textbook contained in many respects English rowing information, including ‘rules of the amateur.’ It included construction of boats, a learn-to-row course, racing programs, rules of competition, sports diet and rowing uniforms.

“When I showed this textbook to a USSR sports government official in 1970s, he swore and said, ‘Before 1917 Revolution, yacht-club could issue textbooks, and today Soviet Sports Committee and Federation cannot even print racing rules!’

“First Russian Rowing Championship was carried out in 1892 in Moscow. Well-known Russian cognac and vodka industrialist **Sergey Shustov** was the single sculls winner (1,140m in 6:30).

“Russia’s first racing eight-oared shell arrived to St. Petersburg in 1891. (It was saved in Krasnoye Znamya boathouse up to 1960s.) Russia’s first eights race was carried out in St. Petersburg only in 1909.

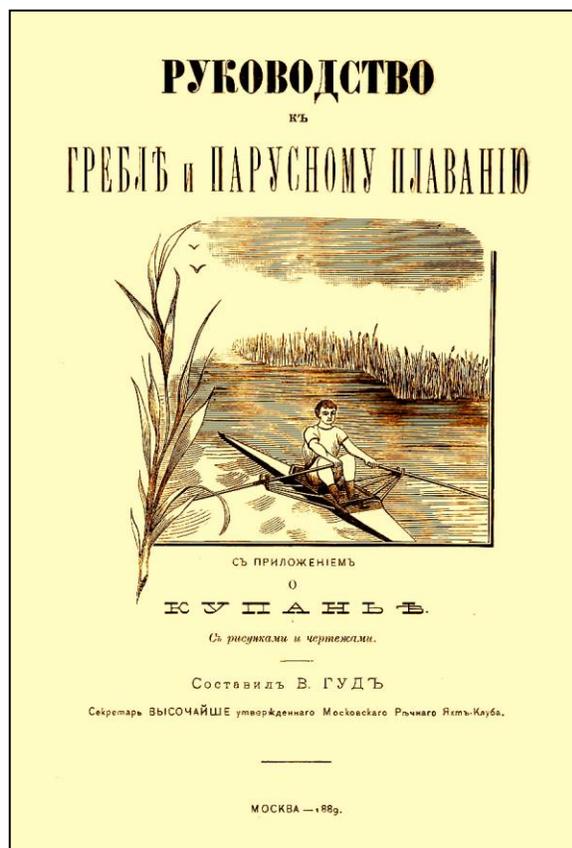
Mikhail Kusik

Ochkalenko: “**Mikhail Kusik** [154lb. 70kg] of St. Petersburg became Holland Beker Champion²⁹⁹⁴ in 1909 and 1910 and Russian Singles Champion in 1910, 1911 and 1913. In 1912 he was eliminated by three lengths in the first round of the Diamond Sculls at Henley by **Polydor Veirman** of Société Royale de Sport Nautique de Gand²⁹⁹⁵ in Belgium.”²⁹⁹⁶

²⁹⁹⁴ See Chapter 72.

²⁹⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁹⁶ Ochkalenko, op. cit.



Ochkalenko

Manual of Rowing and Sailing with Application to Swimming.

With pictures and drawings.
Vassiliy Gud has made
Authorized by the King’s Secretary
Moscow River Yacht-Club.
Moscow – 1889

Kusik then became the first Russian rower to medal in the Olympics. In Stockholm in 1912 after the Henley Regatta, he disposed of the Austrian and Hungarian scullers in the first two rounds of single-elimination racing before again running into Polydor Veirman of Belgium in the semi-finals. The race was closer that it had been at Henley, but Veirman pulled away in the last

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Holland Beker Regatta

Mikhail Kusik

500 to win by open water. In the other semi-final, William Kinnear of Great Britain beat Everard Butler of Canada. Kinnear won the final for Gold and Silver over Veirman, and there being no race for third, both Kusik and Butler were awarded Bronze Medals.

The Official Report of the Olympic Games of Stockholm 1912: “The Russian has a beautiful style and great energy”²⁹⁹⁷

Anatoliy Pereselentsev

Ochkalenko: “Moscow sculler **Anatoliy Pereselentsev** was one of the most influential Russian athletes before Soviet era. Pereselentsev was the Russian Singles Champion in 1908, 1909 and 1914.

“The tall, strong sportsman studied in Paris, Heidelberg and Oxford, and he sculled in French, German and English clubs. He

competed against **Jack Beresford, Sr.**²⁹⁹⁸ of Great Britain, 1904 Holland Beker winner, **William Kinnear** of Great Britain, 1910 and 1911 Diamond Sculls winner and 1912 Olympic Champion, **Giuseppe Sinigaglia**²⁹⁹⁹ of Italy, 1911 European Champion, **Friedrich Graf** of Germany, 1913 European Champion, **Gaston Delaplane** of France, four-time European Champion, and even had sparring races with famous professional **Ernest Barry**.³⁰⁰⁰ Pereselentsev was nicknamed ‘the Champions’ death.’

“In 1913, Pereselentsev won Paris and France Championships. He was selected to the French National Team in a double with **F. Barrelet**, and together they won the 1913 European Championship.



Demyanov, *All About Rowing*

Anatoliy Pereselentsev

²⁹⁹⁷ *1912 Official Olympic Report*, p. 675

²⁹⁹⁸ See Chapter 23

²⁹⁹⁹ See Chapter 73.

³⁰⁰⁰ See Chapter 47.

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“He returned triumphally to Russia with two single shells and a double. These boats had a very long and famous history, especially one single named *Marti*. **Alexandr Dolgushin**, the best Soviet sculler of the ‘30s, used this boat and recorded a 7:15 time result. And in ‘40s and ‘50s, USSR Champion **Igor Demyanov** also raced in this boat. He recorded 7:07. The boat lasted until it broke in the 1960s under **Anatoliy Sass**, later the 1968 Olympic Doubles Champion. The double lasted long enough to be used in the 1950s by **Emchuk and Zhilin**,³⁰⁰¹ who will be discussed later in this chapter.

“After 1917, Pereselentsev passed to coaching. He was Moscow Sports Academy teacher and coach. He taught ‘natural style,’ close to Fairbairn. His teams competed successfully, but in ‘30s he was denounced by some of his pupils and placed in a concentration camp by KGB. He was released after the Patriotic War³⁰⁰² but died unemployed and homeless.”³⁰⁰³

The Soviet Era

Samsonov in 1962: “Rowing has long been popular in my country, though in international competition we are fairly new.

“In USSR, there are nearly twenty thousand oarsmen, from 14 years up. It is encouraged among the young as a school sport; for this we have special children’s

boats. Our senior competition begins at 18.”³⁰⁰⁴

People’s Rowing

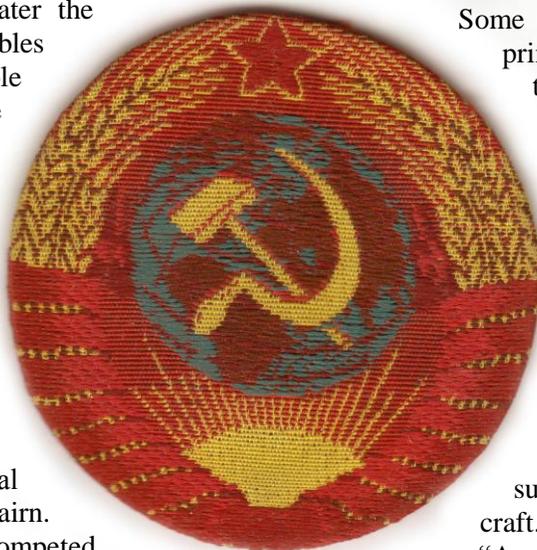
Ochkalenko: “When Soviet Russia tried to develop rowing for the masses in ‘20s and ‘30s, that effort was limited by boat shortage. Clubs could not buy foreign boats, and domestic boats were unavailable.

Some clubs tried to build primitive boats by hand, but this did not solve problem.

“So Soviet government decided in ‘30s to manufacture simple, cheap boats. Many factories began to make single and double wooden boats of a standard design, and by the mid-‘30s many physical culture organizations had sufficient quantity of rowing craft.

“As opposed to classical sports rowing, this version of sport was named **people’s rowing**, in Russian, **Народная гребля**, literally ‘national people rowing.’

“There were two standard designs: coxless-single and coxed-double boats, wooden, light to carry and to transport, clinker construction, rudder attached to the stern with cord for coxing, simple bench seat and foot stretcher, metal rotating gates. Outriggers and sliding seats were strictly forbidden by competition rules. The simple wooden sculls with leather buttons and collars were shorter and heavier than classical sculls, though from ‘60s to ‘80s, serious sportsmen used cut-down classical sculling blades in competition.



Author

³⁰⁰¹ Demyanov, *All About Rowing*, per Ochkalenko

³⁰⁰² World War II

³⁰⁰³ Ochkalenko, op. cit.

³⁰⁰⁴ Qtd. by Lanouette, *Volga*, pp. 125-6

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“People’s rowing was included in school and university physical education programs. It was introduced to army, police and factory workers and was included as part of the obligatory Soviet GTO³⁰⁰⁵ physical testing system. This system was instituted by government in 1934 for physical training of the population.

“These boats were available in boathouses, parks, beaches, etc. Any citizen could rent for a small payment such boat and have recreational rowing.

“Also, many competitions were held for these boats all over the country from ‘30s to ‘80s, from local level at clubs, universities, schools, factories, army divisions up to USSR National Championship. Racing rules were similar to classical rowing, and races were run at various distances depending on the course.

“In addition, these boats were for beginners’ initial sculling training in any boat club. I began in such a boat. The same for rowing, kayaking and canoeing novices. And they were used as off-season fitness training for competitive kayakers, canoeists, swimmers, wrestlers, cross country skiers, skaters, different athletics, etc.

“As a preparatory stage to top level of classical rowing, Olympic Champion **Alexandr Berkutov**³⁰⁰⁶ was USSR Champion in this boat. Also first Soviet World Canoeing Champion **Gennadii Bukharin**. In 1951, first USSR Canoeing Team squad to compete in Olympics was entirely selected for Helsinki from the best Soviet people’s rowing athletes.

“Also we used such boats for **USSR Blind Rowing Program** in Ukraine (coxed-doubles only).³⁰⁰⁷

³⁰⁰⁵ GTO was Russian abbreviation for: ‘Ready To Work And Defend!’

³⁰⁰⁶ 1956 Olympic Doubles Champion

³⁰⁰⁷ “My own idea of a rowing program for the blind in 1962 and 1963 came from learning about this Soviet project. We used four-with shells at Lake Washington Rowing Club with



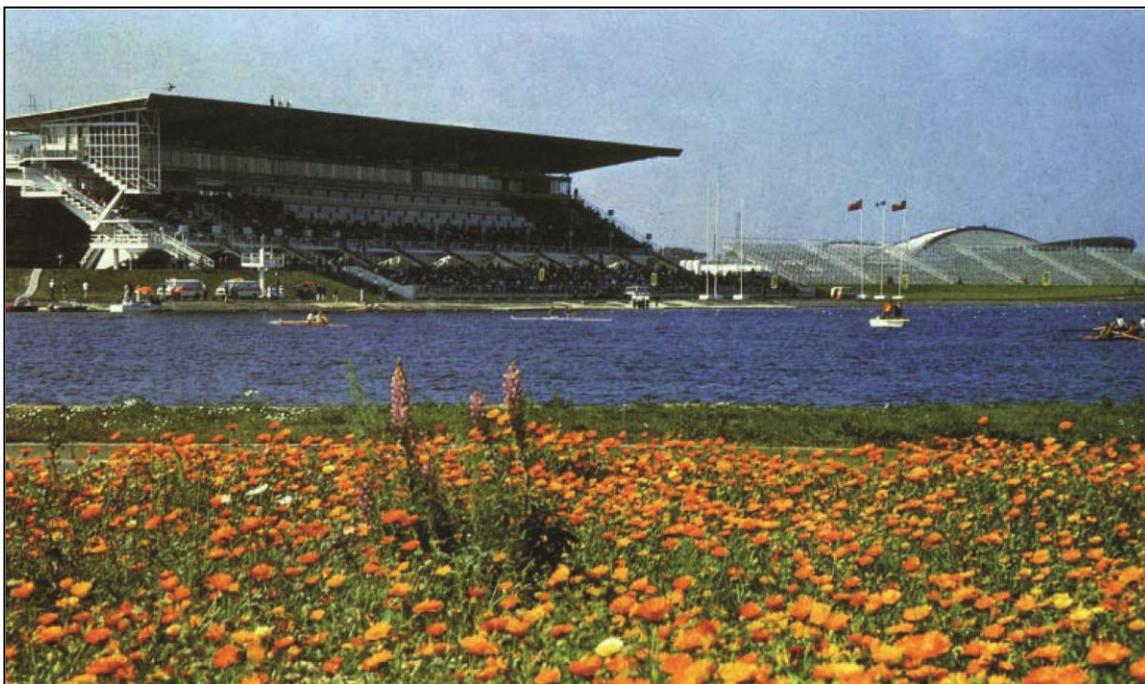
Moscow Olympic Album, 1976

People’s Doubles in Moscow

“Thanks to people’s rowing, from 1930s to 1950s, rowing became popular and fashionable even with scientists, writers, actors and government officials.

sighted coxswains in Seattle and in Vancouver, and then it moved down to Oakland.” – Ted Nash, personal conversation, 2011

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1980 Official Olympic Report

Crylatskoye Rowing Complex, Moscow

Site of the 1973 World Championships and 1980 Olympics
1980 Olympic Indoor Velodrome is visible beyond grandstands on right.
The 1980 Olympic Road Cycling Course is just beyond the velodrome.

“Unfortunately, this rowing has lost its popularity today. The wooden boats have become outdated, although there were attempts to make them in plastic. In Kiev, one company led by former USSR national coach continues to make such boats.

“Soviet Championships were first held for some sports in 1918. During the 1920s, majority of rowing competitions were matches between Moscow and Leningrad rowers. The first USSR Rowing Championship was carried out in 1923, but unfortunately the results have not been preserved.

“The next competition, the first **Спартакиада**,³⁰⁰⁸ was held in 1928 in Moscow. Hundreds of sportsmen

participated, but the competition program included all boating races, people’s boats and kayaks as well. Leningrad and Moscow rowers participated and won there mainly. The Leningrad city team was the strongest.

“During 1930s, rowing competitions were held more regularly, though not annually. As well as other sports, rowing stayed in isolation. Soviet rowers did not participate in any international events up to 1950.

“At this time, Moscow athletes became the leaders, both by their results and because of their style. While the Muscovites mastered a progressive ‘natural’ style similar to **Fairbairn**,³⁰⁰⁹ Leningrad’s rowers adhered to out-of-date orthodox principles.

³⁰⁰⁸ “Спартакиад”

³⁰⁰⁹ See Chapter 14ff.

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Demyanov, *All About Rowing*

Alexandr Dolgushyn

“In 1938, **Taisiya Kyrichenko** from my city of Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine was first non-Moscow or Leningrad USSR Champion in women’s single sculls. She did not sit in a skiff boat ever before beginning of USSR Championship because city club had clinker boats only. However, she won over all Moscow and Leningrad strong participants.

“The successful and popular Soviet statesman **Alexey Kosygin** [Premier from 1943 to 1946, Chairman of the Council of Ministers from 1964 to 1980] was the big rowing admirer. He had been involved in rowing during the 1930s when studied textile engineering in England. He kept his love for rowing all his life. While he was the leader of the Soviet government, he had a single shell at his countryside villa, *dacha* in Russian, and often sculled along the river in the summer.

“In many respects due to his efforts the **Crylatskoye Rowing Complex** in Moscow was constructed in 1973.

Alexandr Dolgushin

Ochkalenko: “The most outstanding athlete of that time was unique Moscow sportsman **Alexandr Dolgushin** (1912-1943) who mastered absolutely free natural

movements and was not held down by traditional vision of the rowing technique.

“He was absolutely self-made because he never had coach. And what is more, who could coach him, who could teach him to anything if he surpassed any sportsman or trainer of that time all over the country?

“He was USSR Champion in the single, double, coxless-pair and coxed-four between 1934 and 1939, seven titles in all. His tremendous time result in the single of 7:15 for 2,000m in 1939 put him near to the best world single scullers of that time.

“During Patriotic War in 1941, Dolgushyn, an Honored Master of Sport, was selected along with other great Soviet athletes to the fifty-man special intelligence-gathering team *Slavnyi*³⁰¹⁰ and was lost in 1943 in Byelorussia in the fight with the fascists.³⁰¹¹

Igor Demyanov



Demyanov, *All About Rowing*

Igor Demyanov

Ochkalenko: “The tremendous **Igor Demyanov** (1924-1999) was a founding member of first **Krylya Sovetov** men’s

³⁰¹⁰ “Glorious”

³⁰¹¹ http://gomel-region.gov.by/en/photos?foto_id=1730

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Demyanov, *All About Rowing*

1946 Krylya Sovetov Men's Eight
Bow **Sergey Volkov**, 2 **Evgeniy Bocharov**, 3 **Alexey Komarov**, 4 **Igor Borisov**,
5 **Vladimir Rodimushkin**, 6 **Igor Demyanov**, 7 **Boris Zubchuk**, Stroke **Evgeniy Syrotinskiy**,
Coxswain **Igor Polyakov**

This crew would dominate Soviet rowing for a decade.

eight, 1946 Soviet Champions. He soon left the eight and concentrated in the single shell mainly. Was 1947-1950 USSR Men's Singles Champion. Had 7:07-7:10 time results.

"Demyanov applied for 1952 Helsinki Olympic Selection in the single, but his parents had been arrested and killed by KGB in 1945, and in USSR such people were not allowed to travel abroad. He was called before USSR Sports Committee and forbidden to compete.

"He began to coach. He alone created the surprising **Moscow Style** [to be discussed below] for **Vyacheslav Ivanov**.³⁰¹² He was National Coach in '60s and won more than 105 Golds with his pupils.

"Then he was forbidden to coach in Moscow and on National Team. He tried to continue on periphery. He wrote the great two-volume textbook, *All About Rowing*, but he was not allowed to publish it.

"In 1968 when all state sports officials were in Mexico City, he printed a short part of the book concerning rowing technique in a small local printing house. When the officials came back, the book was already sold out, instantly by the way. I have this first edition in my library.

"Due to several enthusiasts in Russian Rowing Federation, the entire work was finally published in 2000, but Demyanov did not live to see it.

"The first USSR Rowing Championship after war was carried out in 1945, basically between athletes who had begun in the 1930s and stayed alive.

"Every four years between 1956 and 1991, USSR held a unique competition – the **Spartakiad** National Games. It was the check of national sport and simultaneously training and preparation to the subsequent Olympic Games.

"All fifteen republics and both Moscow City and Leningrad City were obligated to enter their teams in *all* sports. Some Asian and Caucasus republics which lacked

³⁰¹² See Chapter 86.

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British Pathé Newsreel, 533-04, Henley Regatta

1955 Klub Krasnoe Znamya Leningrad Men's Eight

Semi-finalist, Grand Challenge Cup

Bow **Roman Zakharov** 147lb. 67kg, 2 **Anatoly Antonov** 183lb. 83kg,
3 **Oleg Vasiljev** 5'11" 180cm 176lb. 80kg, 4 **Vladimir Kirsanov** 171lb. 78kg,
5 **Kiril Putyrskiy** 178lb. 81kg, 6 **Georgy Bruljgart** 6'4" 193cm 200lb. 91kg,
7 **Georgy Guschenko** 183lb. 83kg, Stroke **Boris Federov** 183lb. 83kg,
Coxswain **B. Bretchko**

Fit, experienced, well-coached professional athletes
appeared at Henley rowing their unique version of Fairbairnism,

rowing development were 'helped' by regions where sportsmen were many and they did not get in teams. Sometimes this resulted in funny things. In 1983, the 'Uzbek' women's eight won against Moscow crew because it consisted entirely of Ukrainians.

"Moscow and Leningrad rowers dominated the first Spartakiad, whereas Ukrainian and Byelorussian rowers were strongest in the last one held in 1991.

"The last USSR Championship (though named as CIS³⁰¹³) was carried out in 1992 in Moscow. The Soviet rowing epoch was finished."³⁰¹⁴

World Rowing in the 1950s

It turns out in retrospect that the decade of world rowing leading up to the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo may well have been the most significant of the entire 20th Century, a series of watershed events creating a

revolutionary boundary in the evolution of rowing technique.

It was the virtual end for several strands of rowing DNA and the beginning for several others. The advantage of historical perspective now reveals the beginnings of all the trends which would drive international rowing for the next forty years.

One of the most startling developments of the 1950s for Western countries was the emergence of Soviet rowers after more than thirty years of self-imposed isolation. The West had seen little of any communist athletes in the decades after the Russian Revolution of 1917.

The first major international competition for rowers from the **Soviet Union** was the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki, and it was a spectacular debut. Their **Krylya Sovetov Moscow** eight came in second to the U.S. Naval Academy's "Great Eight,"³⁰¹⁵ Georgi Zhilin and Igor Emchuk of **Klub Burevestnik Kiev** in Ukraine placed second in the double sculls, and Yuri Tyukalov³⁰¹⁶

³⁰¹³ Commonwealth of Independent States

³⁰¹⁴ Ochkalenko, personal correspondence, 2011

³⁰¹⁵ See Chapter 64.

³⁰¹⁶ See Chapter 86.

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British Pathé Newsreel, 533-04, [Henley Regatta](#)

1955 Double Sculls Challenge Cup Final

Henley-on-Thames

Club Burevestnik Kiev Ukraine

Bow **Georgy Zhilin** 188lb. 85kg, Stroke **Igor Emchuk** 173lb. 78kg
by ½ length over **Grasshopper/Zürich**

Bow **H. Volmer** 169lb. 77kg, Stroke **Thomi Keller** 189lb. 86kg

Both crews limping toward the finish.

of **Klub Krasnoe Znamya Leningrad** won the single.

In **1954**, the Soviets made an equally auspicious debut at the Henley Royal Regatta, winning the Grand Challenge Cup for eights, the Stewards' Cup for coxless-fours and the Silver Goblets for coxless-pairs.

No wonder that in **1955**, in the midst of the Cold War, the University of Pennsylvania's fondest hope was to meet the defending champion Soviets in their own Grand Challenge Cup final.³⁰¹⁷

That year, even though the **Klub Krasnoe Znamya** eight was eliminated in its semifinal by Frank Read's Canadians,³⁰¹⁸ the coxless-pair of Igor Buldakov and Viktor Ivanov, representing **Klub Khimik Voskresensk** near Moscow, defended their title in the Silver Goblets, and 1952 Olympic Silver Medalists Zhilin/Emchuk won the Double Sculls Challenge Cup.

Grasshopper versus Burevestnik

Historian **Christopher Dodd** tells a delightful story of how this Soviet double won its 1955 final over Grasshopper/Zurich.

At the mile mark with the boats almost level, the stroke of the Swiss crew "looked across the course and saw a very young man in blazer and boater sitting in a punt alongside the booms with his rosy-cheeked teenage English rose.

"The pimply youth enunciated in clear Oxford tones: 'Well rowed, Grasshoppers!'"³⁰¹⁹

The Swiss stroke man burst out laughing so hard that his concentration disintegrated just as he and his partner were about to mount a final attack on their opponents.

Too bad. The Russians were about to crack.

1955 Henley Program: "Both started at 38, and Zhilin and Emchuck led by a length at the ¼ mile and at the ½ mile. Vollmer and Keller then closed up a little. Zhilin and Emchuck led by ½ length at Fawley and by

³⁰¹⁷ See Chapter 65.

³⁰¹⁸ Ibid.

³⁰¹⁹ Dodd, *Henley*, p. 156

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Sports Clubs and Professional Unions and Societies	
Name	Membership
Dynamo	Police, KGB
Army, Navy, Air Force	Military personnel
Burevestnik	University students
Trud, Zenit, Avangard, Krylya Sovetov	Various metallurgy, mechanical engineering and defense industry workers
Spartak	Trade unions, light industry, civil aircraft, retail industry workers
Lokomotiv	Railway transport workers
Vodnik	Water transport workers
Kolos	Collective farmers
Yunost	School pupils
Trudovye rezervy	Professional school pupils
Zalgiris, Daugava, Jyud, Pakhtakor, Moldova, Ararat, Gantiadi, Enbek, Kalev, Zakhmet, Kolkhoznik, Nyamunas, Neman, Sevan, Urojay	Republic local unions and clubs

½ length at the Mile and won a fine race by ½ length.³⁰²⁰

Thomi Keller

Incidentally, that Swiss sculler was **Thomas Keller** (1924-1989), five-time Swiss Champion and Singles Bronze Medalist in the 1950 European Championships.

Three years later in 1958, Thomi became President of the **Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d’Aviron** (FISA) and led rowing into the modern age.

Ochkalenko: “**Dr. Igor Emchuk** (1930-2008) was for many years Vice President and Rowing Faculty Head of Ukrainian Sports Academy. He was the Soviet Head Coach from 1978 to 1980. He and Thomi Keller remained personal friends until Keller’s death in 1989.”³⁰²¹

³⁰²⁰ Double Sculls Challenge Cup, 1955 Henley Program

³⁰²¹ Ochkalenko, personal correspondence, 2011

Soviet Sports System

The post-World War II Soviet system of sport organization was developed in the direction of the German system of the 1930s. The two had a number of similar features of professionalism and semi-professionalism.³⁰²²

Ochkalenko: “The Sports System of the **Soviet Union** was implemented during the 1930s and remained in effect there until 1991 when the Soviet Union was disbanded. East European and other communist countries (GDR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, China, Mongolia, Northern Korea, Cuba) have mainly repeated this system and principles. Russia, Ukraine and Byelorussia continue this system up to now without the large changes.

“It was based on top-down organization and support by the Soviet government

³⁰²² Refer to the PhD thesis of Gerald Anthony Carr included in the bibliography.

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Lifetime Sports Ranks	
Rank	Necessary achievement
Master of Sport	USSR Medalist, Republic Champion, World Junior Champion, repeated Spartakiad Champion, some international competitions winner
International Master of Sport	USSR Champion, European or World Medalist, Olympic Medalist, World Junior Champion, some international competitions winner
Honored Master of Sport	Olympic or World Medalist, European Champion

through sports clubs associated with professional and trade unions.

Athlete Categories and Ranks

Ochkalenko: “The status of athletes was subdivided into temporary and lifetime, junior and adult. It was necessary to confirm **categories** annually, while **ranks** were given for life.

“All category- and rank-holders received medals and certificates, and their small annual dues payments to their sports unions were waived.

the holder a special sports pension and some tax decreases. Also, they could attend any sports event in the USSR free-of-charge.

Coach Categories and Ranks

Ochkalenko: “It was necessary to confirm temporary coaching categories each four years:

- Third coaching category
- Second coaching category
- First coaching category
- Highest coaching category

Lifetime Coaching Ranks	
Rank	Necessary achievement
Honored Trainer of a USSR Republic	USSR or Spartakiad Champion, World Junior Champion, European or World Medalist, Olympic Finalist, World Junior Champion, some international competitions winner
Honored Trainer of USSR	Olympic, World or European Championship Winner.

“Temporary categories:

- Third junior category
- Second junior category
- First junior category
- Third adult category
- Second adult category
- First adult category
- Master of Sport candidate

“Lifetime athlete rank-holder could be employed as sports coach with a University diploma but without a special sports degree. The Honored Master of Sport rank allowed

“In USSR, the Honored Trainer of a USSR Republic rank allowed to the holders a higher salary, a special sports pension and some tax decreases. They also could attend any sports event in their Soviet republic free-of-charge. Now these rights are abolished.

“USSR sports governmental officials and clerks could be awarded the USSR Republic Honored Worker of Physical Culture and Sports lifetime rank. This also allowed to the holder a higher salary, a special sports pension and some tax

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decreases. They also could attend any sports event in their Soviet republic free-of-charge. Unlike the coaches, they have saved their privileges until now.”³⁰²³

Amateur or Professional?

Nash: “The system was based on an unlimited number of candidates, unlimited time to train, military housing and food, Vladivostok warm water in the winter for training and a position of very high pride in being a state athlete. They were seen as still amateur, as their job was army, navy or governmental, which covered everything.”³⁰²⁴

But this sort of government-based approach to sport was seen by many as antithetical to the amateur ideal of the West. According to **Joe Burk**³⁰²⁵ speaking of the similar German system in 1939: “The balance of power among oarsmen is being seized by the dictator countries and by a few other nations on the continent. The reason for the rise of oarsmen in Germany and Italy is plain. Dictators stress athletics as a national duty.

“For instance, in Germany before the last Olympics the best oarsmen in the country were segregated a year ahead of time and told to concentrate solely on winning. In one sense, the German and Italian oarsmen are semi-pros. They’re subsidized as a government monopoly.”³⁰²⁶

Though he was not speaking of the Soviet Union, Burk’s language reflects the biases of the pre- and post-World War II world. In our own post-Cold War era, **Dr. Valery Kleshnev** provides appropriate balance and perspective: “The rapid growth of professionalism in Soviet sport was

related to the socialist economy but not to the political system. It was nothing like in other dictatorships, e.g. in Franco’s Spain or in Middle Eastern or South American dictatorships.

“Simply said, the Soviet government was the exclusive employer in the country, and it easily created extra jobs for coaches and athletes when they were needed. We can see Western countries doing the same thing today. I’ve definitely seen it in Australia and the UK.”³⁰²⁷

Coach and rowing historian **Mike Spracklen**:³⁰²⁸ “After World War II, international sport took on a new dimension.

“The communist countries fought to show the world that their political system was better than the West. Winning in sport became a matter of pride, prestige and national policy. For them, the Olympics became as professional as Canadian hockey or American football. They trained full-time, and there were big rewards for winning.”³⁰²⁹

Kleshnev: “Yes, sport achievements were used for advertising of their country and political system, but I do not see that as negative. Now every country with any political system does the same.”³⁰³⁰

Spracklen: “In Britain when I was a lad, everyone rowed at 6 o’clock in the morning, went to work, and went home in the evening. They were amateurs and could only train for a limited amount of time, one or two years, and now they had to compete against professionals.”³⁰³¹

Paul Massey, stroke of the 1952 British Olympic Bronze Medal coxed-four: “The standard of these [Helsinki] Games had risen considerably since 1948. To compete in the Games one has to sign a declaration of

³⁰²³ Ochkalenko, op. cit.

³⁰²⁴ Nash, op. cit.

³⁰²⁵ See Chapter 58.

³⁰²⁶ Qtd. by Harvey Patton, Jr., **Burk Aiming for Olympics**, *The Detroit News*, July 20, 1939

³⁰²⁷ Kleshnev, personal correspondence, 2010

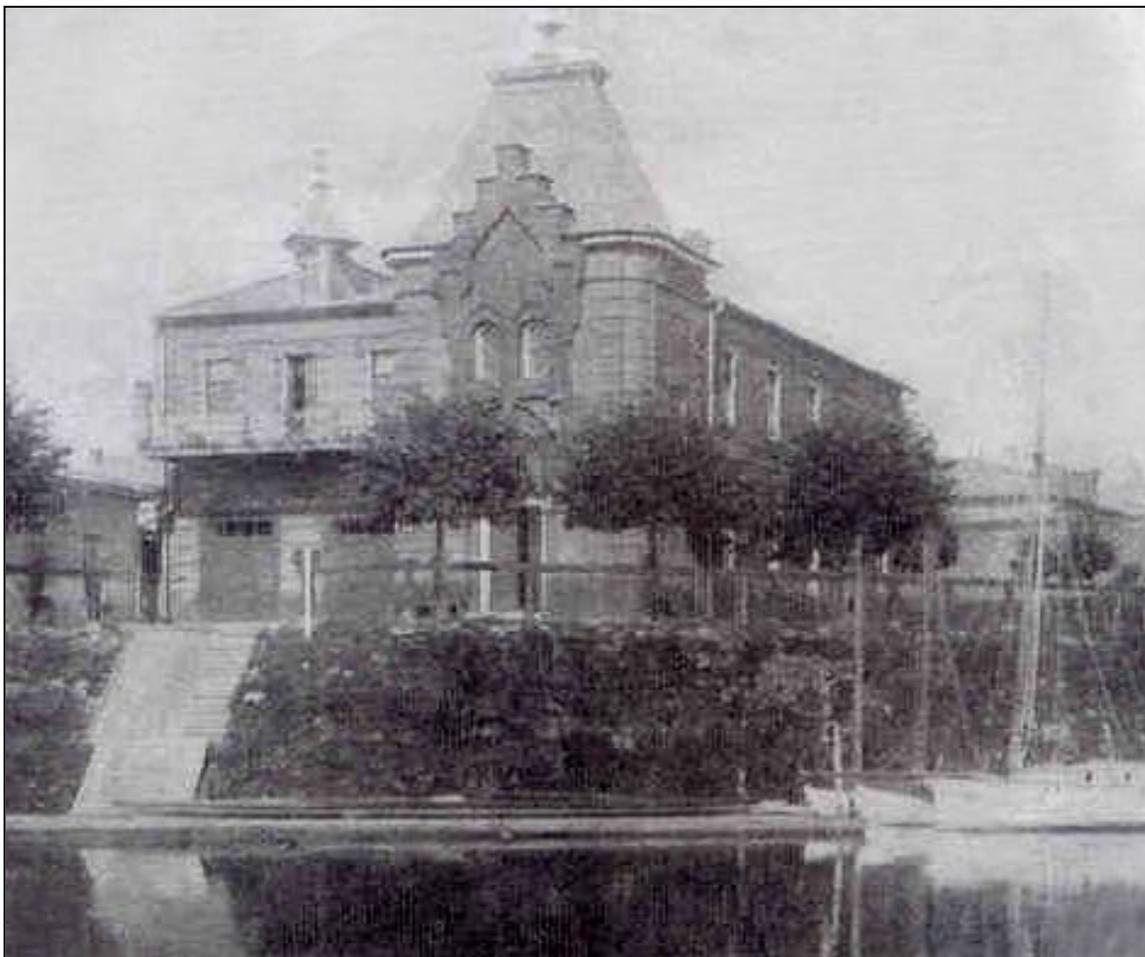
³⁰²⁸ See Chapter 130.

³⁰²⁹ Spracklen, personal conversation, 2005

³⁰³⁰ Kleshnev, op cit.

³⁰³¹ Spracklen, personal conversation, 2005

INTERNATIONAL ROWING TURNS PROFESSIONAL



Demyanov, *All About Rowing*

Strelka, “Little Arrow,” Moscow’s first rowing club, founded in 1867

“The Moscow Style was created here. The building still exists, but no rowing.”

– Gennadii Ochkalenko

“This is a British boathouse! You can see structures like this around the world, in India, Sri Lanka, even Undine Barge Club in Philadelphia, anywhere that Brits migrated.”

– Ted Nash

amateur status, but this has long been a farce. One is competing against the amateur-professionalism of most other countries . . . The Gold Medalist in the sculling event, a Russian student [**Yuri Tyukalov**³⁰³²] . . . stated that he had been selected eighteen months before the Games started and from that time had been

³⁰³² See Chapter 86.

maintained by his government ‘as doubtless your government keeps your athletes,’ he remarked.”³⁰³³

Republic Pride

Non-Russian athletes and coaches representing the Soviet Union maintained

³⁰³³ Qtd. by Page, p. 106

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their allegiance to their home republics. **Alfonas Mikishis** coxed the Soviet eight that traveled to the United States in 1962.³⁰³⁴ “We are not Russians, but from Vilna,³⁰³⁵ Lithuania. Selection for the international races is made in Leningrad twice a year. There are races between city crews in all classes, and all are eager to represent their republics abroad.

“If you are selected there, the work has just begun. Really you must keep your crew together and in condition most of the year long. Even in the winter we practice, using special booths. Then, as competition approaches, we row every day, just resting on Sunday.

“We row twice a day, before and after work. We practice both sprints and long trips.

“Rowing is just beginning in colleges and institutes. We still get most of our dedicated rowers from sports clubs and factories.

“Our season is usually from April, when the ice breaks up, to late November. Even during the frozen months our oarsmen keep in shape by skiing, gymnastics or weight lifting.”³⁰³⁶

American **Ted Nash**³⁰³⁷ has rowed and coached against Eastern Bloc crews through eleven Olympiads: “The training strategy was big men training very, very hard under the Soviet compulsory structure, and except for that, the organizational system itself was the most important component their success.

“And they made it pay because they won so much, in sweep and in sculling.”³⁰³⁸

American coach **Allen Rosenberg**³⁰³⁹ remembers that the Soviets trained year-round “till they dropped.”³⁰⁴⁰

The Moscow Style

Ochkalenko: “I consider that the 1950s were the most productive for Soviet rowing in the sense of creating a unique style. In 1946, the **Krylya Sovetov** eight won their first USSR Championship with a style completely distinct from the others.

“And from 1950 the new, international era for the Soviet rowing began.”³⁰⁴¹

Kleshnev: “The rapid growth of sport performance in the Soviet Union was based on developments in sport science, which was a part of socialism economy.

“First time in the world, sport science and coaching science became a serious full-scale science in USSR. In Soviet terminology, it was called ‘theory and practise of physical culture and sport training.’ A number of famous scientists invented and developed scientific principles of training planning, teaching and improvement of sporting technique.

“The system contained dedicated universities with thousands of students, so every professional coach had to have a university diploma. There were two research institutes, in Moscow and in Leningrad (St. Petersburg now), and they provided support to national teams and formed ‘complex scientific groups’ – another invention of Soviet system, where scientists of various specialties (physiologists, biomechanists, psychologists and doctors) worked together to improve performance.

“A very good review of Soviet research in rowing technique was done in 1991 by Vladimir M. Zatsiorsky and Nikolai Yakunin. Mechanics and Biomechanics of Rowing: A Review, *International Journal of*

³⁰³⁴ See Chapter 98.

³⁰³⁵ Vilnius

³⁰³⁶ Qtd. by Lanouette, op cit, pp. 126-7

³⁰³⁷ See Chapter 84.

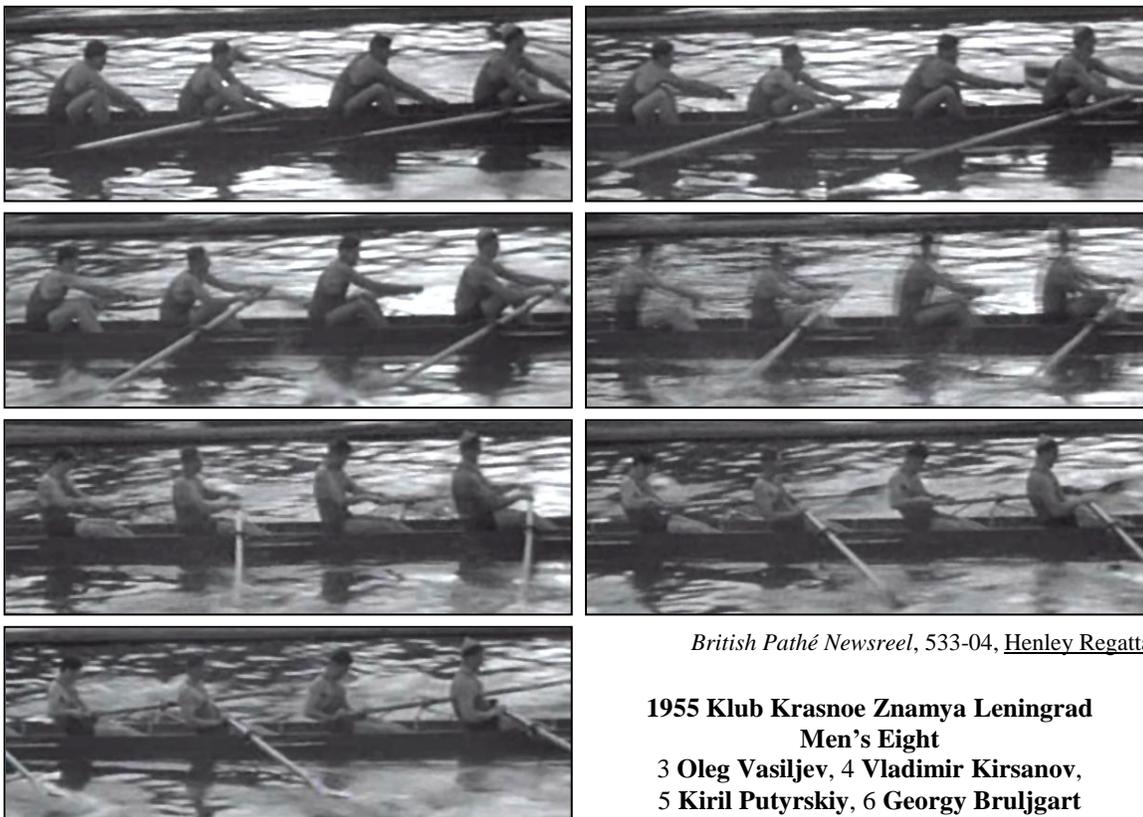
³⁰³⁸ Nash, op. cit., 2004

³⁰³⁹ See Chapter 107 ff.

³⁰⁴⁰ Rosenberg, USRA Clinic, Chula Vista, CA, Sept 11-2, 2004

³⁰⁴¹ Ochkalenko, op. cit.

INTERNATIONAL ROWING TURNS PROFESSIONAL



British Pathé Newsreel, 533-04, Henley Regatta

1955 Klub Krasnoe Znamya Leningrad Men's Eight

3 Oleg Vasiljev, 4 Vladimir Kirsanov,
5 Kiril Putyrskiy, 6 Georgy Bruljgart

The Moscow Style

Note hand heights approaching the “windmill” entry.

Maximal effort at catch, maintained to release with hybrid-concurrent legs, backs and arms.

-10°, +25° to -10°, 0-10, 0-10, 0-10, *Kernschlag*, rate 38, sprint 41

Sport Biomechanics, 7 / 1991, pp. 229-281.³⁰⁴²

Nash: “The Soviet system brought together athletes from eleven countries that all began with disparate styles. For instance, the Ukrainians rowed absolutely unlike the Russians, and the Romanians rowed just like the Italians of the time. If you saw any of them rowing, they’d all be different.

“They researched into what they wanted and developed a Soviet style, and it took them four or five years to get that style together, but because they had unlimited paid coaches, hundreds of centers and endless people rowing, in the military as

well as civilians, if a guy couldn’t change his technique to what they were now asking, they could just get rid of him and get somebody else. That’s how many athletes they had.”³⁰⁴³

The technique of the Soviet crews became known as the **Moscow Style**, though some in Britain referred to it as the **Continental Style**.³⁰⁴⁴ I will use the former name.

In this book, I generally follow the valuable distinction made by Prof. **Volker**

³⁰⁴² Kleshnev, op cit.

³⁰⁴³ Nash, op cit.

³⁰⁴⁴ Russian Crew Make Fast Henley Time, *The Times* of London, July 4, 1958

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Nolte³⁰⁴⁵ of the University of Western Ontario in Canada between the words “**technique**” and “**style**,” the former being based on fundamental principles and the latter the result of individual preferences and idiosyncrasies (for example, the Jesus Style).

Following Nolte’s guidelines, it might at first glance seem more appropriate to refer to the “Moscow Technique,” but in fact it contains no real deviations from the broad fundamentals of Classical Technique. “Moscow *Style*” is correct.

Technique

At the 1952 Olympics, U.S. Team Leader **Tip Goes** was welcomed into the Soviet boathouse.

The New York Times: “‘They don’t follow our technique,’ he said at the time. ‘They feather high and are short in the water. I imagine they do 38 or 39 beats a minute, whereas we like 32 or 34. But their crews obviously are accustomed to rougher water. They don’t look bad at all.’”³⁰⁴⁶

After the same Krylya Sovetov crew won the Grand Challenge Cup at Henley two years after Helsinki in 1954, the 1955 Soviet Henley entry, Leningrad’s **Klub Krasnoe Znamya**, coached by Samsonov of Krylya Sovetov, became the object of intense media scrutiny.

The *Daily Express* of London characterized them as having a “**rocking, windmill style**.”³⁰⁴⁷

This referred to the visually distinctive recovery motion of all Soviet crews in the 1950s from singles to eights.



Demyanov, *All About Rowing*

Alexandr Shwedov in 1954
with the Grand Challenge Cup

Ochkalenko: “Krylya Sovetov coaches **Alexandr Shwedov** and **Alexey Shebuev** created that ‘rocking, windmill style.’

“Shwedov was head coach on the water, and Shebuev was *very* important adviser, who supervised and warned impulsive Shwedov. Also good teacher.

“Demyanov and other Krylya Sovetov members emphasized always that they liked Shebuev as their vital and sports main adviser, crew keeper also.

“Shwedov was a university professor in mathematics and Shebuev in chemistry, and they were the first in the world to explain rowing technique in terms of the rules and formulas of mathematics and physics.

“During the 1950s, Krylya Sovetov crews and single scullers, men and women, won many European events. They were undoubtedly the strongest club in Europe at the time.”³⁰⁴⁸

³⁰⁴⁵ See Chapter 134.

³⁰⁴⁶ U.S., Soviet Crews Hit Friendly Note, *The New York Times*, July 13, 1952

³⁰⁴⁷ Qtd. by Dodd, op cit.

³⁰⁴⁸ Ochkalenko, personal correspondence, 2011

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www.youtube.com/watch?v=z11JXKtdB3o

1960 Soviet Union Coxed-Pair, RK Vilnius Žalgiris, Lithuania

Olympic Silver Medal, Lago di Albano

Bow **Antanas Bagdonavičius** 6'2" 187cm 187lb. 85kg

Note how he snaps his right elbow straight just at the entry.

The blade follows a "rocking, windmill" path up, around and in.

For at least a century, the recovery rhythm of the vast majority of Western crews, from English Orthodox to Conibear, had been fast hands away, back swinging over and then the slide decelerating into the entry.³⁰⁴⁹

The Soviets did the opposite: almost hesitating after the release, then beginning forward quite slowly until the arms were almost straight and the backs had swung part of the way forward. Then recovery speed would smoothly and progressively increase, the blade would gather speed, rise a bit off the water and then circle around (like a "windmill"), making the entry the crescendo of the entire recovery.

British rower **Colin Porter**³⁰⁵⁰: "Unlike American crews, the Russians say that they prefer to sit and take a rest when they are in the most comfortable position, which is the normal 'easy-all' [release] position.

³⁰⁴⁹ The only significant exception was the **Lady Margaret Style** of Roy Meldrum, a major precursor to the Moscow Style. See Chapter 76.

³⁰⁵⁰ See Chapter 78.

Differing from all other styles, there is a clear-cut end to every stroke, and there is no [Fairbairn] continuous chain movement. The stroke begins with the slide coming forward quite fast, the arms bent until just as the slide reaches the front stop they straighten, the blade circles high and latches on to the water."³⁰⁵¹

Nash: "On the recovery, the Soviets wanted everyone to accelerate into the stern. The Americans at the time were talking deceleration.

"And the other thing that was so prominent was that they didn't have straight arms. They'd come out of the bow with their arms a little bent, and only at the last micro-nanosecond before the catch would they straighten their arms, and it was so that they could snap the blade suddenly into the water.

"Even though they were rushing up the slide, it still wasn't fast enough. They wanted it even faster, so by having slightly bent elbows and straightening them at the

³⁰⁵¹ Porter, *Rowing to Win*, p. 60

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John Cooke

Club Khimik Voskresensk Coxless-Pair

Stroke **Viktor Ivanov** 163lb. 74kg,

Bow **Igor Buldakov** 167lb. 76kg

1954 and 1955 Silver Goblets Champion

1956 Olympic Silver Medal, Melbourne

The Moscow Style featured a visually distinctive “**rocking, windmill**” motion into the entry.

After a deliberate start, the slide gathered speed, the rollup began early, the blade rose and followed a circular “windmill” path up, around and aggressively into the water.

last moment, they could get the blade to do this ‘jump’ into the water.

“**Igor Grinko** told me that they liked then to see the bow jump or hop into the air as it reduced the drag of the bow wave. My own thought at the time was: Hey, if the bow goes up, the stern goes down. How do you know you’re not swapping one for the other?

“Then they would recoil off the footboards, accelerate in, and the shaft would bend early on.

“The jumping away from the footboard was amazing because you couldn’t believe anybody could get to the stern with such a rush, catch with such blinding speed, and still jump away from the footboards.”³⁰⁵²

³⁰⁵² Nash, op cit.

Porter: “The Russian explanation of the bound up to frontstops is simply that of the bouncing ball: the faster the approach to the frontstops, the faster the rebound.”³⁰⁵³

The “rebound effect” of springing into the catch and recoiling back was visually quite distinctive.

In the words of **Allen Rosenberg**, “I remember seeing the Soviet crews throwing their bodies into the stern, lifting and *hauling!*”³⁰⁵⁴

Force application from the entry all the way to the release ranged from an effective *Kernschlag* to a very elegant *Schubschlag* characterized by a high arc of the back.

³⁰⁵³ Porter, op cit, p. 61

³⁰⁵⁴ Rosenberg, personal conversation, 2004

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Fairbairn on the Steppes

Samsonov: “If there is a ‘Russian Style of rowing, it has been developed since the war. Our Bible has been *My Stories on Rowing*³⁰⁵⁵ by Stiv Ferbern. He has most influenced the sport in our country. His book was later improved and its rules applied to the sport by two famous trainers – Shwedov and Shebuev. On their studies, Russian rowing is founded.”³⁰⁵⁶

Kleshnev: “In rowing, sport science played a positive role in 1950s, when two bright coaches, Shwedov and Shebuev, developed a scientific model of Soviet rowing style based on Fairbairn ideas.”³⁰⁵⁷

Spracklen: “When the Soviet team came to Henley in the 1950s, they rowed very high and around and in, and that was their interpretation of Fairbairn.

“It wasn’t really what Steve taught, but it was their interpretation. They drove it in from behind, so it actually hit the water hard.”³⁰⁵⁸

In other words, they were attempting to recreate the **Jesus Bell-Note!**³⁰⁵⁹

Zenon Babraj, former Polish national team rower and coach and currently the women’s coach at the University of Southern California, recalls:

“When I started rowing, we rowed good Moscow Style: you go and hit with the body, and then see what happens. So there was emphasis on lifting the shoulders, really. A lot of teams in Eastern Europe were rowing like this.”³⁰⁶⁰

Despite initial inspiration from the writings of Fairbairn, the Moscow Style

represented a radical departure from the rhythm and the force application patterns of the Conibear and Fairbairn approaches, and Babraj’s description effectively captures how the difference felt to the participant.

For many, instead of a preoccupation with the Courtney-Fairbairn single-cut pullthrough, an entry accelerated strongly to the release, the Moscow emphasis was all on the front half of the stroke with the rest an afterthought.

This is *Kernschlag*, although many crews, especially in small sweep and sculling boats, strongly accelerated to the release after their windmill entry.

Race Strategy

It should be recalled that through the 1950s the common strategy was to aggressively take the lead early in the race and crack your opponent, and this was also the Soviet approach. An integral component was their high stroke rate, and their pullthroughs were impressive during practice and early in their races when their entry-to-release acceleration was still consistent and effective.

Unfortunately, their race pace seemed to mirror their approach to a single stroke: “Hit it hard, and see what happens.”³⁰⁶¹ When they got tired, they tended not to be able to make it to the finish, either of their strokes or of their races. If their opponents had cracked first, then they won. If not, they lost, sometimes spectacularly.

At the 1952 Olympics, Krylya Sovetov first came up against the U.S. in their semi-final. When the Americans started to inch away, the Soviets cracked, almost stopped rowing and lost by twelve seconds. In the final, the two boats were even through the 1,000 when the Americans put in a power-10. That ended the race. The Soviets

³⁰⁵⁵ Russian translation of *Chats on Rowing*.

³⁰⁵⁶ Qtd. by Lanouette, op cit, pp. 125-6

³⁰⁵⁷ Kleshnev, op cit.

³⁰⁵⁸ Spracklen, op cit.

³⁰⁵⁹ See Chapter 14 ff.

³⁰⁶⁰ Babraj, USRA Clinic, Chula Vista, CA, Sept 11-2, 2004

³⁰⁶¹ Babraj, op cit.

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eventually ceded half a length of open water and were almost caught by the Australians.

In the 1955 Henley Double Sculls Challenge Cup, Thomi Keller and Grasshopper/Zurich cracked first, and Klub Burevestnik won, but they also collapsed and slowed down as soon as their rivals had begun to fall back.

In the semifinals for the 1955 Grand Challenge Cup, the Klub Krasnoe eight cracked while leading and were rowed down from behind by UBC/Vancouver R.C.³⁰⁶²

1956

The 1956 Soviet Olympic Trials were a case of dominoes.

Defending 1952 Olympic singles champion Yuri Tyukalov failed to win the single, and so he teamed with newcomer Aleksandr Berkutov and won the Doubles Trials. That forced Helsinki and Henley double scullers Emchuk and Zhilin into the coxed-pair with coxswain Vladimir Petrov.

The man who began the dominoes falling by winning the Singles Trials was 18-year-old **Vyacheslav Ivanov**.³⁰⁶³

At the 1956 Olympics, Emchuk /Zhilin/Petrov won coxed-pair Bronze behind Ayrault/Findlay/Seifert of the U.S.³⁰⁶⁴ In the coxless-pair, Buldakov/Viktor Ivanov, two-time Henley winners and two-time European Champions, came in second to Fifer/Hecht of the United States.³⁰⁶⁵

Tyukalov/Berkutov, a simply gorgeous combination, won the double, and Vyacheslav Ivanov won the single.

Altogether, Soviet rowers had won a total of three Gold, two Silver and one

Bronze in two Olympic Games, mostly in small boats.

Mature Moscow Style

By 1964 in Tokyo, the USSR Olympic single, double, both pairs, both fours and eight all rowed a more mature and nuanced version of the Moscow Style.

The recovery had moderated somewhat. There was less “windmill,” and the concurrent pullthrough relied more heavily on the legs. They approached the entry with shoulders and heads low, leaning the bodies forward +25° and bending the inside elbows.

Then they extended their arms and very aggressively lifted their heads and shoulders upward to put their oars into the water.

On the pullthrough, the evolution was in the other direction, away from moderation. Load on the oars appeared to be very heavy, and this was exacerbated by the switch during this era to wider and wider blades. The Soviets *always* had the widest blades of anyone, and this would have been felt by them most acutely at the entry, encouraging oarsmen to counter the load with increasingly assertive leg application.

Soviet rowers through 1956 displayed well-developed shoulders and arms and less bulk in their legs, a bit like gymnasts, only much larger. **Stan Pocock** later recalled how developed their legs had become by 1960. “They knew where the power lay.”³⁰⁶⁶

Careful study of films of the 1964 Soviet crews reveals that they still used their legs, backs and arms concurrently from entry to release, as had been the case with Soviet boats in the 1950s. Beginning with their aggressive catches, the Soviets would suspend their bodies on their oar handles.

However, some 1964 crews still displayed an almost imperceptible force

³⁰⁶² who were then narrowly defeated in the final by Pennsylvania. See Chapter 65.

³⁰⁶³ See Chapter 86.

³⁰⁶⁴ See Chapter 82.

³⁰⁶⁵ See Chapter 81.

³⁰⁶⁶ Qtd. by Dodd, *World Rowing*, p. 107

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Tokyo Olympic Committee

1964 Soviet Union Men's Eight

6 **Antanas Bagdonavičius** 6'2" 187cm 187lb. 85kg, 5 **Pyatras Karla** 6'2" 188cm 190lb. 86kg
(Rowers from RK Žalgiris Vilnius Lithuania)

+5°, +25° to -15°/-20°, 0-8, 0-10, 0-10, rate 38, sprint 41

Recovery (not shown) was slow and then accelerating into the entry.

Maximal effort at catch, then maintained to release.

Much of 1950s "windmill" action had moderated by 1964.

discontinuity as the initial explosive impact of the legs at the catch dissipated, symptomatic of segmented *Kernschlag* pullthroughs.

Layback was limited to -15° to -20°, but due to the heavy load and the early aggressiveness, the back and arms tended to fall behind and still have 8" to 10" to go to the chest by the time the legs had completed their motion.

This mirrored the 3rd Generation Conibear hybrid-concurrent innovation of Cornell University, which the Soviet coaches would have had a chance to study during their impressive appearance at Henley in 1957.³⁰⁶⁷

In 1964, having lifted their heads and shoulders in the first half of the stroke, the posture of the Soviet crews would tend to collapse toward the finish, with the athletes rowing down into their laps with a hint of ferryman's finish.

In summary, by the 1960s the rowing style developed in the Soviet Bloc accelerated into a Fairbairnesque frontsplash entry, had upper bodies lifting vertically in the first half of their *Kernschlag* pullthrough and sagging during an abbreviated second half. They used legs, backs and arms in a Classical hybrid-concurrent manner which featured a strong emphasis on legs at the entry with arms struggling to finish the pullthrough.

Kleshnev: "Unfortunately, in 1960s the role of some incorrect scientific concepts

³⁰⁶⁷ See Chapter 70.

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became negative. When force curve and instantaneous boat velocity data became available, wrong conclusions were made about the main criteria of efficient technique, which were defined as minimisation of variation of the boat speed and later peak of force application during the drive. These incorrect principles were widely promoted: even educational film was made for coaches and students.³⁰⁶⁸

But the 1960s Moscow Style influence continued in the United States through **Harry Parker**, who had observed Klub Krasnoe Znamya in 1955 from his position in the 2-seat of the University of Pennsylvania eight.³⁰⁶⁹

Nine years later, he had the chance to closely study the 1964 Soviet Olympic Team as coach of the U.S. coxed-four from Harvard University.³⁰⁷⁰

Conventional wisdom says today that the Harvard Technique of the 1960s was based on that of Ratzeburger Ruderclub, whom we will discuss shortly. Indeed, Harry himself gives them a great deal of credit, but he will tell you that the crew that really caught his eye in 1964 was the Soviet coxed-four rowing the Moscow Style.

Cross-Pollination

By the late 1960s, the **German Democratic Republic**,³⁰⁷¹ known familiarly as East Germany, came to dominate world rowing. Behind the Iron Curtain, GDR Style built on the Moscow Style and quickly and completely overshadowed it so that the seminal role of the original style of the

Soviet Union was soon nearly forgotten by the rest of the world.

Kleshnev: “The rowing technique of many Soviet crews was changed in 1970s: the catch became much softer, coaches taught rowers ‘Do not stop the boat at catch,’ ‘maintain the boat speed,’ ‘pull the handle before pushing the stretcher at catch.’ Soviet coaches started coping Karl Adam’s style³⁰⁷² with its active trunk drive at the catch and then DDR style, but a copy is always worse than original. In 1970s and ‘80s, in spite of very good average level, many crews in finals and some outstanding crews (men’s single and double in 1972, men’s coxed-four in 1976, women’s double in 1980, men’s coxless-pair in 1981), the Soviet rowing style lost its flashing brightness.”³⁰⁷³

The Pimenov Twins

One of the most successful Soviet crews of the era was the **Pimenov twins**’ coxless-pair, seven-time international medalists between 1979 and 1990. The mild accelerating recovery remained, and force application had evolved from *Kernschlag* back to *Schubschlag*.

Nash: “I made a study of films of the Pimenovs, and they were probably the cleanest in and the cleanest out of all rowers in the world. They were distinctly different-sized twins, but they made it work.

“They smoked cigarettes relentlessly, in and out of the boat. I’ve actually seen them smoking *in the boat*, and in the dining hall they would *constantly* be told they weren’t supposed to be smoking, but they did.

“Their starts were phenomenal, and often they held on to win, but their tendency to falter in the last 150 meters was their undoing in many, many races. I think there must have been two or three major races

³⁰⁶⁸ Kleshnev, op cit.

³⁰⁶⁹ See Chapter 65.

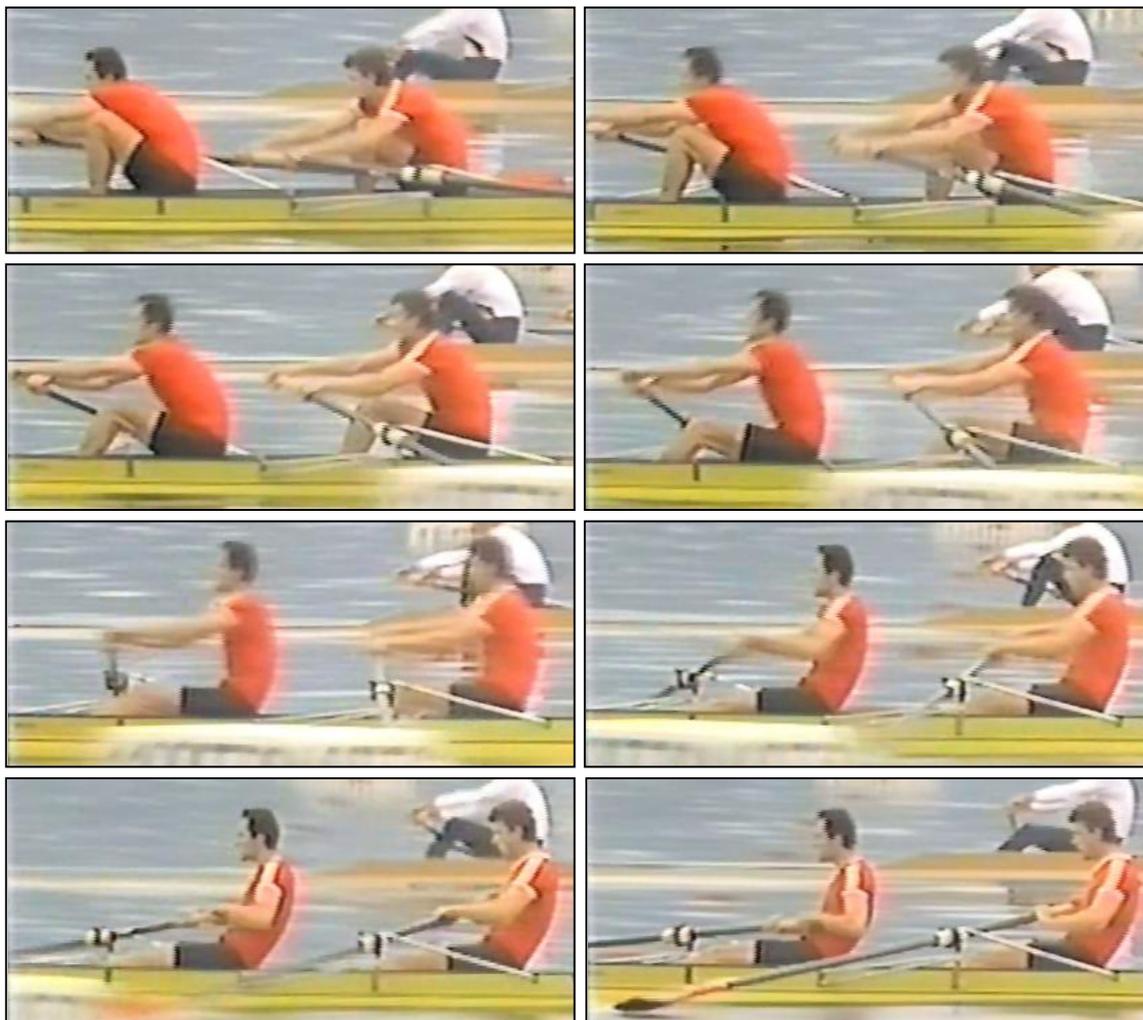
³⁰⁷⁰ See Chapter 101.

³⁰⁷¹ In English, German Democratic Republic or GDR. *Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (BRD) or the Federal Republic of Germany was the official name of “West Germany.” See Chapter 119.

³⁰⁷² See Chapter 92.

³⁰⁷³ Kleshnev, personal correspondence, 2010

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FISA 1989 Video

Dymano Moskva Coxless-Pair

1979 Silver, 1980 Silver, 1981 Gold, 1985 Gold, 1986 Gold, 1987 Bronze, 1990 Silver
Stroke **Nikolay Pimenov** 6'3" 193cm 190lb. 86kg, Bow **Yuriy Pimenov** 6'5" 198cm 207lb. 94kg

0°, +40° to -20°, 0-8, 0-10, 0-10, hybrid-concurrent *Schubschlag*

Accelerating recovery to instantaneous catch.

Emphasis on early leg motion, surge to finish.

where they were rowed through by the end, and I wondered if some of their losses weren't a result of their smoking."³⁰⁷⁴

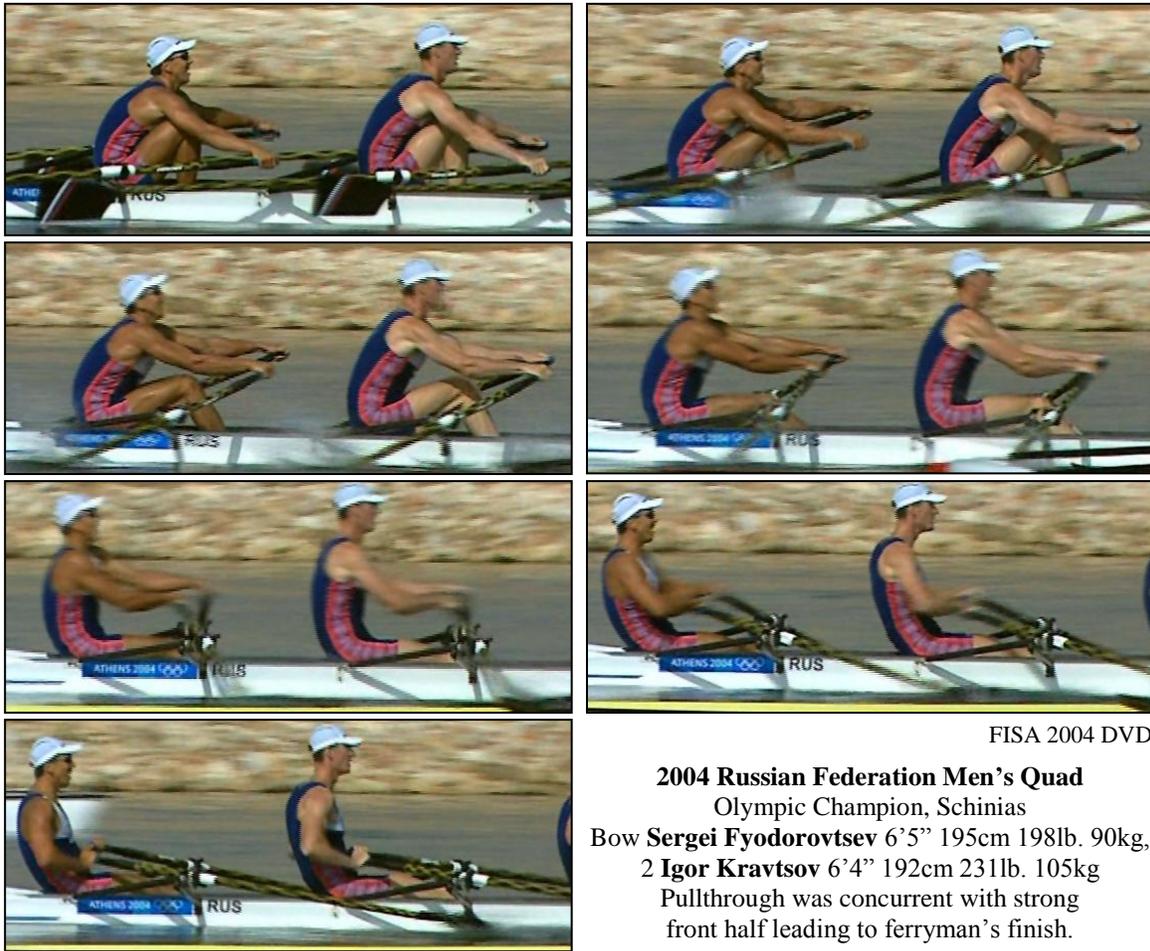
The 1985 World Championship final in Hazewinkel is an excellent example of the Pimenovs' racing style. They pulled out an

entire length in the first 150 meters and a length and a half by the 250. They maintained that margin to the 500 when the British pair of Adam Clift and Martin Cross attacked to close to within one length at the 750 and half a length at the 1,000.

As the water got rougher, the margin grew to a length again at the 1,500, and then

³⁰⁷⁴ Nash, op. cit., 2011

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FISA 2004 DVD

2004 Russian Federation Men's Quad
 Olympic Champion, Schinias
 Bow **Sergei Fyodorovtsev** 6'5" 195cm 198lb. 90kg,
 2 **Igor Kravtsov** 6'4" 192cm 231lb. 105kg
 Pullthrough was concurrent with strong
 front half leading to ferryman's finish.

0°, +30° to -10°, 0-8, 0-9, 0-10, Classical Technique, stroke 35, sprint 39
 After forty years, Moscow Style had evolved from *Kernschlag* to *Schubschlag*.

the Brits poured it on. As the Pimenovs struggled to reach the line, the Brits kept coming. They fell short by a few inches, perhaps 10cm.³⁰⁷⁵

The Moscow Style Today

Has the Moscow Style survived into the 21st Century?

Ted Nash: "The fall of the Iron Curtain may have slowed it down a little bit, but the Soviet Style *is still around!*"

³⁰⁷⁵ For British coach **Mike Spracklen's** recounting of the race, see Chapter 130.

"The Russian Federation men's quad that won in 2004 in Athens rowed the Moscow Style, and it hadn't changed *one iota* since the '50s!³⁰⁷⁶

"Ukrainians of today also row the old Soviet Style, give or take a little bit of the arm snap, and here comes Estonian single sculler **Jueri Jaanson**, who couldn't win a thing in the late '90s.

³⁰⁷⁶ This is an exaggeration. Over forty years, force application had been transformed from *Kernschlag* to *Schubschlag*.

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“Where did Jueri go? He went to Russia, but it happened to be via Augusta, Georgia, USA.

Igor Grinko



Peter Spurrier

Igor Grinko

The coach that Jaanson came to in Georgia was former Soviet National Coach **Igor Grinko**.

Born in Vilnius, Lithuania, he received his Diploma of Higher Education of Physical Culture and Sport from the National Academy of Sport in Kiev, Ukraine.

Ochkalenko: “Grinko rowed and coached in Ukraine. He was USSR Doubles Champion representing Dynamo Kiev.”³⁰⁷⁷

He coached the Dynamo squad from 1976 to 1980 and was **Soviet National Sculling Coach** from 1980 to 1990, during which time he produced eight World Champion, seven World Silver and two World Bronze Medal boats.

³⁰⁷⁷ Ochkalenko, personal correspondence, 2011

He became an **Honored Trainer of USSR** in 1984.

Nash: “Jaanson came to the United States *not* to learn our technique but to train under Igor, a former Soviet coach who teaches the same Soviet Style, with maybe a little modification of the body tilt.

“Jaanson regrouped, came back onto form and almost won in Athens. On the beach after the Olympic final, the Norwegian winner, **Olav Tufte**, said in front of me, in front of Igor and directly to Jaanson:

“‘Jueri, if you had had *one* more attack, I couldn’t have answered it.’

“Jaanson got an Olympic Silver Medal after losing everything to everybody, even losing to U.S. lightweights in Augusta when he first arrived!”³⁰⁷⁸



Ted Nash Collection

³⁰⁷⁸ Nash, op cit., 2004

THE SPORT OF ROWING



FISA 2004 DVD

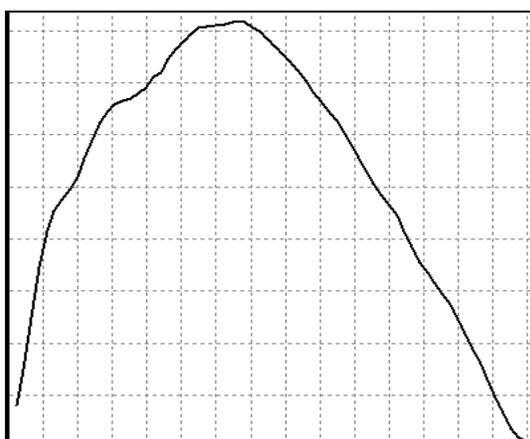
Jueri Jaanson, Estonia

6'4" 192cm 212lb. 96kg

2004 Olympic Silver Medal, Schinias

2004 Moscow Style: accelerating recovery and classic "rocking, windmill" motion into the entry (not shown).

Pullthrough: strong front half to ferryman's finish.
-10°, +20° to -20°, 0-9, 0-9, 0-10, stroke 37, sprint 39



Cas Rekers, Rowperfect

Jueri Jaanson

Sequentiality of legs and back led to lumpy first half curve.

Left-leaning curve is a characteristic of effective *Kernschlag* force application.

Jaanson had all the classic components of the Moscow Style, accelerated recovery and rocking, windmill entry. His pullthrough featured strong and effective *Kernschlag* force application. However, instead of the Moscow Style's Classical concurrency, Jaanson rowed Modern Orthodox overlapping-sequential body mechanics.

Nash: "The Moscow Style created for the fifteen republics of the old Soviet System half a century ago is still alive.

"Jueri Jaanson was the top medal winner for Estonia in Athens, and Estonia had been one of those fifteen Soviet republics."³⁰⁷⁹

³⁰⁷⁹ Nash, op cit.

INTERNATIONAL ROWING TURNS PROFESSIONAL



FISA 1996 Video

1996 United States Men's Quad

Olympic Silver Medal, Lake Lanier

Bow **Tim Young** 6'4" 193cm 207lb. 94kg, 2 **Brian Jamieson** 6'4" 193cm 209lb. 95kg,
3 **Eric Mueller** 6'7" 200cm 225lb. 102kg, Stroke **Jason Gailles** 6'4" 193cm 205lb. 93kg

+10°, +30° to -20°, 0-7, 0-9, 0-10, Classical Technique
Concurrent *Kernschlag*, late arm draw, ferryman's finish

Igor Grinko: "It was idea of Matt Smith of FISA and Kris Korzeniowski to invite me to USA to coach sculling in 1989 year at the World Championships in Bled. Tom Terhaar was my assistant coach from 1996 to 2000."³⁰⁸⁰

One of the most successful boats that Grinko coached while in the United States

³⁰⁸⁰ Grinko, personal correspondence, 2011

was the 1996 American Men's Quad that won Olympic Silver on Lake Lanier.

Nash: "With little or no support, little or no recognition from USRowing, Igor's men's quad of 1996 was made up of club leftovers, and two were almost novices! That's how *good* Igor was."³⁰⁸¹

Brian Jamieson: "Club leftovers?" I believe that I am the only one in the boat

³⁰⁸¹ Nash, op. cit., 2011

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who can truthfully answer that call, and Ted's comment made me chuckle. I was a third varsity rower at Yale, graduating in 1991 and only briefly rising sophomore year to the jayvee boat. I was rejected from the 1991 Potomac Boat Club quad that went to the now-defunct Olympic Sports Festival, and I spent a fair amount of time trying to catch up to the PBC women rowers.

"One of the fondest memories of my entire rowing career was a speed order race in 1993 on a very messy Occoquan River. I was in the final and managed to pull ahead just at the finish. I hit a huge log in the last 100 meters and the skeg on my undersized and flimsy used Van Dusen single fell off. I managed to sprint despite weaving, and won the race. Afterwards Ted Nash came up to me and said something to the effect that I was a tough son of a [gun]. I could practically have lifted off the ground and floated away I was so proud and happy to win his praise. That was a turning point for me, and from then on I had a lot more confidence and success at rowing. I made the quad that year and the next, the double in 1995 and the quad again in '96.

"Of my 1996 teammates, **Jason Gales** had rowed intermediate sweep at Penn A.C., probably around 1990. In 1992, he won a Gold at the Canadian Henley in the double, beating me by three-quarters of a length. In 1993, he sculled with Igor in Occoquan, Virginia, going to the Worlds in the quad with me. And 1994 was more training under Igor and racing the double at Worlds, 1995 and 1996 back in the quad.

Tim Young was also sculling by 1992. I distinctly remember being soundly beaten by him in the senior single race at the Southeast Regional Regatta that year. Tim sculled for Undine in 1992 and 1993 and then hooked up with Igor in 1994 and made the quad with me that went to Worlds in Indianapolis and the quad the following two years.

"**Eric Mueller** only started sculling in 1994, rowing a quad for Potomac Boat Club that made history by flipping under Key Bridge. In the 1994/95 season he made the switch to Igor and made the quad for Finland.

"So, of the four of us, probably only Eric qualifies as a 'near novice' at sculling by 1996. In the bigger sense, though, Ted is right. We were almost novices in comparison to most of our competition, especially the Germans, who I believe were Olympians before most of us had picked up an oar of any kind."³⁰⁸²

The Grinko Style

Dr. **Valery Kleshnev's** analysis of various modern rowing techniques characterizes the "Grinko Style" as **long-slide** and **sequential** in body mechanics.³⁰⁸³ The entire '96 quad with the exception of 3-seat Eric Mueller who is extremely tall, compressed to a +10° shin angle, which limited body angle forward to +30°. This extreme compression actually makes it more difficult to lead with the legs, and so like the Ratzeburg crews of the 1950s and '60s who also used long slides,³⁰⁸⁴ the American quad showed no sequentiality. Unlike Modern Orthodox sculler Jaanson, they actually used their legs and backs concurrently.

Kleshnev also characterizes the Grinko Style as **Kernschlag** in force application,³⁰⁸⁵ and indeed the U.S. quad appears to have a force curve similar to that of **Juuri Jaanson**, shown earlier in this chapter. Note also that the quad set their footstretchers so that they released with their handles in front of them, just like with Jaanson. This would limit reach and maximize length at the release, putting the point at which the sculls passed

³⁰⁸² Jamieson, personal correspondence, 2011

³⁰⁸³ See Chapter 167.

³⁰⁸⁴ See Chapter 92.

³⁰⁸⁵ See Chapter 168.

INTERNATIONAL ROWING TURNS PROFESSIONAL

through perpendicular to the hull earlier in the pullthrough.

Nash: “Igor Grinko gave the USA a full-value package of new all-body weight lifting. He gave mileage at low, really powerful rates. He taught us about TR (total rower) machines, and he made them out of scrap parts, pulleys with cables. You sit on a sliding seat and pull a handle just like you would an erg, and when you let go, the weights would go crashing down on a pile of old tires to prevent them from breaking the building up.”³⁰⁸⁶

“He also treated men and women as equals, first coach in the United States to ever do that. Absolutely equal!

“Igor is a U.S. citizen and a resident of Augusta, Georgia. He is presently the head coach in China and has produced several championship medals in lightweight and heavyweight, men’s and women’s events. In my opinion, Igor was one of the hardest-working and least-thanked coaches I’ve ever seen in sixty years in the sport.”³⁰⁸⁷

Grinko: “During my coaching, my teams won thirty-six medals, seventeen of them Gold (count only World Championships and Olympics).”³⁰⁸⁸

Many thanks especially to **Gennadii Ochkalenko, Ted Nash** and **Valery Kleshnev** for invaluable advice and substantial contributions to this chapter.

³⁰⁸⁶ Joe Burk had built *exactly* the same apparatus at the University of Pennsylvania boathouse in the late 1950s. You could hear the weights come crashing to the floor halfway down Boathouse Row. See Chapter 94.

³⁰⁸⁷ Nash, op. cit.

³⁰⁸⁸ Grinko, op. cit.