

The challenge faced by Coach P. involves managing two rowing teams, Varsity and Junior Varsity, that exhibit vastly **different** dynamics and performance outcomes. Despite comprising the strongest rowers, the Varsity team consistently **underperforms** relative to the cohesive and high-performing JV team. This analysis highlights three critical issues underlying this situation.

1. Lack of Team Cohesion in the Varsity Boat

The Varsity team's superior individual capabilities are undermined by **fractured** dynamics. A culture of **blame-shifting**, seen in critical emails and heated discussions, prevents synchronization essential for rowing success. Harsh post-practice **critiques** erode trust and morale, reinforcing **dysfunction**. These issues stem from an overemphasis on individual metrics during selection, neglecting relational and psychological aspects vital for cohesion.

2. Cultural Divide Between Varsity and JV

A stark cultural contrast worsens the performance gap. The JV team thrives on a “nothing to lose” mentality, fostering camaraderie and resilience. Conversely, the Varsity team bears the weight of high expectations and fear of losing to JV, creating psychological **strain**. JV rowers resist “promotion,” while Varsity rowers are **demoralized** by repeated defeats, perpetuating **pressure** and **underachievement**.

3. Ineffective Interventions to Address Performance Gaps

Attempts to improve Varsity's performance, such as member swaps and intensified conditioning, have backfired. Member switches **demoralized** both teams, while the focus on physical conditioning **overlooked** psychological and relational factors critical for teamwork. These interventions failed to address the root causes of Varsity's underperformance.

Recommendation

Coach P. should maintain the current boat assignments while implementing team-building interventions to address Varsity's cohesion issues:

- **Establish a "no-blame" policy** for the remaining practices to foster a supportive environment and encourage collective accountability.
- **Adopt a unified team motto** to replace the varied and inconsistent slogans, creating a shared identity and purpose.
- **Restructure post-practice feedback sessions** to emphasize team-wide improvement rather than individual shortcomings.
- **Conduct targeted synchronization drills** that focus on rebuilding trust and alignment among Varsity rowers.
- **Assign clear leadership roles** to provide guidance and authority within the Varsity boat, empowering rowers to take ownership of their performance.

By addressing Varsity's teamwork deficiencies, this approach leverages their physical potential while mitigating psychological barriers. Though switching boats might yield immediate results, maintaining roles with targeted interventions preserves long-term integrity and validates the selection process. These steps maximize Varsity's chances at Nationals and lay a foundation for sustained success.