Keeping Cox’ns Warm—

There must be many coxswains who regularly express the same feeling. They also, no doubt, express it somewhat more forcefully. There is good reason, I believe, to throw a little light upon this state of affairs.

AREAS OF THE BODY MOST SUSCEPTIBLE TO EXPOSURE TO THE COLD

Greatest heat loss occurs where there is no fat protection, namely the wrists, ankles, back of the neck, lower spine and the head. The head constitutes a very large surface area and the skin is very fine. Too few coxswains and oarsmen wear head protection in the winter. It will be noted immediately that all these areas are ones where our normal clothing joins, or, as is usually the case, doesn't join, and one very obvious example is the number of crews seen out training with every member revealing a vast area of lower back where shorts and shirt fail to meet. This is not only an area of great heat loss, but it is also very near the kidneys, which are inclined to malfunction when exposed to extreme cold! Consider also that this area is the most exposed to the wind, and those rowing bow suffer most?

PROTECTIVE CLOTHING FOR COXSWAINS

1. Ensure that the cox is thoroughly warm _before_ going out. (Could join in crew warm-up.)
2. Always cover the head, ears and neck. Balaclava type hats, polo-necked jumpers and scarves. In wet weather a waterproof hat as well.
3. The hands must be kept dry as well as warm and the wrists must be fully covered. Ordinary household rubber gloves (the lined variety) worn over knitted gloves are the best solution, but any type should have a long cuff.
4. Ankles and feet often get wet in the process of getting into the boat and this should be avoided at all costs. Gum-boots are ideal but should not be worn in the boat as they mean sure drowning if the boat sinks. Again long socks to protect the ankles.
5. The whole problem is really one of ensuring that no gaps appear anywhere, and this calls for overlaps wherever clothing joins.
6. Several thin layers hold the heat better than one thick layer and wool against the skin is best.
7. All clothing is useless if wet and thus waterproofs are essential.

All this may sound like “pampering”, but in terms of safety it is essential, and in terms of improved concentration and dexterity it is surely worthwhile. From experience I know that coxes won’t wear enough clothing unless continually nagged to do so.

The real answer to the problem of protection and insulation against cold and wet is a wet suit or dry suit, and since canoists, water-skiers and divers have used them for many years now, it is amazing that the “rowing fraternity” has not yet made use of them for coxes.

not a matter to be pooh-poohed!

“Nobody knows tiddeley-pom,
How cold my toes tiddeley-pom,
How cold my toes tiddeley-pom,
Are growing.”

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