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9-403-131

REV: MARCH 30, 2004

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The Army Crew Team

It was nearing the end of the crew season in May 2002, and Colonel Stas Preczewski, the coach of the Army Crew team for the United States Military Academy at West Point, had just spent the last three weeks in utter frustration. He faced a situation he had never seen before in the nine years he had coached the sport: the Junior Varsity (JV) crew boat frequently beat the Varsity (V) boat during practice and in some races. This was not supposed to happen. Coach Preczewski (or Coach P.) had selected the members of the Varsity boat after a long series of objective tests measuring their speed, strength, and coordination—all of which demonstrated that they were the top eight rowers on his team. So how did the Junior Varsity boat—consisting of the *bottom* eight rowers on his team—frequently beat the Varsity boat?

Over the course of the season, Coach P. had made many attempts to gather information that would help him understand and resolve this unusual situation. So far, however, nothing had worked. Now it was just one week before the culmination of the season, the National championship race with over one hundred schools competing, and Coach P. deliberated over several options. The most radical action would be to acknowledge that the Junior Varsity team was better than the Varsity team, and simply promote the whole JV team to the Varsity boat for this race. A second option was to switch a small number of individual members of the two boats. Alternatively, Coach P. could keep the current team members in each boat, but try to intervene to improve the performance of the Varsity team—but how?

Crew Background

Crews rowed lightweight boats, or "shells," that were up to 60 feet long, yet very narrow. In "sweep" boats, each rower propelled a single oar through the water using his or her legs, back, and arms. In addition to the rowers, a "coxswain" was perched in the back of the boat to steer the rudder, coach, motivate, and set the race strategy for the crew. Crews competed as pairs, fours, and eight-oared units of rowers. Rowers typically considered the eight-person boats, or "Eights," to be the prize crew in which to earn a "seat" berthing. These 8-oared shells had seats numbered from the 1-seat (or "bow" seat) through the 8-seat (or "stroke" seat). (See **Exhibit 1** for a description of the placement of rowers in a crew boat.) The "stroke" set the pace in strokes per minute for the crew, and advised the coxswain during practice and races (when he or she could find the breath to do so!). By all accounts, rowing was an exhausting activity. In fact, physiologists who studied the sport

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Professors Scott Snook and Jeffrey T. Polzer prepared this case with the assistance of Senior Researcher Hillary Anger Elfenbein. HBS cases are developed solely as the basis for class discussion. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements, sources of primary data, or illustrations of effective or ineffective management.

maintained that rowing a 2000-meter race was comparable to playing two back-to-back basketball games.[1]

Rowing held the distinction of being the first intercollegiate sport in the United States, beginning in 1852 with a race between Harvard and Yale.[2] The modern version of intercollegiate crew was a year-round sport that began when students returned to campus in August and ended after graduation in early June. The fall racing season consisted of so-called "Head" races that were typically 3.5 miles long (e.g., the "Head of the Charles" race in Boston). These races consisted of 20 to 60 crews racing their rowing shells down winding courses against a clock. After all the crews had completed the course, they were ranked according to their times to determine the winner. Although winning was important, the fall season was generally devoted to staging tryouts, training novices, and improving crew members' rowing technique.

When the fall season ended in early November, crew members transitioned into the indoor winter conditioning phase to build strength and endurance for the upcoming spring "sprint" season. The sprint season consisted of dual and regatta races held on straight, 2,000-meter courses. Lanes were demarcated with buoys so that crew boats could race alongside one another. Large events used a "heat" system in which the top one or two boats from each heat advanced to the next round of competition. Because these races were so closely contested, even seemingly small factors could separate the winners from the losers.

The Elements of Success

Successful racing in crew required a unique combination of individual skills and team coordination. In an effort to learn more about these components, the U.S. Olympic Committee had sponsored a research project in which dozens of crew coaches indicated which dimensions they thought were most important for achieving top performance. The survey asked coaches to indicate the importance of over two hundred variables that were either directly or indirectly related to "sweep" rowing, in which each crew member rowed a single oar. The sample of respondents included coaches with a wide array of experience, ranging from novice coaches, with 1 to 2 years of experience, and intermediate coaches, with 3 to 4 years of experience, to master coaches, with over 4 years of experience. The coaches' responses revealed that the two hundred variables could be broken into four distinct categories concerning issues of 1) strength and conditioning, 2) rowing technique, 3) psychological dimensions, and 4) program organization. Interestingly, the importance assigned to these categories varied with the coaches' level of experience. One pattern was that novice and intermediate coaches tended to rate a multitude of variables (often as many as one hundred) as highly important, whereas master coaches focused on a smaller set of variables, ranging from 11 to 20. Moreover, novice coaches tended to focus on technique, while intermediate coaches concentrated on conditioning, and master coaches—those who were most experienced and successful—tended to spotlight psychological variables as the most important ingredients of a successful crew.

Individual strength and endurance The eight individual athletes in each crew boat needed extreme strength and endurance to have any hope of performing reasonably well. Coaches used a relatively easy and objective process to measure the athletes' individual strength and conditioning. The rowing "Ergometer" (or "erg" for short) objectively measured work output over a given distance or period of time for each individual rower. This stable, land-based metric device, like the "rowing

[1] See www.usrowing.org.

[2] See www.usrowing.org.

machines" found in most gyms, simulated the general rowing technique required to race on the water, but eliminated the instability of rowing in a racing shell and isolated each crew member from the other rowers in a boat. Rowers trained for endurance and technique on the "erg" and were periodically tested year-round against one another and their own previous scores. Scores were comparable across machines and years, making it easy to compare the current year's average time to last year's, or to compare a time in Boston to a time on a different machine in Seattle, all with precision to the tenth of one second over a 2,000 meter test.

Weight lifting exercises complemented the erg training. Records for the number of repetitions and the amount of weight lifted in various exercises, including leg and bench presses, curls, and squats, provided the coach with objective measures of strength and progress for the individuals over time. Both the erg and weight records provided objective and comparable measures of strength and endurance capabilities to assist the coach in evaluating the individual skills of the crew members.

Teamwork As important as individual skills were, it was crucial for the eight individual athletes to synchronize their rowing. Crew was one of the few sports in which there were no awards for individual performance, such as a "most valuable player." Indeed, if one member of the crew suddenly tried to out-perform his teammates in a race, the shell would actually slow down because the rowers would no longer be synchronized. In addition, a key consideration was the mental strength of the crew members, who had to be single-mindedly attuned to one another with the common goal of crossing the finish line ahead of all other crews.

John Smith, a crew coach writing in the late 1800s, noted that "rowing is about the minutiae,"[3] and teams ever since have continued to struggle to master the details of rowing. When observing a good crew, all eight rowers' hands, arms, backs, and legs appeared to move as if there were steel-bar connections linking them together. The timing of each oar's entry and release from the water had to occur within hundredths of a second of the other oars, which in turn required each rower to hold his hands at precisely the same height. Moreover, for the entry and release to be perfectly timed, all rowers had to drive their oar through the water at an identical pace. During the recovery phase of the rowing stroke, all oars had to move in unison while remaining above the water, lest they touch the water and slow the boat down. If any part of this rowing movement or oar blade-work was off, the boat would lose its center balance and decelerate. Because the boat's center of gravity was above the water line, a rower who simply tossed his head to flick the hair out of his eyes during the recovery phase of a stroke would cause the shell to tip to one side and his oars to hit the water. Although a team member generally could not attribute a deviation in another's technique or exertion level during race day to any single individual, the remaining rowers could feel the deviation instantly.

One long-time rower described the difficulty of staying synchronized:

> I love the challenge, physical, mental, and even technical, in terms of body positioning, timing, when body parts move, keeping the boat set, determining when the blade goes in and comes out, how high out of water, where your hands are, how you feather the oar with one hand and pull with the other. And after you drive, after you take the stroke with all your power, you have to shift to nice and easy for the back-up slide. Think of it this way – it's the

[3] Bourne, Gilbert. *A Textbook of Oarsmanship*. (1987; original printing 1925). Sport Book Publishing.

> equivalent of eight guys all trying to do the perfect golf swing at the same time, all together, 200 times in a row.[4]

Since every movement for every stroke of a 200-stroke race (2,000 meters) had to be in perfect synchrony, an 8-person racing crew confronted 1,600 opportunities (8 people x 200 strokes) to upset the balance of the boat. Naturally, it was nearly impossible for each person to row 200 perfect strokes. The best boats were often distinguished, therefore, by how well the rowers adapted to one another's imperfect strokes. When one rower made an error, it was important for the other rowers who felt the result of that error to *refrain* from adjusting their technique to compensate, because this reaction could set in motion a spiral of asynchronous, unstable rowing. Instead, the best response was to trust that whoever made the error would correct his next stroke, allowing the boat to regain balance and maximum speed.

The trust required among team members spoke to the psychology of the team as a whole. Because each member contributed to the team effort of rowing, a crew boat was only as strong as its weakest link. When one member deviated from the group's pace, this frequently had a cascading effect that threw off the movements of the remaining members. This maxim of the "weakest link" applied not just to rowing technique, but also to an individual's threshold for physical failure. At some point, rowers confronted the exhaustion of participating in a long race, which could make it feel impossible to keep up the team's unrelenting pace. If one member reached his threshold and tried to rest for even one stroke, the team's momentum was broken. The loss of one rower's power for just one stroke produced an increased load on the oars of the seven remaining rowers. If one of the remaining seven was near his threshold of physical failure, even a slight increase in the load on his oar substantially increased his chances of failure. Consequently, if one rower relented near the end of a race, it could have a domino-like effect on the performance of the other rowers. Winning a crew race, therefore, required rowers to fight against reaching their physical threshold while making the fewest technical mistakes on any stroke.

In reality, synchrony was often imperfect. Coach P. explained:

> Any slight change in the racing shell affects the whole boat. Often, when one person changes, the seven other people try to respond in different ways. It is important not to respond. Instead, teammates need to trust each other, to trust that the person out of rhythm will correct himself. You need to trust that none in the crew will be the weakest link of that crew, and that instead the weakest link will be found in the competitor's boat.

In a crew boat with perfect coordination, rowing could feel almost effortless due to the synergy among the eight members. In fact, Coach P. occasionally drilled the team members in practice by asking them to row with their eyes closed, in order to help the team learn to "feel" this coordination, referred to as "swing." He explained: "The drill helped them to experience themselves along with the rest of the team as a single unit, rather than as a collection of individuals. Swing is akin to a runner's high or being 'in the zone' where every stroke feels like one effortless activity after another—a rower's paradise."

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[4] Thomas, Jack, "Different Strokes," *The Boston Globe*, September 9, 2003, http://www.boston.com/news/globe/living/articles/2003/09/30/different_strokes (accessed September 30, 2003).

The 2001–2002 Army Crew Team

Coach P. looked forward to the start of the 2001-2002 spring season for Army Crew. The 2000-2001 team had achieved excellent performance during the previous spring, and most of the members were returning for another season. They had worked hard in the fall and winter to improve their individual skills, and this work had paid off. One of the coach's first jobs was to select the top eight rowers for the Varsity boat and place the bottom eight rowers into the Junior Varsity boat. These two boats raced against different levels of competition throughout the season, although they competed against each other directly in practice and indirectly by comparing their race times. As he did every year, Coach P. began the season by conducting a series of exercises to determine assignments to the Varsity and Junior Varsity boats.

The first set of exercises measured individual rowing skill. These objective measures included individual strength, technique, and endurance using the ergometer machine. Coach P. was pleased to note that the 2001-2002 team average had improved compared to the previous year by 10 seconds on the erg over a 2,000-meter trial. In context, the Army Crew's average time of 6:32 compared with an approximate average of 6:20 for the Ivy League, and 5:55 for the U.S. Olympic team. Coach P. had the crew members' individual ergometer results in hand when the team headed to Atlanta for an intensive week of training.

The Atlanta Retreat

As the weather improved, it was time to begin the spring racing season in earnest. The rowers were anxious to get started after spending the winter in off-season training. Spring break served as a kick-off, with a week off-site rowing "retreat" that the team spent training together at the former 1996 Olympic rowing venue in Atlanta. There, the rowers used their mornings to row in randomly selected boats to focus on technique and adaptability. At night, the rowers read rowing biographies and related materials. Afternoons, however, were the most intense part of the day. It was during this time each day that Coach P. conducted a series of "seat races" that would ultimately determine which rowers were selected for the Varsity boat.

"Seat racing" provided systematic data about how well each rower used his individual skills while coordinating with his teammates in a shell on the water. The seat racing system was used widely, including in the Olympic selection process, because coaches believed that it objectively captured an individual's ability to contribute to the team's performance. First, eight rowers of about equal strength were divided arbitrarily into two 4-person boats, which then raced against each other for two minutes on calm water. If boat "A" beat boat "B" by 10 meters, this was recorded. Immediately after the race, one member of each boat was told to switch boats, and the two boats proceeded to row another two minute race. If boat "B" beat boat "A" by 15 meters in the second race, it was recorded that rower "X" (originally in boat A) was 25 meters better than rower "Y" with whom he had switched. Thus, the difference in results between the two boats across the two races could be attributed to the two rowers who had switched boats. Because no one knew when they would be switched, each individual was motivated to perform his best in each trial of the seat race. The coach collected data over the course of multiple races with every possible combination of rowers in each boat. Races that ended with close or surprising results were often re-run to confirm the result. Although the racing times measured the performance of the whole 4-person boat, the systematic comparison of many trials with many combinations allowed Coach P. to calibrate each individual member's relative capabilities and, consequently, to rank the rowers from top to bottom.

By the end of the week in Atlanta, Coach P. had selected the top eight rowers for the Varsity boat and the bottom eight rowers for the Junior Varsity boat. He recalled that it was an easy decision:

The seat racing made it clear who the right eight guys were for the Varsity boat. The Varsity team had the top eight scores for individual strength, with two exceptions. The two guys with the greatest sheer strength were placed into the JV boat due to their performance in the seat races. One of them tended to focus on his individual performance, but brought his 4-person team down in the competitions. He did not appear to give his personal best on the water, and yet he was critical of others. He would row hard but throw out technique in competition, thus slowing the shell down. The other rower was young, inexperienced and had very poor technique on the water where it mattered. Both of these rowers lost their seat-race competitions.

For the last practice of the week, the two newly-selected teams raced for the first time, and, as expected, the Varsity boat defeated the JV boat handily. The Varsity boat experienced "swing" almost immediately, and the rowers were excited about their first experience together as the Varsity team.

Back on the Hudson River

When the team arrived back at campus, Coach P. found that some of the Varsity boat members appeared unhappy and critical of one another about why they had not defeated the JV boat by a greater margin in Atlanta, just five days prior. He took it as a good sign: "I thought this was an indicator of their striving for excellence. In retrospect, it should have been seen as an omen of the hard times awaiting me."

As far as Coach P. was concerned, his Varsity boat consisted of the eight objectively best rowers, and he expected them to perform well together. In other years, and based on his knowledge of other teams, the Varsity boat was almost always faster than the JV boat, both in practices and in real race times. This was only natural, as the best eight rowers were in the Varsity boat. Their victory over the JV in their first effort confirmed the objective selection methodology—clearly. Or did it?

During the team's first practice on the Hudson River after Spring Break, the JV boat immediately beat the Varsity boat in a practice race. Coach P. viewed this result as an aberration. When it happened a few more times, however, it became more puzzling to him. Soon a clear pattern emerged. To his continuing surprise, Coach P. found that the Junior Varsity rowed faster than the Varsity team about two-thirds of the time. And it wasn't that the JV was getting faster; the Varsity appeared to be slowing down. Given the meticulous attention he had devoted to placing individuals in the boats, and the clear-cut objective performance data on which he had based these placement decisions, he had no indication in advance that this would happen.

Coach P. was perplexed by this turn of events, and began an ongoing, painstaking, daily analysis of the potential factors that could be causing this pattern of results. His first actions were aimed at gathering various types of information and performing experiments to try to isolate the specific reason why the Junior Varsity outperformed the Varsity boat. For example, he conducted a series of pair-wise races in which two members of the Varsity boat raced against the corresponding pair from the JV boat. Regardless of which two members he put together, the pair from the Varsity boat consistently beat the JV pair. He then conducted another series of races in which various groupings of four or six rowers from the Varsity boat raced against their counterparts from the JV boat. Again, the Varsity rowers consistently won these races. Only when all eight rowed at the same time did the JV beat the Varsity. These results again indicated to Coach P. that the Varsity boat did have the better individual members, but that there was something about the way they functioned as a team of eight rowers that made "the whole less than the sum of the parts."

Turning to the hard data he had collected on the team members, Coach P. constructed a matrix of the 16 rowers, listing their strengths and weaknesses on various dimensions. These dimensions included erg scores, weight lifting strength, rowing technique, and whether the person was a "leader or follower," "optimist or pessimist," "team builder or team disrupter (i.e., someone who consistently talked during practice or criticized others)," and related factors. Each person's scores on the more subjective criteria were based on the Coach's direct observation along with comments that the rowers made to him. His assistant coach also provided ratings for the subjective items. Coach P. and his assistant had almost identical views on these subjective measures. The pattern that emerged from examining this matrix was that the Varsity boat's members had the best technical skill and conditioning among the 16 rowers, but no one was classified as a leader while several were labeled as team disrupters. The JV boat's members, in contrast, had virtually no team disrupters.

Coach P. was aware of the Olympic study emphasizing the importance of psychological factors. Moreover, he was comfortable analyzing these dimensions based on his advanced degrees in psychology, his Ph.D. in higher education, and his experience as a tenured professor in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership at West Point. In addition to relying on his own judgment as an experienced coach, he brought in a person from the Center for Enhanced Performance (CEP) at West Point who had expertise in maximizing individual and team performance. The CEP was comprised of the Academy's sports psychologists, who were trained to develop the systematic application of specific mental skills necessary to improve human performance. They employed a series of training techniques designed to utilize the "beliefs, attitudes, and thinking habits that help develop the confidence, concentration and motivation needed to achieve one's full potential." Although the JV crew team seemed to embrace this CEP training, Coach P. was concerned about how it was received by the skeptical Varsity members, who labeled it as "touchy-feely."

Coach P. routinely encouraged his rowers to email one another with the goal of mutually supporting one another's efforts toward developing a winning mentality. He also asked that any criticisms or suggestions for improvement be directed only towards him. A sample from the email messages circulating among the JV boat read: "…everyone has rowed enough races to know you win some, you lose some … Just remember, everyone on the [JV] Crew wants to win as much as you do … only those who are serious rowers and want to row hard (are among us)." Another read: "We have the confidence and the control to row our own race. We know how to win and we will do it on our terms. We will succeed together, we will fail together." And yet another: "We are not rowing for ourselves, Coach, or Army Crew. When push comes to shove, in that last 1,000 meters, we're rowing for every guy in that boat because we don't want to let him down."

In contrast, a sample from the Varsity Boat's email messages read: "I never thought I would be the weak link, but on this race, I am sure of it. I know if I get my head back in it, the boat will start to move again." Many of the Varsity rowers wrote directly to the Coach with their complaints. A representative email, though hardly the only example of finger-pointing, read as follows: "Now . . . my bitching session about Jim since I haven't gotten a chance to talk with you. Besides his "great personality" (which I won't even get into) he is not consistent at all and I don't know if you can tell this from outside the boat. It doesn't seem like he listens to the coxswain very well and he doesn't listen to me either. I really need someone that I feel a bond with and it isn't happening with Jim. At points I have almost asked you to move me to any boat but the one that he is in. I know and try to remember the story that you always tell about the guy that decked the other guy at the season's end, but I seriously don't think that I can hold out that long. He gets on my nerves so bad (which is odd cause I really get along with everyone) and I think everyone is starting to notice what an ass he's making out of himself and asking why he is sitting in that seat. I'm very sorry if it seems like I'm trying to get you to change something that you don't want to (because you are the coach) but I'm just

trying to give you perspective from my seat." Among all the emails Coach P. received like this one, no clear pattern emerged that pointed to a lone culprit among the Varsity members.

Coach P. also considered whether to attribute the puzzling turn of events to the rivalry between the two boats. At one point during a CEP team-building session, the Varsity team members had accused him of creating a rift between them and the JV boat by forcing them to row against each other at practice so often. The Varsity preferred to row alone and apart from the JV. One member suggested that the competition that the Coach set up between the Varsity and Junior Varsity boats was unnerving. Whereas the Junior Varsity boat had nothing to lose, it was embarrassing for the Varsity boat to compete against them. Another team member, however, argued that it was too difficult to compete on the river while rowing only against the clock, because the other team provided a useful benchmark to gauge how fast they were rowing.

Some comments were also directed toward internal comparisons among the members of the Varsity boat. For example, one rower who was in his second year attributed his own low performance to being the most junior member of the team. He felt he was ineffective in influencing the more senior members of the team who outranked him militarily.

Before the two boats raced against each other at practices, the members of each boat met in a huddle, put their hands together and shouted parting words from their huddle. From early on, the JV boat always parted by shouting the words "nothing to lose." In contrast, the Varsity boat intermittently changed the words they used, tending to focus their slogan on the specifics of rowing itself. For example, they parted with shouts of "row hard," "never die," and "finish clean."

After every practice and race, the crews put away the equipment and conducted a self-critique. Coach P. noticed that members of the Varsity boat tended to critique each other individually on the details of the practice or race. They could be merciless in their assessment of one another's performance. In contrast, the JV boat's members did not criticize one another individually. If corrections were needed, they never singled out a single rower but, instead, made global comments about details that everyone needed to practice.

Coach P. had taken a somewhat risky approach to the team's conditioning activities during the winter and spring season. Noting that the team's overall erg scores were so much better than the previous year (which had been a successful winning season), he believed this year's crews could make it to the finals of the Nationals. Given that belief, he wanted to ensure they had every possible chance to accomplish this goal. Accordingly, he met with the football team's strength and conditioning coach, nick-named "Satan" for his hellish weight room workouts.

Coach P. told the team that he and Satan had worked out a conditioning plan that would ensure they would be at their peak strength and endurance during the week of the National competition. This plan required them to continue significant weight workouts throughout the normal racing season. Coach P. told the crew that this might slow them down significantly during the dual racing season, as well as during the League and New York State Championships. However, with weight lifting curtailed approximately 14 days prior to the Nationals, they could expect that the 14-day rest from lifting would allow the muscles to heal, grow and be ready for maximum performance. He described this as a sort of "sling-shot" effect of increased individual power that would be seen at the most critical point in the season—the Nationals. In fact, the members of both the Varsity and JV were getting progressively stronger and their erg times were improving during the course of the season. However, the Varsity was losing at the dual meets and finishing near the middle of the pack in larger events while the JV was routinely winning against their competition.

As the season proceeded and they crept closer to the National competition, the JV members were far more excited about their season than were the Varsity members. This disparity may have affected one final experiment Coach P. conducted by moving some JV rowers into the Varsity boat on occasion during practices. This inevitably led to worse results. In the beginning of the season, the JV members would have found it more prestigious to join the Varsity boat. Now, however, the JV wanted nothing to do with the Varsity rower who was "sent down" and the JV rower wanted to stay with the winning JV boat with little desire to "move up" to the losing Varsity. In fact, when switches were made, the JV would win by even more, indicating the rower "sent down" made the JV boat go faster than before. If the rower "sent down" was indeed better than the one moved up to the Varsity, however (again confirming the initial placement), this defeated the purpose of trying to improve the Varsity boat by switching members with the JV! Coach P. remained confident of the potential for the Varsity boat, but he increasingly questioned whether or not that potential would be realized this season.

What to do?

Switch the Varsity and Junior Varsity boats The most extreme option that Coach P. considered was to acknowledge that the Junior Varsity boat was a stronger performer than the Varsity boat and simply switch their titles. He was reluctant to do this, however. After all, the data he collected both before and after the boat assignments strongly indicated that the Varsity boat had the strongest rowers. On the other hand, there was a precedent for switching boats. During the mid-1990s, the Cornell Coach faced a similar situation, made the switch, and both the Varsity and JV won Eastern Championships that year.

Switch individual boat members Another option that Coach P. continued to consider was to switch individual members between the two boats. Perhaps he still had not found the right combination for the Varsity boat, despite all his efforts to do so. The viability of this option was somewhat limited by the Junior Varsity members' preferences to remain in the JV boat. Some of them had even expressed dread toward switching places.

Intervene to improve the Varsity boat's performance Given that the Varsity boat contained the strongest rowers, Coach P. ruminated about how he might intervene to improve their performance. Toward this end, he decided to begin the team's final week of practice by meeting with the Varsity boat's members to discuss their performance.

The Group Meeting

With the National championship races just four days away, Monday's practice ended with the JV yet again whipping the Varsity. The JV left the Hudson River exuberantly, cheered their "nothing to lose" slogan, and left the practice area. Coach P. held the Varsity boat on the water, pulled his coaching launch alongside, and looked into the eyes of every rower. The coxswain's head was down and shaking left to right. He saw no pain in their eyes that would have reflected the agony of a physical loss to the JV. Rather, he saw crushed spirits with hollow stares. The rowers muttered quiet, unemotional expletives. Coach P. ordered them to "put it on the dock—we'll meet at the picnic table."

Coach P. waited at the picnic table to observe his Varsity rowers wander over to the table. The crew wouldn't even sit near each other. Some knelt on the grass, others stood, one laid flat, and the others took the four ends of the table as far apart as they could get. No one talked. The Nationals were exactly four days away. Coach P. stated his confidence in them, but expressed his own

frustration in failing to understand why they weren't winning. He laid out the logical arguments of using objective measurement and selection criteria. He ended by stating that the answer was held within them as a team and that no one would leave until a solution was proposed or issues were identified for resolution.

The first few forced explanations focused on the team's general situation rather than on any particular members of the team. The tone changed, however, when Joe, the most junior member got his turn to speak. Joe stood up, stalked several steps away from the rest of the team, and wheeled around to confront them all. "I've been carrying this boat alone," he said angrily, "I am the only guy working hard on every stroke. I feel I'm out there rowing alone." He argued that his teammates should look to themselves for the explanation for their poor performance.

Other team members quickly countered Joe's claims. "*I'm* the one carrying the boat," said another rower. Two others contended that they were not slacking off, but instead were working as hard as they possibly could. After several angry accusations and defensive outbursts, one of the men summed up something they were all feeling: he was sick of the situation and couldn't wait for the season to be over.

Coach P. was surprised by how the discussion had escalated. He saw his best eight rowers dejected, angry, and clenching their fists. He asked the group, "So, what is the solution?" All eight rowers met his question with dead silence. After an increasingly tense stretch of silence, Coach P. told them that the meeting had given him a lot to think about, and that they should report back to practice the next day ready to work through this situation.

When he finished speaking, Coach P. watched the eight teammates walk away from each other in eight different directions. After letting them disperse, the walk back to his office seemed longer than usual. He felt weighed down by the immediate prospect of his Varsity team falling apart, and he knew he had a long night of thinking ahead of him about what to do.

Exhibit 1 Placement of Rowers in a Crew Boat

Seats	Description
1 and 2	Bow seats. "Place kickers" who are removed from the action. Described as "self-motivated" and "loners." They rarely speak.
3 and 4	Similar to 5 and 6 but better technique, less strength. Good transition to the bow pair. With 5 and 6, they comprise the "Engine Room" for the boat.
5 and 6	Strongest members with generally poorer technique. The team captain sits in the 6 seat.
7	Good follower of 8, almost a perfect pair with him. 7 leads the starboard side of the boat.
8	Stroke seat. Crucial for setting the rhythm. Not as strong, but most consistent with solid technique. Should possess a "never quit" attitude.

Source: Created by casewriter.

Coxswain: Steers the boat, motivates the team, and sets the racing strategy. Executes the coach's training plan for the day and corrects rowing technique when the coach is not present and during races. Appointed leader responsible for the boat when under way, generally blends into the background off the water. Reports issues to the Coach as appropriate.