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# **Machine Learning to go *nyoom***

Using Machine Learning to evaluate rowing training and predict  
training outcomes and performances

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# Vocabulary

## Heart Rate Metrics

HRV

Heart Rate Variability

HR

Heart Rate

HR<sub>max</sub>

Maximum Heart Rate

## Training Zones

UT2

Basic Oxygen Utilisation Training

UT1

Oxygen Utilization Training

AT

Anaerobic Threshold Training

TR

Oxygen Transport Training

AN

Anaerobic Capacity Training

LT

Lactate Threshold

## General Training Terms

Stroke Rate

The number of strokes completed per minute (like cadence in cycling or running)

Split

The standard split in rowing is time to complete 500m

## Data Providers

Strava

An exercise tracking platform with social media features commonly used by endurance athletes.

Concept2

The manufacturer of the most commonly used rowing machines. They provide an API for data access for sessions completed on the machines.

Polar

A manufacturer of heart rate monitors, GPS watches, and other fitness tracking devices.

Garmin

A manufacturer of heart rate monitors, GPS watches, and other fitness tracking devices.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

This chapter will introduce the general approach and motivation for this project, the expected outcomes, and a structure for the remainder of the report.

### 1.1 Motivations

What motivated this project. Interest in rowing, rowing background, sports science is cool, blah blah blah

### 1.2 Goals

Target: ML to go fast. Data collection piece, data analysis piece, final model target.

### 1.3 The Report

How this reports structured, whats going to be covered.

Background - covering intro to sports science for rowing, and terms used for data analysis and modelling. Models which are used atm, why they work well, or don't.

Data Collection and management - Discussing how I collected data (made website and deployed bits, etc). How data was managed (s3 for raw data, dynamo & rds for user generated/processed data).

Data Analysis + visualization - I mean, it does what it says on the box Machine Learning Applications - what was the goal, considerations for the model, what'd we actually make

Discussion - Did we actually do the thing, how can we improve what we did, what stopped us from building the whole thing

Conclusion - uhm, some waffle to tie it all together

# Chapter 2

## Background

This chapter will cover the basic background of rowing, the sports science which guides rowing training, and how an athlete's body responds to training stimulus. Next, a review of performance modelling will explore the development of human performance modelling since the introduction of the basic Bannister model in 1975 [1]. The section will outline how training load and performance can be quantified, and explain the way these approximations are used in various performance models to date.

### 2.1 A Brief Introduction to Rowing

Rowing is an Olympic sport, raced across a 2,000 metre course, typically lasting six to seven minutes. It is classed as a power-endurance sport, this means training is focused on building aerobic, anaerobic, and power while also developing rowing technique [2]. Most time is spent building endurance, next most time is spent building anaerobic capacity, finally building strength and power through strength and condition sessions [3]. The importance of power is more significant in rowing than in cycling given the relatively short duration of exertions, with longer distance racing typically only covering five to seven kilometers, or fifteen to twenty-five minutes. Conversely, road cycling, tends to last for a longer period of time, where the shortest races might last two hours. There are many different approaches to how training is conducted and which energy systems are targeted for improvements in efficiency or strength. This section will discuss the basic training principles which guide training, the way athletes respond to different kinds of training loads, and how performance is evaluated in rowing.

#### 2.1.1 Training Principles

Generally when a coach builds a training plan they have a few factors they can work with: volume, the amount of mileage or total time spent training, sessions intensity, how hard the given session is meant to be, and finally the frequency, or the time spent in different intensity zones. There are various ways to measure intensity, including heart rate, blood lactate concentration, velocity at maximal oxygen uptake ( $\text{VO}_2 \text{ max}$ ), and relative perceived exertion (RPE) [4].



## Training zones

Rowers tend to use heart rate zones or blood lactate concentration depending on access to the equipment to test blood lactate. Typically when a rower uses calculated aerobic zones each zone will be a percentage of  $HR_{max}$ . Following this approach, zones are defined as follows:

**Z1** "Very Light" intensity, 50% - 60% of  $HR_{max}$

**Z2** "Light" intensity, 60%-70% of  $HR_{max}$

**Z3** "Moderate" intensity, 70%-80% of  $HR_{max}$

**Z4** "Hard" intensity, 80%-90% of  $HR_{max}$

**Z5** "Maximum" intensity, 90%-100% of  $HR_{max}$

The exact definition of these zones varies in the literature, as does the method to calculate  $HR_{max}$  without a specific test. However, most high level athletes will have completed some kind of stress test to determine their  $HR_{max}$  in order to train more effectively on their prescribed zones. A rower who uses lactate based training zones might use the following zones:

**T1** basic oxygen utilization training (UT2) [lactate = 0-2 mmol/L]

**T2** oxygen utilization training (UT1) [lactate = 2-3.5 mmol/L]

**T3** anaerobic threshold training (AT) [lactate = 3.5-4.5 mmol/L]

**T4** oxygen transport training (TR) [lactate = 4.5-6 mmol/L]

**T5** anaerobic capacity training (AN) [lactate  $\geq$  6 mmol/L] [5]

Depending on how rigorous the testing protocol was, Heart Rate zones may be calculated for each zone, these may vary from the aerobic zones calculated from  $HR_{max}$ .

The most basic zone approximation approach uses three zones based around certain physiological thresholds, like, lactate thresholds ( $LT_1$  and  $LT_2$ ) and ventilatory thresholds. Cyclists may use critical power to determine these three basic zones, although this practice has not become popular in rowing training. The zones become simply, low-intensity, moderate-intensity, and high-intensity.

## Blood lactate - A brief description

Lactate is constantly produced by the body during the day. The concentration of blood lactate, measured in millimoles per litre (mmol/L), does not increase until the rate of lactate production surpasses the rate of lactate removal. Many things can affect the rate of lactate removal, training can improve the rate of lactate removal, with certain sessions targeting that adaptation. Blood lactate acts as a biomarker used regularly to determine muscular fatigue during exercise. During an exercise lactate test a lactate profile is generated. Figure 2.1 shows a chart showing two lactate profiles generated during two lactate tests about 14 weeks apart (98 days) in January and May of 2023. The test conducted saw the rower complete seven, four minute, efforts, at prescribed wattage targets. Details of each set of intervals can be found in A.1. These curves can be used to prescribe training as is described above.

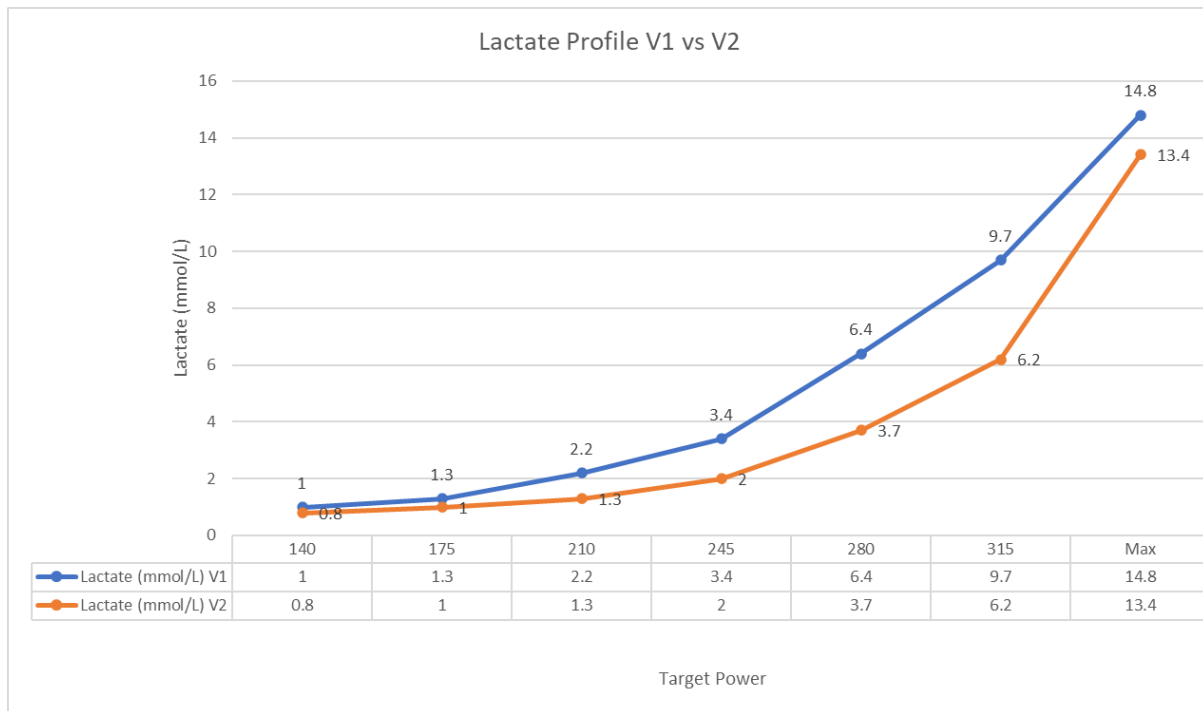


Figure 2.1: Two lactate profiles completed 98 days apart following the protocol described above. Test one completed January 24, 2023. Test Two completed May 2, 2023

## Training prescription and distribution

There are a few different approaches for distributing intensity for endurance training. The three main methods are: polarised training, sweet spot or threshold training, and pyramidal training. This guides the final factor a coach considers when building a general training plan, frequency. For the purposes of comparing polarized training (POL), threshold training (THR), and pyramidal training (PYR), the more basic three zones of intensity will be used. The breakdown per zone for each training method is as follows:

**Polarised Training** Far more time spent in the low-intensity zone [6].

**Low-Intensity** 75%-85% of total training volume

**Medium-Intensity** 5%-10% of total training volume

**High-Intensity** 5%-10% of total training volume

**Threshold Training** More time spent in the medium-intensity zone [6].

**Low-Intensity** 45%-55% of total training volume

**Medium-Intensity** 35%-55% of total training volume

**High-Intensity** 15%-20% of total training volume

**Pyramidal Training** Most time spent in low-intensity zone with progressively less time spent in higher zones [7].

**Low-Intensity** 75%-85% of total training volume

**Medium-Intensity** 15%-20% of total training volume

### **High-Intensity** 5%-10% of total training volume

This report will not compare the effectiveness of different training distributions. Different distributions tend to be used by different sports, or depending on which energy system is being targeted. The use of polarized training is most common in rowing [4], although other training approaches have been used, especially around competition time.

## **2.1.2 Energy Systems**

In the human body there are two major types of skeletal muscle fibres, fast twitch, and slow twitch. Slow twitch muscles are used for longer, slower contractions where relative strength is low. Conversely, fast twitch muscles are shorter, faster contractions where strength is relatively higher. These types of fibres store energy differently and respond to training differently. Slow twitch muscles can be adapted to longer, lower effort, sessions and become resistant to fatigue, while fast twitch muscles fatigue easily, due to their lower glycogen capacity. Slow twitch muscle fibres have a low anaerobic capacity, while fast twitch muscle fibres have high anaerobic capacities. These two kinds of fibres draw on two different energy systems: anaerobic and aerobic systems. These systems provide muscles with Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP) which is used by the mitochondria in the muscle fibre cells to produce energy, allowing the muscles to contract [8].

The anaerobic system is used to provide energy to muscles to produce power without the use of oxygen. The anaerobic system typically provides energy for shorter periods of time. An immediate energy system can provide energy for 1-2 seconds of maximal work, this is typically used for resistance based strength training. More commonly in rowers, the short term energy system is used to provide energy to muscle fibres under significant strain. However, each time the energy system produces (ATP), lactate is also produced. This system is limited by an athlete's ability to flush lactate from muscles. If the muscles are unable to flush the lactate quickly enough, the muscles will fatigue until failure forcing a stop to exercise.

The aerobic, or long term energy, system is the slowest at providing energy to muscles. This system uses sugars, fats and oxygen to produce ATP. This system only works when large amounts of oxygen are available, which for rowers is typically during lower intensity sessions. Longer "steady state" sessions rely on the aerobic to provide energy to muscles, with these sessions also being used to build the aerobic system. By spending time in the appropriate training zones the aerobic system builds efficiency by creating new capillaries to support the slow twitch fibres.

Rowers develop both their anaerobic and aerobic systems. Much of the winter season (typically September-March) is spent building the aerobic system, this is due to the longer length of any races done during this period, and to build a larger base on which to build a strong anaerobic system. As the sprint racing season begins, or shortly before, more anaerobic sessions will be introduced to build the system. Rowers will build their lactate tolerance, and spend more time at just-below-maximal efforts to prepare for the shorter race format.

## **2.1.3 Training Considerations**

When building a training plan many things are considered. Plans are typically built in macro-, meso-, and micro-cycles [9]. The macro-cycle in rowing will normally work on a yearly

basis, with the overall target of performing at championship event at the end of the training year.

Meso-cycles are typically seasonal or monthly cycles. For example, the autumn season is focused on building base fitness and forming a squad's technical style, there may be small races which a squad may attend, but any specific preparation for these events is unlikely. The winter months will be focussed on building the aerobic base, with some race preparation towards the end of the season being introduced. The spring season will see the first race events. Typically these are "Head races", longer races (5-6km) allowing the longer length, lower intensity sessions from the winter to be leveraged. This season will also see an increase in interval and sprint race preparation in anticipation of the summer months. The summer season is the primary racing season, with the macro-cycle peak in performance. This meso-cycle will see a reduction in lower intensity aerobic sessions and an increase in anaerobic intensity work to build fast-twitch muscle performances and the necessary racing performances of the shorter events.

Within these meso-cycles, there are micro-cycles typically lasting 7-14 days. It is crucial that these cycles are "periodised" appropriately. Periodisation is the budgeting of load across micro-cycles, ensuring athletes are experiencing the appropriate increase in intensity, followed by an appropriate length recovery period.

A coach will develop a training plan at the start of a new year, with a general idea of each cycle, and make adjustments as necessary throughout the year. If a coach had access to a system which could model the individual training responses for each athlete, individualised plans could be generated for each athlete, allowing the entire squad to train, and perform, at their physiological maximum.

## **Overtraining and burnout**

Training for endurance sports puts a large amount of strain physically, and mentally on athletes. Endurance athletes are conditioned to consistently push their bodies, making it difficult to identify when overtraining has occurred. Spending too much time in hard training zones without providing enough time to rest and recover leads to overtraining. Overtraining can be diagnosed when a performance decrease, as a result of training fatigue, has not gone away within two weeks of relative rest [10]. Overtraining can manifest symptoms physically and emotionally. Athletes may become depressed, chronically fatigued, and lose their appetites before a drop in performance. Ensuring training plans are appropriately periodised (load is managed in sustainable cycles of intensity and rest), and with enough variety in sessions to avoid monotony can help avoid overtraining. Athlete stress management outside of training is also crucial to managing overtraining.

Overtraining can often lead to burnout. Burnout is when an athlete gives up a sport entirely. With many athletes attaching their self-esteem to success in their sport, they risk burning out. This is particularly problematic when an athlete may be suffering from overtraining, or underperformance [11].

Managing both overtraining and burnout are important when training, and can be considered when building a model of performance. Recognising overtraining can potentially prevent a promising athlete from retiring from their sport. By developing individual performance models, it can be easier to recognise overtraining and adjustments can be made to help the athlete recover more quickly.

## **Tapering**

The concept of a taper is common among endurance athletes. Training blocks tend to be quite exhausting and typically leave athletes in an "over-reaching" state, they are constantly in a fatigued state. This encourages physiological adaptations but also negatively impacts performance. A taper period sees an athlete reduce their training load ahead of a competition [12]. Timing of the taper is important as athletes want to strike a balance between losing too much training time, and consequently fitness, and not having a long enough taper, and therefore still experiencing some training induced fatigue. Different taper strategies can be used, but typically session volume decreases, rather than session count. Typically as part of a taper a very short period (2-3 days) of high-intensity, interval, sessions is completed. This is followed by a longer period of recovery, or relative rest, in order to induce a "super-compensation" effect. This effect is a result of the body continuing to recover beyond the original baseline of fitness in anticipation of another period of high-intensity interval sessions. This results in a minor performance boost [13].

### **2.1.4 Performance**

There are two primary ways to measure a performance in rowing. First, on the rowing machine, a 2,000 meter, 6,000 meter, or 30 minute at stroke rate 20 (30 r20) test is normally used, depending on when during the season the test is done. This can be used to determine a rower's fitness and can be used to track progress for an athlete. These sessions are typically maximum effort sessions with some degree of taper (typically 4-7 days maximum) to elicit a peak performance. On the water, times can also be used to judge an entire crew, with external factors like wind direction and intensity, current flow, and temperature considered. Some boats and squads may use on the water telemetry to quantify the impact and power output of each rower. On-the-water performances may not always be peak efforts depending on a squad's seasonal focus or an event's progression (e.g. a maximal effort will rarely make an appearance in the heat stage of a heat-semi-final progression). Ergometer scores tend to be considered the purest way of quantifying a rower's performance, however, a combination of approaches can be used to quantify on-the-water performance.

### **2.1.5 Summary**

Rowing training is quite time consuming for athletes. Many rowers will learn much of what has been discussed in this section to make better decisions themselves, or understand why training is done in a given way. The focus for a majority of the training cycle is to build a strong aerobic base in order to allow for higher "peak", ideally coinciding with the peak event for a season of training. For international athletes this will be a yearly cycle targetting World Championships, which is part of a four-yearly cycle targetting the Olympics. For national level athletes, national championships are typically the target, with Henley Royal Regatta featuring as a season's target. Coaches will normally take into account season targets and rower proficiency and base fitness when generating training plans. The target of this project is to make it easier for coaches and more accessible for athletes who may be more independent.

## 2.2 A Review of Performance Modelling

The first wide spread approach to modelling performance was developed by Banister *et al.* [1] with the Banister Fitness - Fatigue model, and further refined by Morton *et al.* [14] when defining training impulse to determine fitness and fatigue. The use of machine learning, specifically artificial neural networks has since been introduced in approaches to model performance. In preparation for the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Edelman-nusser *et al.* [15] successfully predicted Olympic performances within an error of 0.05 seconds across a total time of 2:12.64 (min:sec) for the 200m backstroke event. Edelman-nusser *et al.* [15] specifically consider the limitation of using a linear model, such as the model proposed by Banister *et al.* [1], on training adaptation and performance; adaptation to training is inherently a complex non-linear process.

This section will review basic approaches to systems modelling, exploring metrics which are commonly used to guide models and some non-linear systems models which have been explored.

### 2.2.1 Quantifying Training Load (Fatigue)

#### Rate of perceived exertion (RPE)

Rate of perceived exertion (RPE) is a scale, originally introduced by Gunnar Borg, to measure an athlete's effort. The original scale ranged from 6-20, where 6 would be no exertion at all, and 20 is maximal effort. This scale ranges from 6-20 to correspond more easily with heart rate, as the scale is used beyond just athletic settings. Therefore another scale, ranging from 0-10, was developed by Borg as well for use with "extreme intensity of activity", this is the scale normally used in athletic studies. The second scale is called a Category-Ratio (CR) scale where the reference anchor is RPE CR10 of 10, meaning maximal effort/pain. Session RPE (sRPE), using CR10, can be used, in conjunction with duration to determine session load [16] using the equation  $\text{Load} = \text{sRPE} \times \text{Duration}$ .

#### Training impulse (TRIMP)

Training Impulse (TRIMP) is a method to calculate training load and is defined as  $\text{TRIMP} = \text{Training Volume} \times \text{Training Intensity}$  [17]. There are many methods to calculate TRIMP, using different metrics to calculate training volume and training intensity. For the purposes of this project volume will simply be minutes, and intensity will be average heart rate (bpm), as the simplest TRIMP method outlined. Other modifications may apply a weighting against a heart rate metric to normalise longer sessions completed at a lower heart rate – considering the noted difference in heart rate responses to training in male and female athletes [14], alternatively, load can be calculated by using the product of RPE and duration (ie.  $\text{RPE} \times \text{Duration (minutes)}$ ).

#### Acute chronic workload ratio (ACWR)

Acute Chronic Workload Ratio (ACWR) can be used to monitor load in an athlete. It compares training load accumulated, in arbitrary units (AU), over the last seven days (acute workload) to the training load accumulated over the last twenty-eight days (chronic workload). The exact calculations used to determine acute and chronic workload depends on what type of ACWR

Borg RPE	
Score	Level of exertion
6	No exertion at all
7	
7.5	Extremely light
8	
9	Very light
10	
11	Light
12	
13	Somewhat hard
14	
15	Hard (heavy)
16	
17	Very hard
18	
19	Extremely hard
20	Maximal exertion

Figure 2.2: The original Borg 6-20 RPE Scale [16]

Borg CR10 scale	
Score	Level of exertion
0	No exertion at all
0.5	Very, very slight (just noticeable)
1	Very slight
2	Slight
3	Moderate
4	Somewhat severe
5	Severe
6	
7	Very severe
8	
9	Very, very severe (almost maximal)
10	Maximal

Figure 2.3: The Borg Category-Ratio 10 RPE Scale [16]

### The two Borg RPE scales

model is selected. Additionally, the exact time periods considered for acute and chronic load can change depending on the application [18]. Typically ACWR is used for injury management in team sports, but some articles have found it may not be effective for preventing injury as it is inaccurate way of approximating load [19]. Training load estimation in rowing tends to be more objective given the objective internal load measurement of heart rate measured during a session. There is no clear consensus in literature about the effectiveness of using ACWR in injury prevention. As a relatively new concept, first published in 2016, more research into its efficacy and to provide validation needs to be completed [20]. Regardless of its effectiveness in reducing injury, ACWR charts are easy to produce and provide easy feedback to rowers to see how training load can change week-to-week and ensuring load is not increased too quickly to begin to risk overtraining or injury.

## 2.2.2 Impulse-Response Models

Impulse-response models are a group of models, built on the model initially introduced by Banister *et al.* [1]. These models assume that a single exercise, or training session, produces two responses: fitness, or a positive performance response, and fatigue, or a negative performance response. A simplified version of this model is defined as

$$Performance = Fitness - Fatigue \quad (2.1)$$

This simplified model is commonly called the Fitness-Fatigue impulse response model (FFM) and research since its initial introduction in 1975 has sought to refine how the *Fitness* and *Fatigue* components of this equation are defined.

### Banister fitness-fatigue model

In the FFM model originally introduced in 1975 [1], and built upon by Morton *et al.* [14] in 1990, the functions for fitness and fatigue were defined, considering a cumulative training load

and a decay factor for each response. This decay factor is different for both the fitness and fatigue responses, resulting in a longer decay period for fitness than fatigue, but also differs from person to person, offering a parameter to be tuned for each athlete. First, a session needs to be quantified. A session is defined as:

$$w(t) = D(\Delta\text{HR ratio}) \quad (2.2)$$

where

$$\Delta\text{HR ratio} = \frac{\text{HR}_{\text{exercise}} - \text{HR}_{\text{rest}}}{\text{HR}_{\text{max}} - \text{HR}_{\text{rest}}}$$

Morton *et al.* [14] acknowledged the disproportionate influence longer sessions at a low heart rate could have on resulting sessions  $w(t)$ , in arbitrary units (AU), so introduced a weighting factor  $Y$ . They determined  $Y = e^{bx}$ , where  $b$  is a pre-selected value determined for men and women, and  $x = \Delta\text{HR ratio}$ . So each training session is calculated as:

$$w(t) = D(\Delta\text{HR ratio})Y \quad (2.3)$$

Next, Fitness,  $g(t)$ , and Fatigue,  $h(t)$ , can be calculated. These two functions are defined as

$$g(t) = g(t-1)e^{\frac{-i}{\tau_1}} + w(t) \quad (2.4)$$

and

$$h(t) = h(t-1)e^{\frac{-i}{\tau_2}} + w(t) \quad (2.5)$$

where each function states the fitness and fatigue at the end of the day  $t$ ,  $i$  is the number of days between the training session being added and the last training session, and  $\tau_1$  and  $\tau_2$  are the decay time constants for fitness and fatigue respectively. Finally, to model performance, two more constants are introduced:  $k_1$  and  $k_2$ . These constants are weighting factors for fitness and fatigue, they have "no direct physiological interpretation" [14] but can be used to adjust the model for athletes who recover more quickly to heavy training load or require more time to recover from sessions across a taper period. Finally, performance is modelled as

$$p(t) = k_1g(t) - k_2h(t) \quad (2.6)$$

The model was originally developed using a swimmer. When evaluated using linear regression for the athlete-specific parameters ( $\tau_1$ ,  $\tau_2$ ,  $k_1$ , and  $k_2$ ), the model reasonably estimates the performance outcome of a swimmer with relative confidence. No  $r^2$  value is provided for the swimming application in 1975 [1]. In the 1990 model from Morton *et al.* [14], two of the researchers participated in a training and testing regimen and a "good degree of fit" was observed, with  $r^2$  values of 0.71 and 0.96 calculated for a slightly trained and an untrained runner respectively, with the former being given a starting 1000 AU points given some pre-existing running fitness. The impulse-response model, if trained appropriately can help guide the structure and timing of a taper period for each athlete [14]. Versions of this kind of impulse-response model are used in basic analysis across many consumer fitness apps today, such as Training Peaks and Strava.

### Limitations to the impulse-response model

The Banister FFM simplifies human physiology quite effectively. However, in order to tune the parameters of the model, regular "criterion" testing needs to occur. These are maximal efforts done at regular intervals. During the testing of the Morton *et al.* [14] model refinements,



both participants tested roughly once per week, something which is not feasible for high-level endurance athletes. This dependency on regular testing to tune parameters makes it particularly difficult to implement effectively as a holistic model for rowers. Furthermore, the use of data to adjust model parameters results in less data being available to model training behaviour.

The model only considers training load, specifically endurance training load, as an indicator for performance. Given the power dominance in rowing, a training block with seemingly less training load, as a result of more time and energy spent doing strength training, this can result in a bigger performance when tested next which may not be explained by changes in endurance training load. Additionally, the model does not consider other factors such as recovery and non-training strain an athlete might experience.

Finally, if the model is not constantly updated, it cannot predict future performances effectively. For the purposes of this project, a model would require an understanding of training behaviours in order to model the physiological response, predicting future performances. By modelling physiological response, suggestions can be made to improve certain energy system efficiency or effectiveness if needed.

Impulse-response models are still widely used to model training and adaptation for athletes, their simplicity being a key factor for this. To more effectively model performances, without the need for constant testing, alternative models can and should be used. Impulse-response models can still be used in machine learning solutions, though, but as part of a larger ensemble approach [21].

## **2.2.3 Alternative Models**

There are models which employ more complicated mathematical approaches. This section will explore one of the most developed models, Performance Potential (PerPot), and explore artificial neural network approaches used by a number of researchers in recent years.

### **Performance potential (PerPot)**

Performance Potential (PerPot) was first introduced by Perl [22] in 2001. It is a performance potential meta-model which models responses to training input through a flow model. PerPot approaches performance modelling similarly to the impulse-response approach, each training load has an antagonistic response, two contradicting effects: response potential and strain potential. These can be compared to the impulse-response fitness and fatigue responses, respectively. Strain and response potentials impact the performance potential with differing decay factors, like impulse-response models as well. There have been reports of PerPot being effective in modelling cycling training [23]. PerPot, unfortunately, suffers from one of the key issues with impulse-response modelling: repeated testing is needed to tune the model's parameters. Additionally, due to the nature of the decay factors for strain and response potentials, the super-compensation effect is not considered with the basic PerPot model [23].

### **Artificial neural network (ANN) approaches**

Artificial neural networks (ANN) have been used to effectively model performance based on training data as early as 2000 by Edelmann-nusser *et al.* [15] where (200m - Backstroke)

swimming performances at the 2000 Olympic Games were predicted based entirely on training data. In building their model, Edelmann-nusser *et al.* [15] considered the use of linear models like the impulse-response model, but commented that biological adaptations are inherently non-linear, and therefore set out to "demonstrate that the adaptive behaviour of an elite female swimmer can be modelled by means of the non-linear mathematical method of artificial neural networks".

Machine learning techniques require vast quantities of data in order to be effective. Edelmann-nusser *et al.* [15], however, used a single athlete, collecting 95 weeks of training data and 19 competitive performances. This is quite a small training set for a machine learning application. With only 19 performances to compare a performance model to, the risk of overfitting is significant. Edelmann-nusser *et al.* [15] completed three data analysis steps to generate a model. The first two steps involved determining the impact of a 2-week taper period and the impact of a 2-week intense period immediately before the taper (3-4 weeks before competition) for steps one and two respectively. The final step combined the first two steps to determine the influence of the four weeks leading into competition. The result of this neural network approach was quite successful and Edelmann-nusser *et al.* [15] concluded that neural networks can be effectively used on small datasets to predict performances.

Churchill [23] sought to build on the success of using ANNs by Edelmann-nusser *et al.* [15] to model performance outcomes, but targeting professional cycling performances. Churchill, however, struggled to collect data for peak performances due to the strategic nature of cycling. Churchill did develop techniques to smooth noise in small datasets using an ensemble approach, citing the larger the number of neural networks used, the better smoothing was applied to noise. Artificial neural networks have consistently shown promise in predicting performances in swimming and cycling, even addressing small dataset issues which are prevalent in machine learning applications. This project aspires to build on these successes and apply ANN and ensemble techniques to individual rowing training data to predict ergometer performances.

# Chapter 3

## Data Collection and Management

The first step in building any machine learning model is collecting, or acquiring, data with which to train and develop a model. To collect user data there were also ethical considerations to take into account and ethics approval was required. This chapter will discuss the data collection process, how the data was managed and stored for use in the project, and the ethical considerations and concerns that were a part of that data collection and storage development.

### 3.1 Research Ethics Considerations and Approval

When collecting data from participants, it is important to consider the ethical implications of that data collection. This is especially true when the data being collected is personal data, such as the data collected in this project. The data collected in this project was personal data, as it included information about the user's training sessions, including in many cases heart rate and GPS data, and their personal details such as their name and email address. As such, it was important to consider the ethical implications of collecting this data and to ensure that the data was collected in a way that was respectful of the user's privacy and rights. Furthermore, all of the participants are active competitors, many of them competing against the researcher in the same events. It was important to ensure that the data collected was not used in any way that could be seen as an unfair advantage. Some squads have strict policies surrounding the sharing of training data and scores; the same data privacy requirements were required to begin conversations with these squads and their members to collect data.

When applying for ethics approval it was important to consider how user data could be protected both from unauthorised access and, in the unlikely event of a data leak, ensuring the exposure a user sees is minimal.

To ensure user data protection, much of the connection to an actual person is removed, the data is stored in a database with a unique identifier, and the user's email address is stored in a separate table. This means that if the database is accessed, the user's email address or other identifying information is not immediately available. The data is also stored in a secure database, with access restricted to only the researcher and the serverless functions used for analysis. To ensure data protection for participants during the project, all data received is encrypted at rest and in transit. A table linking the unique identifiers generated for each user and identifiable user data was stored securely on the researcher's personal machine making the

de-pseudonymisation of the data more difficult. This key was kept to provide users feedback through the website and to allow the researcher to delete any collected information if a user elected to leave the project early.

There was some GPS data available in some training sessions submitted as part of the project. It was determined that this data, if leaked, would not be a significant risk to the user, as the data was only collected during on-the-water training sessions where many rowers train and compete normally. As most rowers in a squad train together, if the raw data for multiple sessions were leaked it would be nearly impossible to pinpoint which sessions belonged to which athletes given the number of total athletes training at any one time.

Most of the analytics approaches were tested using the researcher's own training data. This ensured that the researcher did not get an unfair advantage when comparing to other athletes' data; any further analytics done for individual users was done using serverless functions meaning the researcher never had direct access to the raw data. These policies and procedures were included in the ethics application and were approved by the College Research Ethics Committee, and were shared with participants when in the recruitment stage.

Following some difficulties with the new College Research Ethics Approval Management System (REAMS), an ethics approval application was submitted on November 2, 2023 and approval was granted on December 6, 2023. It is available to view in the appendix A.2.

## **3.2 Data Collection**

When developing the data collection pipeline, some key considerations were made. Firstly, the user effort per activity logged was to be as minimal as possible. Rowers typically have a lot of data to log, and the more effort required to log each activity, the less likely they are to do so. In many cases they were already logging their training elsewhere as a part of their squad's training program, therefore making the process of logging their sessions for this project as seamless as possible became a priority. Next, for what little interaction was required, the platform needed to be easy to use and intuitive. This was important as it reduced the workload of maintaining the platform, by responding to user queries, and encouraged users to continue using the platform due to its ease of use.

Considering the minimum requirements for a successful data collection pipeline, a website was developed to manage data provider connections and view training feedback. This website worked in conjunction with a series of serverless functions to automatically collect and analyse user sessions, and generate the feedback which was presented in the website.

### **3.2.1 The Frontend**

The website was developed using Next.js, a React framework for building server-side rendered websites, it was developed using Typescript, which is a statically typed superset of JavaScript. This allowed for type checking and better code quality and made it easier to develop and maintain the backend. It was designed to be simple and easy to use, with a focus on the user experience. This meant that a mobile-first approach to design was needed, as many users would be accessing the website from their mobile devices, it also needed to be fast and lightweight meaning many of the data-heavy components of the web app are rendered with server-side components to reduce the client-side workload ensuring a smooth and consistent

app experience. The web app is also fairly basic, including only three screens once logged in.

## Login and register

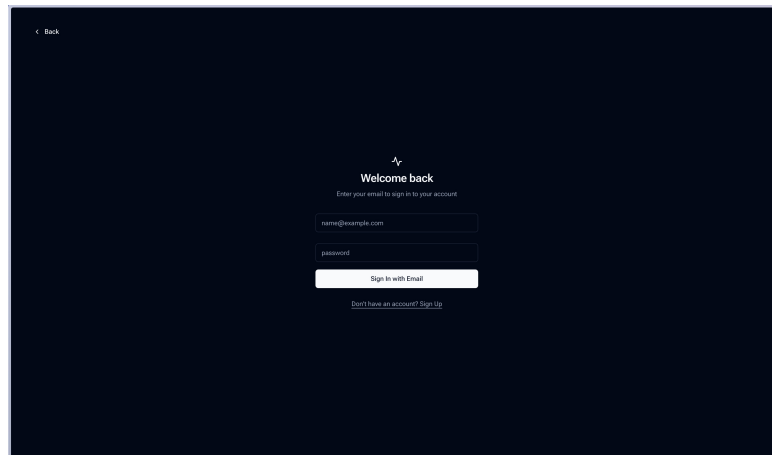


Figure 3.1: The login screen for the web app

When users first navigate to the website, they are greeted with either the login screen (Figure 3.1), or the register screen (Figure 3.2). The login screen is simple, with only two fields, one for the user's email address, and one for their password. The register screen is similarly simple, with fields for the user's name, email address, and password. Users are also required to agree to the consent form and acknowledge they have read the information sheet provided by a PDF link. The consent form and information sheet were written as part of the ethics approval obtained to collect user information. Once the user has registered, they are automatically logged in and redirected to the dashboard screen.

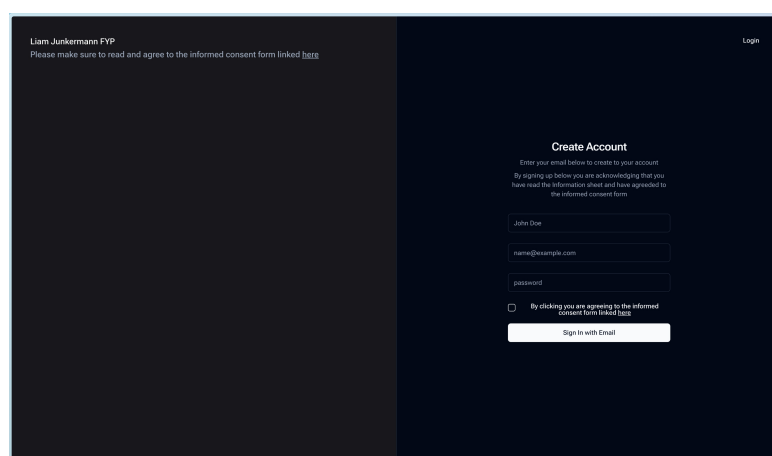


Figure 3.2: The user registration screen for the web app

## Dashboard

Once logged in, users are greeted with a dashboard screen (Figure 3.3). This screen gives a summary of training in the last seven days, as well as some visualisations across a selected time period of the user's choice. At a glance, athletes are able to identify if they are training

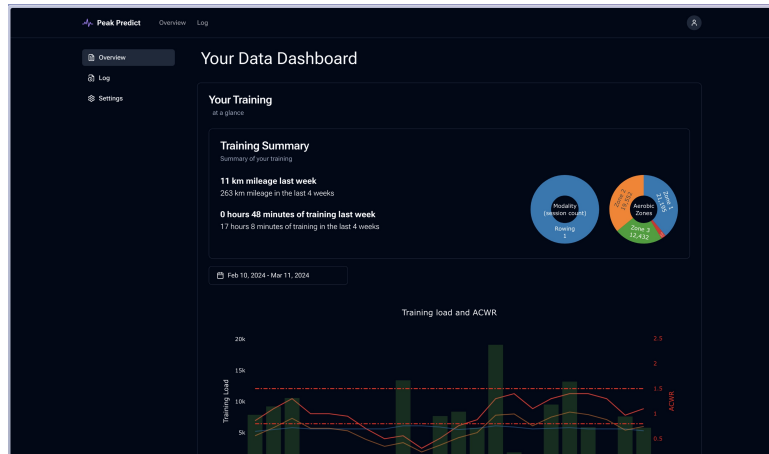


Figure 3.3: The dashboard screen for the web app

sustainably, and compare, week-to-week, their mileage and modality break-down. Managing training load is particularly important for rowers as overtraining has even greater knock-on effects in other aspects of a rower's life, like work or college.

## Training log

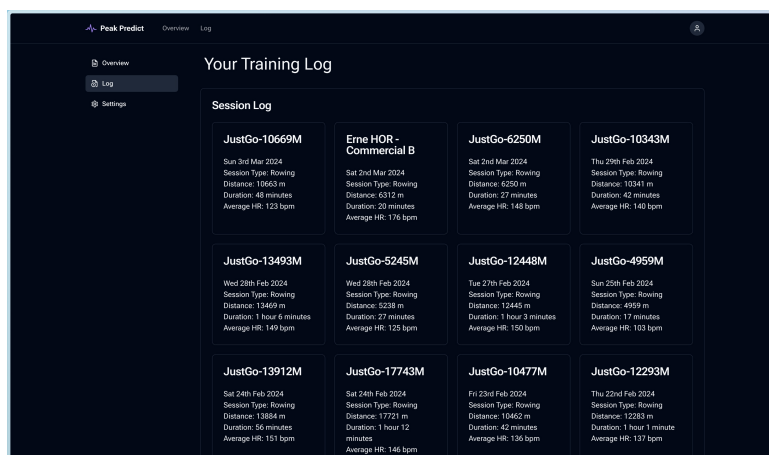


Figure 3.4: The training log screen for the web app

The training log (Figure 3.4) provides a detailed view of all the sessions a rower has completed. This project did not require athletes to provide additional feedback for sessions, however, this page would host a form to allow athletes to add sessions and session feedback in a more developed version of the web app, this will be discussed more in the Discussion, chapter 6. The user can also click on a session to view more detailed information about that session, including heart rate data, GPS data, and any other data collected during the session.

## Connections manager

The final screen in the app is the settings page (Figure 3.5), which is home to the connections manager. Here users can see which data providers they have connected. This page is where the most user interaction happened throughout the project. Given the goal of minimal user intervention and maintenance, when logging in for the first time they were directed to this page

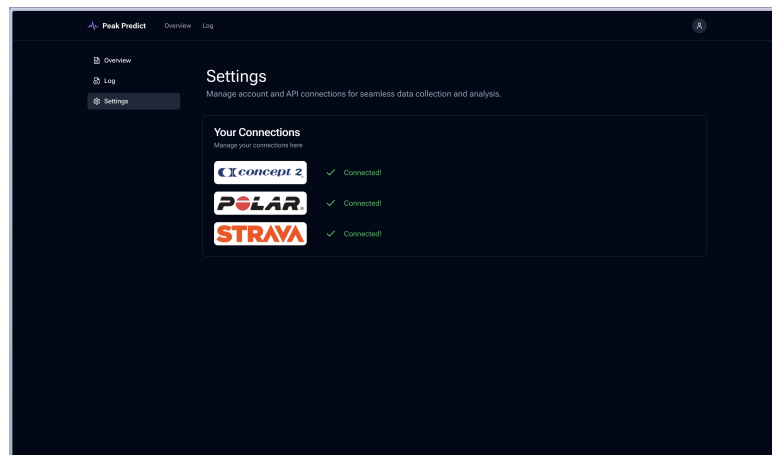


Figure 3.5: The connections manager screen for the web app

to connect their rowing data providers, and using the OAuth protocol, shared the necessary keys with the project to allow data to flow automatically in the backend.

### 3.2.2 The Backend

The backend services were crucial to developing a system that required minimal user and maintainer intervention. The backend was developed using serverless functions, which are small, single-purpose functions that are run in response to events. These functions were used to collect data from the user's data providers, analyse the data, and generate feedback for the user. The backend was developed using the Serverless framework, which is a framework for building serverless applications. The backend was hosted on AWS and used a combination of AWS Lambda, AWS API Gateway, AWS DynamoDB, and AWS S3 to provide the serverless functions and store the data. The backend functions were primarily built using Node.js and Typescript. This section will only discuss the data collection and management functions. Analysis functions will be discussed in the Data Analysis and Visualisation chapter, chapter 4.

There are 4 major functions, which were separated into serverless functions to manage and handle data. These functions are the Provider Connection, Provider Webhooks, Data Ingestor, and Data Processor. Each of these functions is responsible for a different part of the data collection and management process.

The general web app backend was mostly handled by AWS Amplify. This service made it possible for the researcher to focus on providing valuable features to users, rather than spending extra time developing boilerplate authentication and database interactions. The Amplify service also provided a GraphQL API, which was used to interact with the DynamoDB database, and provided a simple way to interact with the database from the frontend in a secure way.

#### Provider connection

When connecting to a service using the OAuth protocol, the user is redirected to the service's login page, where they log in and authorise the project to access their data. Once the user has authorised the project, the service redirects the user back to the project's website and provides an access token that can be used to access the user's data. This access token is

then stored in the database and is used to access the user's data in the future. This function is responsible for handling the OAuth flow and storing the access token in the database. The provider connection function handles the various data formats which different providers use, and connects access and refresh tokens to the users for use later on in the pipeline when activities are generated. This particular function was built as part of the Next.js server, leveraging the server-side rendering capabilities of the framework to handle authentication of users using cookies making the linking of tokens with users easier.

## **Provider webhooks**

Typically when a user completes a workout, the data provider can query a webhook (if it has been set up), with a payload containing basic information about the workout, and in some cases, the details to retrieve the full session. For each of the supported data providers, Polar, Concept2, and Strava, webhooks were setup and registered with the providers. Webhooks were then handled through the Next.js server, retrieving any additional data needed. The full session data was then shared to the Data Ingestor function for processing and storage in the database. Different providers had different requirements for the webhook payload, and the data was stored in different formats, so the webhook function was responsible for handling these differences and normalising the data before sending it to the Data Ingestor function, while also limiting the unnecessary sharing of client secrets and keys across multiple services.

## **Data ingestor**

The data ingestor handled the actual storage of the data in the database. The data ingestor first validated any data provided. This was done by validating the provider user id and comparing a key which was shared with the Next.js server. Then it stored the raw session data, provided by the webhook handler in the Next.js server, in AWS S3, this meant that any issues with data processing could be rectified after the fact with the raw data available. Finally, the ingestor triggered the Data Processor function. This extra level of data processing before storing the data ensured that data ingested to the data pipeline was legitimate and provided through the proper channel. This function was a standalone serverless function, built using Node.js and Typescript, and deployed to AWS Lambda using the Serverless framework.

## **Data processor**

Given the variety of data and session types provided, a standard exercise model was needed to make analysis and machine learning easier. This standard exercise model will be discussed in more detail in the data cleaning section of the data analysis chapter (4.1), with a schema introduced in the Data management section of this chapter (3.3). The data processor function was responsible for taking the raw session data, and converting it into a standard format. The standard format included a sessions duration, distance, average heart rate (if applicable), time of completion, session type, and session modality. These features would be used to complete analysis and produce the weekly training summaries shown in the front end. This was also a standalone serverless function, built using Node.js and Typescript, and deployed to AWS Lambda using the Serverless framework.



### 3.3 Data Management

Given the expected volume of data collected, the design of how to store and manage this data was important to ensuring analysis could happen quickly, and AWS costs remained low. Almost all the data stored was already provided in a structured JSON format, originally these data responses were saved and stored in AWS S3. This allowed the researcher time to understand what data was being collected, and what was important. From this, the Standard Exercise Model was derived. The process for how this model was developed will be detailed in the next chapter 4. This model was then used to create a DynamoDB table to store the data in a structured format. The data was stored in a table with the schema described in Table 3.1.

Column Name	Column Data Type	Description
owner	string	The users uid
exercise_id	string	An autogenerated id. The tables primary key
data_source	{source: string, path: string}[]	The raw data source(s) and linked data in S3
datetime	number	The unix timestamp for the session
type	"endurance"   "interval"   "strength"   "other"   "unknown"	The session type, an enumerated list
modality	"row"   "erg"   "other"	The session modality, an enumerated list
duration	number	The duration, in seconds, of the session
distance	number	The distance, in meters, of the session
avg_hr	number	The average HR, in bpm, of the session

Table 3.1: The schema for the "Standard Exercise Model"

This schema made it particularly easy to perform analysis on each athlete's training, distilling the key metrics into a small data size. DynamoDB also allows for robust querying of large datasets, allowing this solution to scale well with lots of data. The data was stored in a single table, with the `exercise_id` as the partition key, and the user's unique id (`owner`) as the sort key. This allowed for easy querying of the data and made it easy to retrieve data for a specific user, or for a specific session. With connections to the raw data included in this data format, more detailed analysis can still be completed automatically, without unnecessary S3 reads to find the session amongst a larger, less dynamic data set. Future work could continue to grow this standard model, adding more features which may be commonly used for analysis, such as time in zones, calculated training impulse, or more. However, for the purposes of providing data for the frontend and the initial analysis, this model was sufficient.

# Chapter 4

## Data Analysis and Visualization

Collecting and managing data is a key part of this project, although simply collecting data does not provide any benefit to athletes. Data analysis and visualization are essential to extract useful information from the data. This chapter will discuss the data analysis and visualization process, including cleaning of the data collected, the analysis performed, and the visualizations generated and presented as feedback to users.

### 4.1 Data Cleaning

The data collection step was developed to reduce any cognitive load for users. As a result, there are a number of data sources, and therefore a number of data formats, which need to be cleaned and transformed into a uniform format for further analysis. Furthermore, some athletes might use a number of devices to track a session, so it is also necessary to match multiple session results to a given session. All the raw data from the data providers was stored throughout the project in case the data cleaning steps changed; this allowed database tables to be as small, and queryable, as possible.

#### 4.1.1 Identifying Valuable Data

In order to begin data cleaning, it was important to understand what information was valuable. In order to do this, collected data was analysed for what information was available across each session provided, then understanding what basic analysis and feedback would be most useful to athletes. The most basic information clearly needed is the date and time of a session, what modality of session it is (row, ergometer, or other), and what type of session it is (endurance, interval, strength). These modalities and types were intentionally kept quite simple, with only three options, in order to make analysis easier to start. Next, in order to do any kind of fatigue or training impulse analysis, the duration of a session needed to be considered, along with any available heart rate or RPE information. Finally, rowers measure progress in training through mileage so a session's mileage, where appropriate, was included in this standardised model. As a result of this brief macro-analysis of the data and expected analysis results, the "Standard Exercise Model" described in the previous chapter (Table 3.1) was generated.

## 4.1.2 Developing a Cleaning Process

The data collection pipeline ingests sessions regardless of type. This required a series of functions to handle data from different providers and perform analysis on session data to appropriately classify each session, and normalise to the standard exercise model developed in the previous chapter.

### Identifying session modality

The first step in cleaning data was identifying the session's modality. Was a session a row, an erg, or something else? Typically the sessions were tagged, with sessions coming from Strava being classed as "rowing", regardless of if they were on the water or on the rowing machine, causing some issues. Sessions not explicitly tagged by Strava, for example, or ingested from Concept2 were initially flagged as other. This approach, however, did result in some issues. One member of the Commercial Senior Squad, for example, uses a running watch which classifies on-the-water sessions as runs. He also happens to be an avid runner so it was necessary to analyse sessions to determine if they occurred on land or on water. As a result of this case, and the issues with differentiating on the water or on the machine "rowing" from Strava, it became clear a more developed approach was necessary to accurately identify session types. Differentiating on-the-water rows and erg sessions was much easier. In many cases, erg sessions were provided through the Concept2 API and were easily identified. On-the-water rows were typically provided through Strava and were identified by the activity type and generally the presence of GPS data. Users who did not have a GPS in the boat could manually insert sessions and the name of the session could be used to identify the modality.

### Identifying session type

The next challenge in the data cleaning process was determining if a session was an endurance or interval session. Typically, the distance and duration can be used to identify a session. For erg sessions provided through the Concept2 API, distance, time, watts, and pace were included at a minimum. It is possible to differentiate endurance or interval sessions when comparing pace with other sessions from that user. The ideal session data from Concept2, though, includes highly detailed information about a session such as distance, duration, average wattage, pace, and heart rate, and detailed stroke-by-stroke data including wattage, pace, and heart rate. Many athletes, though, choose not to connect a heart rate monitor to their rowing machine, so it was necessary to match heart rate data, recorded through Polar, with the stroke data, when available. Using heart rate it is very easy to identify if an erg session is an interval or endurance session.

Identifying the type of an on the water row was more difficult. Some on-the-water sessions may be a mix of interval and endurance. A common training session for the researcher throughout this project was 10 kilometres of endurance paddling, followed by 10 kilometres of interval work. In this case, the session could be classified as an interval session. The researcher, however, would separate this into two sessions, classifying the first 10 kilometres as endurance training, considering the duration and average heart rate, and the second 10 kilometres as interval training, again considering the duration and average heart rate to calculate the training impulse. This is a clear example of the limitations of the data collected. The researcher could manually classify this session as an endurance session, but this would not be scalable. A model could be developed to classify this session, but unfortunately, not enough data was collected

and classified to warrant the time needed to develop the model. As a result, the approach used to classify sessions relied on distance and average heart rate, if available. Sessions greater than 18 kilometres in distance were considered endurance sessions, then average heart rate was used to identify endurance or interval sessions below this threshold. This is a limitation of the data collected and is a clear area for future work.

Finally, strength sessions needed to be identified. When a session was ingested as a strength session this was typically already tagged. Logging strength sessions using a heart rate watch typically is not effective. Strain experienced during strength sessions rarely has a direct correlation to heart rate as cardio sessions do. Furthermore, many users did not log strength sessions using one of the supported data sources as most athletes made use of an app like TeamBuildr<sup>1</sup>, to track these sessions. As a result, strength sessions were not normally included in the training impulse analysis. This is another clear limitation of the data collection process implemented and an area for future work.

## **4.2 Data Analysis**

## **4.3 Data Visualisation**

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<sup>1</sup>TeamBuildr is an online strength and conditioning platform for coaches to build S&C plans for their athletes and for athletes to track their weights sessions

# Chapter 5

## Machine Learning Applications

What was the target, what did I actually make, maybe some results

### 5.1 Model Considerations

What led to the final model, difficulties, and data Considerations

### 5.2 The Implementation

Details about the model, including some examples of outputs (on my own data?)

# Chapter 6

## Discussion

This project provided many opportunities for learning and growth and, now, at its conclusion, there is an opportunity to reflect on the proposed goals of the project and its subsequent execution. Firstly, the initial target of developing a comprehensive machine-learning model for rowing performance was quite ambitious. This became clear in January when a data collection system was still being developed. Furthermore, the data collection goal of minimal user input directly contravened the development of a meaningful model. Nevertheless, the project was still successful in developing a data collection system, and a data cleaning pipeline, providing analysis and visualisations to a number of athletes who kindly volunteered their training data, and an exploration of a potential machine learning approach using a more complete data set which could be used to predict, and prevent, athlete burnout and injury. This foundational work could serve as a basis for future development of an effective model.

This chapter will discuss and evaluate the methods used for data collection, management, cleaning, analysis and visualization, as well as discuss the potential for future work, particularly in developing a machine-learning model for predicting athlete performance. Finally, a protocol will be outlined for the effective implementation of a system to develop and deploy a performance model, based on the learnings gleaned throughout this project.

### 6.1 Data Collection

#### 6.1.1 Evaluation

The data collection system, based on the goals outlined at the start of the project, was successful in collecting data from a number of athletes, across four different data sources. Roughly 40 athletes were approached to provide data. Of that number, 12 athletes signed up, with around 8 consistently providing data and feedback on developments. This drop-off between the number of athletes registered for the platform and providing data was due to injuries or illness, preventing training. The data collection system was effective in providing a user-friendly platform for athletes to provide data with the help of the data provider's APIs. In total, since athlete recruitment was completed at the end of January, roughly 500 activities were ingested through the data collection pipeline. This number was lower than expected due to a recent, and poorly documented change by Strava in how developer apps are handled. This meant that roughly 6 weeks of training data for all but one user were not shared with the application, as a result, a number of user data sets were somewhat incomplete and there

was not enough time to fully remedy this issue by backfilling athlete data. Analysis for these users was supported by data provided from Concept2, Polar, and, in the last 4 weeks, Garmin. The researcher's data set was preserved and used for developing the analysis and visualisation steps of the project.

### **6.1.2 Discussion**

The data collection approach, while effective in minimising the effort of individual athletes, made the development of any kind of performance model difficult. The advertised automation of data collection made it easier to recruit athletes, both due to the minimal effort required to participate in the project, and because of the clear security by obfuscation for competitors. This did, unfortunately, result in a dataset which was not as complete as it could have been. The lack of heart rate data for many sessions, and the lack of detail when recording strength sessions, limited the analysis which could be performed. The lack of heart rate data, in particular, made it difficult to classify sessions as an endurance or interval session, and to calculate training impulse. For the purposes of research, a more involved group of participants is required. Athletes who are willing to take the time to provide feedback for sessions, and ensure their training logs are complete, make it easier to develop a model which can be used to predict performance, and perhaps facilitate the low-effort data collection and analysis approach this project strove for.

There were also a number of different training plans being executed by participants, which made it difficult to develop a model which could be used to predict performance. A more consistent training plan, or a more detailed analysis of the training plans being executed, would be necessary to develop a model which could be used to predict performance. If it were possible to onboard an entire squad or have participants commit to completing a specific training session each week, there would be a clear metric for improvements, or decline, in fitness and therefore an anchor by which to compare an athlete's performance. This will be further discussed in the final section of this chapter, section 6.4.

The data collection method developed throughout this project was successful in providing an easy, and secure, way for athletes to provide training data. The data collected was not as complete as it could have been, however, and this limited the analysis and model development which could be performed. This is an easy opportunity for future work, introducing session matching and feedback, a more detailed onboarding process, could help to ensure the data collected is more complete and useful for analysis. This also introduces the opportunity to develop daily monitoring surveys for athletes to complete to give a more complete picture of their training, recovery, and general well-being, something which can be used for more effective analysis.

## **6.2 Data Analysis and Visualisation**

### **6.2.1 Evaluation**

The data analysis and visualisation step of this project was successful in providing easy to read and digest feedback to rowers on their training. First, the data cleaning step effectively cleaned and transformed data from multiple data sources and formats into a concise, uniform, format allowing more efficient analysis and visualization. Next during the analysis step, data was analysed to provide appropriate and useful feedback and insights on training habits. This

analysis was guided by metrics typically used by rowers to define a successful training week, reducing the amount of time and effort needed for rowers to understand their training. Allowing rowers to identify trends in training behaviours, and easily identify minor improvements to help motivate future training. Finally, the visualisation step successfully provided rowers with a way to understand the analysis graphically. The presentation of this information was particularly important to provide athletes with an at-a-glance overview of their training outcomes and habits, and the generation of visualisations was largely successful in completing this objective. This approach to presentation, allowed rowers to quickly identify trends in their training and make adjustments as necessary.

Each of these sub-steps were developed in a way to allow them to be dynamically called through serverless functions, allowing them to be run automatically when new training events were ingested by the data collection pipeline.

### **6.2.2 Discussion**

The data analysis and visualisation portion of this project was the most straightforward part of the entire project. This was made possible due to a number of reasons. First, the data cleaning pipeline was developed to transform data into a standard format, which made analysis and visualisation significantly easier. Second, the analysis and visualisation steps were developed to provide feedback on the most basic metrics which rowers use to define a successful training week. This meant that there was no minimum amount of data required in order to begin to explore potential analyses. Furthermore, due to the researcher's background in rowing, the metrics used to define a successful training week were already well understood and the approach to developing an analytics pipeline had been already been considered before commencement of this stage of the project. Finally, inspiration for visualisations to generate was drawn from the work of other researchers in the field of sports science, particularly in the field of rowing, which made it easier to develop visualisations which would be useful to rowers.

The primary limitation of the data analysis and visualisation step was the lack of data available for analysis. Although analysis of the data available was largely successful, the lack of heart rate data in many case made it difficult to calculate training impulse, and to provide more detailed feedback on training sessions. This is a clear area for future work, and the development of a more complete data collection system, as discussed in the previous section, would help to alleviate this issue. Additionally, the lack of contextual data, such as a rowers injury or illness status, made it difficult to provide feedback on why a rower may have missed a session, or why they may have performed poorly in a session. This is another area for future work, and the development of a daily monitoring survey, as discussed in the previous section, would help to provide this context.

One of the target analyses where this project fell short was comparing "like" sessions. For example, comparing steady-state (endurance) sessions over the course of a season. These endurance sessions may be of varying distance, and varying target intensity. Some athletes may target a session as a UT1 (higher intensity, typically lower volume) rather than a UT2 (lower intensity, typically higher volume) session. Without the additional context of the session, provided by the user through a note or an RPE rating, it is very difficult to identify the exact type of session, making matching and comparison of these sessions impossible. With adjustments to the data collection pipeline, this would be possible, and allow athletes to more easily identify trends in their training, and make adjustments as necessary.



A number of visualisations were generated for the project as well. As described in section 4.3, the visualisations were first developed using a Jupyter notebook to more interactively work with the data. The content of the Jupyter notebooks was then condensed to produce the pipeline that was used to generate the appropriate datasets for use on the frontend. Unfortunately, converting the graphs and visualisations developed using Python into a format that could be easily displayed on the frontend was not as straightforward as initially thought. This was due to the limitations of the Plotly library, which was used to generate the visualisations. The documentation for the library was quite sparse, and a huge amount of effort was spent to ensure that data was reformatted correctly and styling was applied appropriately. In the end, only two of the four visualisations were implemented in the frontend. This is a clear point for future work, and could likely be a full project in itself. Exploring how athletes interact with data, and what visualisations are most useful to them, could provide a wealth of information for future development of a data analysis and visualisation pipeline.

## **6.3 Machine Learning**

### **6.3.1 Evaluation**

### **6.3.2 Discussion**

## **6.4 An Ideal Protocol to Develop an Effective Model**

In order to successfully develop an effective performance model, a number of steps need to be taken. The following protocol outlines the steps which could be taken to develop, validate, and leverage a performance model which can be used to predict, and prevent, athlete burnout and injury. This protocol is based on the learnings from this project, and the research conducted throughout the project.

### **6.4.1 Squad Onboarding**

Given the volume of data required, it is important to onboard an entire squad or club, with the goal of collecting athlete training and recovery data for a long-term solution. This narrows down the number of eligible squads for a partnership to university squads, high-performance groups in open clubs, or national teams. These squads have athletes training nearly year-round following a strict training plan. Furthermore, any squad which is onboarded needs to have complete buy-in from the coaching staff and athletes. This is necessary to ensure that all athletes are providing data, that the data is complete and accurate, and allow collaboration between the research team and the coaching staff to develop a training plan and the necessary procedures to develop a training plan.

Once a squad has been identified and onboarded, each rower should complete a series of physiological tests, this will include lactate and  $\text{VO}_2$  max tests (much like what is described in subsection 2.1.1), strength tests such as the maximum deadlift and bench press, power tests such as a countermovement jump, resting metabolic rate test, and body composition tests. This will provide rowers with more accurate zones to train in, based on both heart rate and wattage, and provide context for a rower's physiology. These tests should be completed at least once per season where possible. Sub-maximal versions of the tests can be completed to

dial in steady-state training zones as each season progresses or when recovering from illness or injury.

Squad onboarding will also include registering all coaches and rowers to an online system. Through this system, coaches will be provided an overview of their athlete's training adherence, recovery metrics, and general well-being, with tools to generate or adapt training programs, build crews for on-the-water sessions and otherwise manage their squads. Rowers will be able to see their scheduled sessions, with suggestions for personalisation based on their recovery and wellbeing metrics, and track their training and wellbeing through the platform.

## **6.4.2 Data Collection**

With a squad onboarded and initial rower data collected, the next step is to develop a data collection system. There are two main parts to consider for this system: recovery and wellness tracking, and training tracking.

### **Recovery and wellness tracking**

Every morning athletes should complete a monitoring questionnaire, this questionnaire will include questions about sleep quality, sleep duration, muscle soreness, fatigue, stress, and mood. This questionnaire can be supported by data from wearables such as a Whoop, Oura ring, or smartwatch. These devices provide heart rate metrics (resting heart rate and heart rate variability) which can be analysed to determine recovery and readiness to train. Rowers can also note if they are unfit to train due to illness or injury. Providing this context is crucial for explaining gaps in training data when in the analysis step.

An additional metric to track could be nutrition, which can also be built into the system. A nutrition tracking system would need to track what food was eaten, how much food was consumed, and at what time. This data can be used to determine if an athlete is eating enough to support their training, and if they are eating the right foods to support their training.

### **Training tracking**

While automated tracking and analysis of sessions would be an ideal scenario for many athletes, to effectively train a model, it is important to provide context for sessions which have been completed. An ideal training tracking solution would leverage session data provided by APIs from Concept2, Strava, Garmin, and Polar, and provide a simple interface for athletes to provide feedback on their sessions. Through the online platform, rowers would provide feedback on sessions, including how they felt during the session, how they felt after the session, and any other notes they might have. If athletes have augmented a prescribed session for any reason, this can be noted as well and feedback can be relayed to the coach. This feedback is essential for developing a model which can be used to predict performance, and identify burnout to prevent injury and illness.

Strength sessions can also be prescribed by the coaches platform, then tracked through the rower platform. By logging lifts used, the number of reps and sets completed, and tonnage moved, a coach can track the progress of their athletes, and provide feedback on their strength training. This will also provide context for the strain experienced during strength sessions, and provide a more complete picture of the training load experienced by an athlete each week.

### 6.4.3 Analysis and Visualisation

With data collected from a squad, the next step is to develop a data cleaning pipeline, and analysis and visualisation tools. The data cleaning pipeline can be iterated from the one developed for this project. Given the increased athlete feedback, session classification will be much more straightforward, allowing for more effective analysis. With a more complete dataset of heart rate and RPE data, alongside more detailed strength session information, the analysis and visualisation tools can be developed to provide more effective feedback to athletes and coaches. Additionally, due to the added recovery data recorded, athletes and coaches can explore the impact of different session intensity, duration, and modality on recovery and wellbeing metrics and adjust squad or personal training as a result that feedback. For example, at the start of the season, an athlete may have lost fitness as a result of time off. Within six weeks they may see a decrease in resting heart rate as a result of being trained again. Conversely, if a trained athlete begins to see their resting heart rate trend upwards, this could be an indicator of overtraining or illness and the need for a rest period. This basic feedback can be used to adjust training plans and prevent burnout and injury.

Algorithms can also be developed to suggest different training sessions based on the feedback provided by athletes. For example, if an athlete is feeling fatigued, a session with a lower intensity can be suggested. If an athlete is feeling good, a session with a higher intensity can be suggested. Additionally, if a coach wants to maintain a certain training load, sessions can be suggested with options to account time constraints or perceived intensity.

### 6.4.4 Model Development and Validation

With a complete dataset, and effective analysis and visualisation tools, the next step is to develop a performance model. There will be several iterations of models. The first, and likely easiest, to develop would be a model to identify injury or overtraining. Leveraging the methods described in chapter 5 in replicating the prediction or running injuries [24], a similar approach can be applied to rowing training. Ideally, considering the volume of training and recovery data collected, a more effective model can be developed. This can be used to help prevent injury and illness and provide feedback to athletes and coaches on how to adjust training plans to prevent burnout.

Next, to develop the holy grail: a model for rower performance. This model will be developed iteratively, with feedback from athletes and coaches. The standard weekly training session, outlined in subsection 6.4.1 can be analysed for changes in fitness, based on heart rate and wattage metrics. With these reference points for athlete performance, a model can be trained to predict performance based on the training load experienced by an athlete. With enough training and recovery data, this can then be used to build training plans for an entire macro-cycle and applied to individual athletes based on their performances each season.

Based on the success of this model, a model for crew performance can be developed. This model will be based on the performance of individual athletes, and how they perform in a crew. This model can be used to build crews for on-the-water sessions, and provide feedback to coaches on how to adjust crews to improve performance. This model will be developed iteratively, with feedback from athletes and coaches, and will be based on the performance of individual athletes in a crew, and how they perform in different crew combinations.

### **6.4.5 The Potential**

Assuming the success of this approach over the course of 5-10 years, a truly data driven approach for coaching and training can help a squad find success and look to optimise every part of training and recovery. The only limitation to success is how much data is available. With progress in the development of hardware to track on-the-water power, and power application, and the development of a more complete data collection system, the potential impact is significant. Athlete development and training can be tuned to prevent injury and illness, which is one of the biggest hindrances for athletes in their pursuit of success. Furthermore, crew selection can be made more data-driven and transparent, identifying the most physiologically capable athletes, and the most effective crew combinations. This approach can then be applied to other endurance sports, like cycling and running very easily. With additional adaptation and research to quantify training load, applications in field and combat sports are also possible.

The potential for further research and development in applying machine learning to sports and human performance is vast and exciting. Developing and providing these tools can free up time and energy for coaches and athletes to allow them to engage with and enjoy their sports more. This project has only scratched the surface of what is possible, and with the right approach, and the right data, the potential for success is limitless.

# Chapter 7

## Conclusion

Did we do what we set out to do.

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# **Appendix A**

## **Appendix**



# A.1 Lactate Test Results

Table A.1: Lactate Test 1 Interval Details

Stage	Target Power (Watts)	Target Time	Relative VO2 (ml/kg/min)	HR (BPM)	RER	RPE	Actual Power (Watts)	Actual Time	Lactate (mmol/L)	Stroke Rate	Distance (m)	Notes
1	140	02:15.9	38.25	132	0.87	1	148	02:13.3	1	17	900	
2	175	02:06.2	39.88	141	0.87	2	178	02:05.3	1.3	19	957	
3	210	01:58.7	56.64	157	0.93	4	212	01:58.1	2.2	19	1016	
4	245	01:52.7	58.86	165	0.94	5	250	01:51.9	3.4	21	1072	
5	280	01:47.8	64.3	175	0.99	6	287	01:46.8	6.4	24	1123	
6	315	01:43.7	68.54	183	1.03	7	323	01:42.7	9.7	29	1168	
7	Max	Max	76.47	189	1.01	9	354	01:39.6	14.8	57	1204	
									16.3			1 minute post
									17.4			2 minutes post

Table A.2: Lactate Test 2 Interval Details

Stage	Target Power (Watts)	Target Time	Relative VO2 (ml/kg/min)	HR (BPM)	RER	RPE	Actual Power (Watts)	Actual Time	Lactate (mmol/L)	Stroke Rate	Distance (m)	Notes
1	140	02:15.9	35.1	130	0.82	0	143	02:14.8	0.8	16	890	
2	175	02:06.2	41.9	142	0.81	1	178	02:05.2	1	17	958	
3	210	01:58.7	47.8	153	0.88	3	212	01:58.2	1.3	20	1015	
4	245	01:52.7	54.7	162	0.88	4	247	01:52.2	2	22	1069	
5	280	01:47.8	59.8	172	0.92	5	285	01:47.1	3.7	24	1120	
6	315	01:43.7	64.2	178	0.99	6	318	01:43.2	6.2	28	1162	
7	Max	Max	74.4	192	1.1	10	398	01:35.7	13.4	43	1253	
									13.3			2 mins post

## **A.2 Ethics Approval Application**

The Ethics Approval Application, which was submitted on November 2, 2023, and approval was granted on December 6, 2023, is attached on the following 9 pages.

**School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Research Ethics Application**

**Part A**

Project Title: **Machine Learning to go *Nyoom*: Using Machine Learning to evaluate rowing training and predict training outcomes or performance**

Name of Lead Researcher (student in case of project work): **Liam Junkermann**

Name of Supervisor: **Dr. Lucy Hederman**

TCD Email: **junkermli@tcd.ie** Contact Tel. No.: **+353 089 484 2123**

Course Name and Code (if applicable): **Integrated Computer Science**

Estimated Start Date of survey/research: **ASAP**

I confirm that I will (where relevant):

- Familiarize myself with the Data Protection Act and the College Good Research Practice guidelines  
[http://www.tcd.ie/info\\_compliance/dp/legislation.php](http://www.tcd.ie/info_compliance/dp/legislation.php)
- Tell participants that any recordings, e.g. audio/video/photographs, will not be identifiable unless prior written permission has been given. I will obtain permission for specific reuse (in papers, talks, etc.)
- Provide participants with an information sheet (or web page for web-based experiments) that describes the main procedures (a copy of the information sheet must be included with this application)
- Obtain informed consent for participation (a copy of the informed consent form must be included with this application)
- Should the research be observational, ask participants for their consent to be observed
- Tell participants that their participation is voluntary
- Tell participants that they may withdraw at any time and for any reason without penalty
- Give participants the option of omitting questions they do not wish to answer if a questionnaire is used
- Tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identified as theirs
- On request, debrief participants at the end of their participation (i.e. give them a brief explanation of the study)
- Verify that participants are 18 years or older and competent to supply consent.
- If the study involves participants viewing video displays then I will verify that they understand that if they or anyone in their family has a history of epilepsy then the participant is proceeding at their own risk
- Declare any potential conflict of interest to participants.
- Inform participants that in the extremely unlikely event that illicit activity is reported to me during the study I will be obliged to report it to appropriate authorities.
- Act in accordance with the information provided (i.e. if I tell participants I will not do something, then I will not do it).

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Liam Junkermann  
Lead Researcher (student in case of project work)

Date: April 3, 2024

**Part B**

<b><i>Please answer the following questions.</i></b>		<b><i>Yes/No</i></b>
Has this research application or any application of a similar nature connected to this research project been refused ethical approval by another review committee of the College (or at the institutions of any collaborators)?		No
Will your project involve photographing participants or electronic audio or video recordings?		No
Will your project deliberately involve misleading participants in any way?		No
Does this study contain commercially sensitive material?		No
Is there a risk of participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort? If yes, give details on a separate sheet and state what you will tell them to do if they should experience any such problems (e.g. who they can contact for help).		No
Does your study involve any of the following?	Children (under 18 years of age)	No
	People with intellectual or communication difficulties	No
	Patients	No

## School of Computer Science and Statistics Research Ethical Application Form

Details of the Research Project Proposal must be submitted as a separate document to include the following information:

1. Title of project
2. Purpose of project including academic rationale
3. Brief description of methods and measurements to be used
4. Participants - recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria, including statistical justification for numbers of participants
5. Debriefing arrangements
6. A clear concise statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with them
7. Cite any relevant legislation relevant to the project with the method of compliance e.g. Data Protection Act etc.

### Part C

I confirm that the materials I have submitted/provided are a complete and accurate account of the research I propose to conduct in this context, including my assessment of the ethical ramifications.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: April 3, 2024

Liam Junkermann

Lead Researcher (student in case of project work)

*There is an obligation on the lead researcher to bring to the attention of the SCSS Research Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not clearly covered above.*

### Part D

If external or other TCD Ethics Committee approval has been received, please complete below.

External/TCD ethical approval has been received and no further ethical approval is required from the School's Research Ethical Committee. I have attached a copy of the external ethical approval for the School's Research Unit.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Lead Researcher (student in case of project work)

### Part E

If the research is proposed by an undergraduate or postgraduate student, please have the below section completed.

I confirm, as an academic supervisor of this proposed research that the documents at hand are complete (i.e. each item on the submission checklist is accounted for) and are in a form that is suitable for review by the SCSS Research Ethics Committee

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor

## CHECKLIST

Please ensure that you have submitted the following documents with your application:

1.	SCSS Ethical <b>Application Form</b>	Yes
2.	<b>Participant's Information Sheet</b> must include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Declarations from Part A of the application form;</li> <li>▪ Details provided to participants about how they were selected to participate;</li> <li>▪ Declaration of all conflicts of interest.</li> </ul>	Yes
3.	<b>Participant's Consent Form</b> must include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Declarations from Part A of the application form;</li> <li>▪ Researchers' contact details provided for counter-signature (your participant will keep one copy of the signed consent form and return a copy to you).</li> </ul>	Yes
4.	<b>Research Project Proposal</b> must include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ You must inform the Ethics Committee <b>who</b> your intended participants are i.e. are they your work colleagues, class mates etc.</li> <li>▪ How will you recruit the participants i.e. <b>how</b> do you intend asking people to take part in your research? For example, will you stand on Pearse Street asking passers-by?</li> <li>▪ If your participants are under the age of 18, you must seek both parental/guardian AND child consent.</li> </ul>	Yes
5.	Intended <b>questionnaire</b> /survey/interview, protocol/screenshots/representative materials (as appropriate)	No
6.	<b>URL</b> to intended on-line survey (as appropriate)	No

### Notes on Conflict of Interest

1. If your intended participants are work colleagues, you must declare a potential conflict of interest: you are taking advantage of your existing relationships in order to make progress in your research. It is best to acknowledge this in your invitation to participants.
2. If your research is also intended to direct commercial or other exploitation, this must be declared. For example, *"Please be advised that this research is being conducted by an employee of the company that supplies the product or service which form an object of study within the research."*

### Notes for questionnaires and interviews

1. If your questionnaire is paper based, you must have the following opt-out clause on the top of each page of the questionnaire: *"Each question is optional. Feel free to omit a response to any question; however the researcher would be grateful if all questions are responded to."*
2. If your questionnaire is **on-line**, the first page of your questionnaire must repeat the content of the information sheet. This must be followed by the consent form. If the participant does not agree to the consent, they must automatically be exited from the questionnaire.
3. Each question must be **optional**.
4. The participant must have the option to '**not submit, exit without submitting**' at the final submission point on your questionnaire.
5. If you have open-ended questions on your questionnaire you must warn the participant against naming **third parties**: *"Please do not name third parties in any open text field of the questionnaire. Any such replies will be anonymised."*
6. You must inform your participants regarding illicit activity: *"In the extremely unlikely event that illicit activity is reported I will be obliged to report it to appropriate authorities."*



**Trinity College Dublin**

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

## Information Sheet for Participants

*Title of Research Project:*

**Machine Learning to go *Nyoom*:**

**Using Machine Learning to evaluate rowing training and predict training outcomes or performances**

**Name of Lead Researcher:** Liam Junkermann

**Email:** junkerm1@tcd.ie

**Phone Number:** +353 089 484 2123

**Name of Supervisor:** Dr. Lucy Hederman

You are invited to participate in a research project as part of a final year project for the partial fulfillment of an Integrated Computer Science undergraduate Degree at Trinity College Dublin. This project aims to determine if, and how, machine learning can be used to quantify rowing training, and its outcomes and performances. This can be used to improve training effectiveness for individual athletes allowing them to adjust their training according to how their bodies respond to different training loads.

Please ensure that you read all the information below before deciding to participate in this project. Please feel free to ask any questions that you may have, as it is important that you clearly understand what participating in this project involves.

You are under no obligation to participate in this project. It is voluntary, and your decision to take part or otherwise will not result in any penalty against you.

The sharing of data is optional. You can withdraw from the project at any time before the project submission in April 2024, even after it has started. After the submission, it will no longer be possible to exclude your data.

All information gathered as part of this project will be pseudonymised when presented as results. Participant names will be pseudonymised, with code names being used instead of the participants' own names. The researcher will securely maintain a translation key to facilitate exclusion of participant's data from the project if requested or to provide feedback which may be the result of a model that has been trained by the researcher. All information about this project will be removed from the researcher's personal devices and cloud storage once the results of the report have been ratified by the exam board. At this point, the researcher will delete all data gathered for this project unless otherwise requested by participants.

### **What is the purpose of this project?**

Quantifying the effect of training on the body is something that trained athletes try to do daily to make their training as efficient as possible to hit their fitness and performance goals. As technology has evolved, different systems and approaches to quantify metrics like load and recovery have been developed. Original models and systems used a linear approach to model these biological processes and adaptations. The formative model for modelling human performance, developed by Eric Bannister, has been supported and built upon many times since its publication in 1975. This model is, unfortunately, incomplete due to its linear nature. Machine Learning has been introduced to the field of study in an attempt to increase both the accuracy of performance modelling and the number of variables that can be used in the model. This project aims to develop a model that can be used to quantify training load and recovery and predict performance based on the available training and recovery data. The goal is to make participants' individual training more effective to drive stronger performances. By participating in this project, you are contributing to the completion of the researcher's undergraduate degree.

### **Who is organising the project?**

Liam Junkermann is the principle researcher and is receiving academic supervision from Dr. Lucy Hederman of the School of Computer Science and Statistics in Trinity College Dublin.

### **Why am I being asked to partake in this project**

You are being asked to partake in this project as you are a rower with intentions to compete, at a minimum, at a national level this season. As a result, you will be committing to 8-12+ training sessions per week where consistent data may be collected, paired with semi-regular benchmark tests (eg. 6k r20, 30min r20, 6k Open, 2k Open), which can provide the researcher with different options to measure model success and provide feedback to you, the athlete.

### **What will my role in the project entail?**

To participate in this project, you will be asked to provide data through various pipelines built by the researcher. The researcher will be collecting any and all training and recovery data you might have available from the time of joining until the time of submission in April 2024. Most of the data collection will happen through automatic API collection pipelines, but may also include manual entry through a training log. Data will be collected with initial signup where you will log in to any accounts, such as Polar, Concept2 Logbook, Strava, or Whoop – anywhere you might log your training. The goal is to collect as much relevant data as possible. Once the signup is completed, your data will be collected without any further engagement from you. You may also be asked to engage in monitoring to collect relevant information about changes in oxygen utilisation zones (as a result of a lactate test), information about illness or injury, and any other information which could have an impact on the effectiveness of training. Providing any or all data is voluntary and you may at any time, before the submission date in April 2024, ask to have the data you have shared be deleted and leave the project data set.

### **What are the benefits of my taking part in this project?**

By participating in this project, you are providing invaluable data to the researcher, which ultimately could benefit you in providing feedback on your training, and understanding which trends in your training produce stronger results.

### **What are the risks in my taking part in this project?**

There are no expected risks associated with taking part in this project. Agreeing or declining to participate in this project will not impact you in any way. Collected data will remain pseudonymised and will be disposed of once the report has been ratified by the exam board unless otherwise requested by participants.

### **Will it cost me to take part in this project?**

There are no monetary costs associated with participation in this project. There may be a small time commitment to set up data collection, and periodic check-ins for training-related data, such as heart rate zones and the result of HP testing such as lactate or VO2 max testing. Initial setup for data collection should take no more than 10-15 minutes. Periodic check-ins may take up to 5 minutes per week.

### **Is this project confidential?**

All information collected for the purposes of this project will be treated with the strictest of confidence. Any data collected will be stored securely, in an unidentifiable form, and deleted from the researcher's personal devices and cloud storage unless otherwise requested by participants when the project is complete and has been ratified by the exam board.

Participants' names will be masked with code names being used instead of participants' own names before being presented as results. The researcher will make every attempt to obfuscate any training plans which may become apparent in raw data. The researcher will securely maintain a translation key to facilitate the exclusion of a participant's data if requested or to provide feedback which may be the result of a model which has been trained by the researcher. No information will be shared with anyone other than the principal researcher in any manner that may be easily identifiable. All data will be stored securely for the duration of the project and will be deleted from the researcher's personal devices and cloud storage, unless otherwise requested by the participant, once the study has concluded in April 2024 and the project has been ratified by the exam board.

The researcher is aware that some squads or athletes may have policies regarding the sharing of training data, all data provided to the researcher for the purposes of this project will only be accessed by the researcher and only de-pseudonymised on the request of the participant to provide training feedback or to delete a participant's data.

### **Are there any conflicts of interest in this project?**

This project forms part of the principle researcher's undergraduate degree in Integrated Computer Science at Trinity College Dublin. By participating in this project, you are contributing to the completion of this degree.

### **Where can I get further information regarding this project?**

If you have any queries or concerns regarding this project now, or at any point in the future, please contact the researcher via email at [junkerm1@tcd.ie](mailto:junkerm1@tcd.ie).

You can reach the Data Protection Officer using the contact details below:

Email: [dataprotection@tcd.ie](mailto:dataprotection@tcd.ie)

Post: Data Protection Officer, Secretary's Office, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin 2, Ireland

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.





**Trinity College Dublin**

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin

## Project Informed Consent Form

**Lead Researcher:** Liam Junkermann

**Background of Research:** The development of a machine learning model to evaluate rowing training to predict training outcomes and performances. This research is being carried out as part of a final-year project for the fulfillment of an Integrated Computer Science degree at Trinity College Dublin.

**Procedures of this Project:** During this project, you will be asked to share your wearable and training data through an online portal. Additionally, you may be asked to complete some monitoring tasks.

**Publication:** There will be a final report submitted to the School of Computer Science and Statistics at Trinity College Dublin. Individual data may be included in the final report pseudonymised.

**Declaration:**

- I am 18 years or older and am competent to provide consent.
- I have read or had read to me, a document providing information about this research and this consent form.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction I understand the description of the research that is being provided to me.
- I agree that my data is to be used for scientific purposes and I have no objection that my data is published in scientific publications in a way that does not reveal my identity.
- I understand that if I make illicit activities known, these will be reported to the appropriate authorities.
- I freely and voluntarily agree to be part of this research study, though without prejudice to my legal and ethical rights.
- I have received a copy of this agreement.

**Participant's Name In Bold:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Researcher's Responsibility:** I have explained the nature and purpose of this research project, the procedures to be undertaken, and any risks that may be involved. I have offered to answer any questions and thoroughly answered any such questions. I believe that the participant understands my explanation and has freely given their informed consent.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Liam Junkermann

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's Contact Information:**

Email: junkerml@tcd.ie  
Telephone: +353 089 484 2123



**Trinity College Dublin**

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The University of Dublin

## Outline of Research Proposal

### Title of Project

Machine Learning to go *Nyoom*: Using Machine Learning to evaluate rowing training and predict training outcomes or performance

### Dates and Duration

This project will run from ASAP until April 2024.

### Purpose and Academic Rationale

The purpose of this project is to develop a machine learning model that can quantify rowing training load more effectively to predict the resulting outcomes and performances from a certain training program. The formative Human Performance Model from 1975 relied on a linear model, only using Fitness and Fatigue as inputs. The linear model for human performance is inherently flawed as adaptations to training load are far more complex. Since then, technology has evolved to allow researchers to build more complex and effective models of human performance. The development in machine learning allows models to be trained on sports-specific data to extrapolate what training plans work and provide individualised feedback using the data available.

At present, no tool like this exists for Rowing. Given the cardiovascular intensity of training, many strain models built for sports generally overestimate the strain, or fatigue, of a given training session. Additionally, there is some disagreement about which approach to training is best. The most popular approaches for endurance training are pyramidal or periodization. These approaches guide what percentage of time spent training should be spent in various heart rate zones.

Rowing training is uniquely placed to be used to train a machine learning model. With countless hours spent on the rowing machine (erg) each week, most often with a heart rate monitor (HRM) connected, most pre-elite and elite athletes have granular, stroke to stroke, data about their training. Given the prevalence of using heart rate to train many athletes also wear heart rate monitors on the water, with some also using Stroke Coaches (GPS computers which various metrics on the water such as speed, stroke rate, in some cases power, and the capability to connect to HRMs) to record distance, time, and speed. Given the time and energy commitment required for rowing many athletes also use fitness-tracking wearables (eg. Polar Watches, Whoop Straps, etc.) to collect data about recovery and sleep. Considering this volume of data, a machine learning approach to analyse and provide feedback, and predictions, on a given training block or to help work to a given goal.

### Procedures of the Project

There will be two steps to the project

#### 1. Data Collection

Participants will be asked to do a once-off signup process which will enable automatic collection of their wearable and training data through the use of APIs. Participants may be asked to do weekly monitoring each week to provide supplemental data. The goal of the data collection step is to be as unobtrusive to the athletes as possible. Their data will be collected and analyzed on the researcher's personal computer, before being transferred to cloud storage, in a pseudonymised format, to allow for processing in the machine learning step.

#### 2. Data Processing and Model Generation

Once a sufficient amount of data has been collected, the researcher will engage in processing the data and developing a model. Data will continue to be collected to continue adding to the data available to the model. Any findings from the model will be released to the participants. The researcher will maintain a translation key securely on their local machine to provide this feedback, and if a participant asks for their data to be deleted.

### Participants

The participants for this project will be recruited through word of mouth, text messages, and email. The researcher is an active member of a Dublin senior rowing squad with friends and former teammates in other squads in Ireland and the United States of America who can be recruited for the project. The researcher will be reaching out to people whom he already has contact details for, and will be emailing captains and coaches of squads for additional participants. These email addresses will be obtained from publicly posted locations such as club Instagram accounts and websites.

The criteria that a participant must meet in order to take part in this project:

- Be at least 18 years old.
- Be training for Rowing at least 8 times per week (>45 minutes per session)

- Have competed at a minimum, national level in the last 6 months or intend to compete at this level in the current season.

Health conditions and injuries which may have occurred before or during the course of the project will not exclude a participant but will be noted as part of the initial intake or the weekly monitoring.

### **Debriefing Arrangements**

All participants in this project will be debriefed through a written document explaining the process to them. If requested, participants will receive the results of the project once the project is completed.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Some ethical considerations arise from the project with regard to participation, data collection, and protection.

**Participation** Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If a participant no longer feels comfortable sharing their data, they may withdraw at any time, even after the project has commenced, with all of their data being removed from the researcher's personal device and cloud storage.

**Data Collection and Protection** All data collected is done through authorised APIs, secured with the participants' login and an API key provided to the researcher. The data is then processed to pseudonymised, by removing any names or user IDs and replacing them with randomly generated keys for each participant. The data is then stored in an encrypted cloud storage provider. A translation key list will be stored securely and encrypted on the researcher's personal device, which is password-secured and has an encrypted disk. The researcher is aware that some squads may have policies regarding the sharing of training data, all data provided to the researcher for the purposes of this project will only be accessed by the researcher and only de-pseudonymised at the request of the participant for the purposes of providing training feedback or to delete a participant's data.

Given that some elements of the data collected may include GPS data. This data cannot be effectively used to discover who a given person is as this will only be for on-the-water rowing sessions and as such would be one of many potential participants rowing on that body of water. The location data available does not put any of the participants at any risk of personal information being revealed.

### **Legislation**

All data gathered as part of this project will be held and maintained in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). All participants will be anonymised before being included in the results. Information gathered throughout the project will be stored securely, which only the researcher will have access to.