



# Cape Coral Rowing Club

at Cape Harbour

## Coxswain Handbook

August, 2009

This handbook is intended to be an introduction to coxing and basic boat handling at the CCRC, and to assist you in navigating your way along our waterways.

*- Row Straight and True! -*

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# The Role of the Coxswain

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The coxswain leads their crew on and off the water as well as steers the boat. A crew's performance is as dependent on a well-prepared coxswain as it is on the technical and athletic abilities of the rowers. The coxswain also plays an essential role in the psychology of the crew, maintenance of equipment, and the effectiveness and efficiency of a practice session.

## Specific Coxswain Roles

- Safety First! Always ensure the safety of the rowers and the boat both on and off the water.
- Steering, Launching, and Landing.
- Maximize practice time by motivating your crew to be quick and efficient in the boat yard and on the dock. Know where your coach expects you to meet him/her on the water.
- Maintain a calm and purposeful manner when working with your crew. You set the tone for the practice or race.
- If you are focused and confident of your job, your crew will respond to your leadership. Even if you are not confident, fake it! Get all the information you can from your coach, then do your job the best you can.
- Provide the leadership needed to maintain the attention and focus of the rowers.
- General care of the equipment you use. Report any damage or repairs needed to your coach.
- Communication with the coach regarding the practice. The coach often depends on you to assist in practice management and for feedback from your perspective in the boat. Express difficulties you may be having to the coach in private (i.e., steering, docking, motivation, crew member, etc.). Also report all boat successes (i.e., set, drill execution, etc.)
- Giving specific direction (within your own abilities) to individual rowers for better oar handling, matching and blade work.
- If you are qualified, maximizing the quality of the practice by filling "down" time with drills (if you are not sure which drills are appropriate for your crew, ask your coach before practice).

# Steering, Stopping, and Turning

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## Steering Basics

- Push the steering mechanism or steering cord in the direction you want to turn.
- Keep on course by picking and maintaining a point high enough on the horizon, so that you can always see it over your rowers.
- Make small adjustments to keep the boat on course.
- Be aware that sharp steering will affect the set of the boat and may disrupt the rowers' focus. You can ask for more pressure on one side to assist in steering around a turn. However, this should not be a frequent request on a relatively straight course.
- Do not lean to either side. Keep your body weight centered and low in the boat.
- To steer the boat to one side when it has momentum and is coming to a stop, have one side hold water or drag blades (generally this would be only Stroke seat to help turn towards port-side, or 7 seat to help turn towards starboard).

## Advanced Steering

- Be aware that the lag time between rudder application and hull response is from 3/4 of a stroke to 1 1/2 full strokes.
- Fours are more responsive than eights, making them somewhat more difficult to keep straight.
- The rudder mechanism needs to be tight otherwise coxswains can unintentionally move the rudder in trying to stabilize their own bodies. Keep even pressure on the steering cables until you want to adjust your course.
- Movement of the coxswain can cause rowers to try to continually adjust to a variable they cannot control. You can increase your stability by grasping both gunwales and the steering cable simultaneously. Hold the steering cable with 2 fingers only, with your other fingers and wrists on the gunwales.
- Be aware of any existing wind patterns, which can affect the set of the boat. Especially in turns, the wind may make it more difficult to complete your turn (if you are coming into a strong wind as you move through your turn) or can aid your turn (if it is helping to bring you around).

## When to Steer

- Turning slows the boat because of rudder drag and because the rowers have a harder time setting the boat, so try to minimize your turning.
- Anticipate the need to steer as the boat begins to move off course and make small corrections early.
- A shell is more stable when the blades are in the water. Try to steer while the blades are in the water (i.e. during the drive).
- A shell is less stable when the blades are out of the water. Try not to steer when the blades are out of the water (i.e. during the recovery).
- The boat accelerates on the drive and decelerates on the recovery. Steering is less responsive the slower the boat is moving.

## Coxing Style

- At any appreciable distance, always raise your hand when you have understood your coach's instruction. If you do not understand, signal your coach by putting your hand to your ear, or ask for clarification if your coach is close to you.
- Turn your Cox Box OFF (or put your hand over the mic) if you need to yell to your coach or others outside of your boat.
- Don't unnecessarily banter over the microphone. Don't leave the mic turned ON while you are making adjustments to your headband etc. (as this will subject the crew to a loud crackling sound over the speakers).
- When making a small adjustment to get your point you can have either Bow or 2 seat row (or just call for a light "tap" if that is all that is needed). Alternatively you can have your 7 or Stroke seat back while your 1 or 2 seat rows, letting you spin the boat without moving forward or backwards.
- When making a gradual turn, steer during the drive and straighten the rudder during the recovery.
- When making a sharp turn it is OK to keep the rudder to one side. However, tell your rowers when you are "on the rudder" and again when you're "off the rudder". Recall that calling for increased pressure from one side of the boat will also help you through sharp turns, and will result in a better set through the turn as opposed to rudder actions only.
- Try refraining from steering for a given number of strokes. If your boat naturally steers straight, you will see how little you need to steer. If your boat tends to pull to one side you may need to work with the coach to find which rower(s) is being out-pulled. Over steering may hide what is really happening in the boat.

## Stopping

- When having a crew stop you can give the command, “In two.... weigh-enough” or “on this one, weigh-enough”. Always say when you want your crew to stop before you say weigh-enough. Say “weigh-enough” as the blades go through the water.<sup>1</sup>
- You can stop your boat quickly by having all eight hold water. You can keep your boat from moving by having all eight square their blades and hold water.
- Generally have your crew “glide” after they weigh-enough. Rowers should stop rowing with their “hands away” and their blades off the water, and feathered. As momentum is lost coming to a stop, you should then call for “blades down” to let the rowers know to drop their feathered blades onto the water.
- Your bow pair or four can be used to bring you into position with other boats as needed.
- Maintain your point and keep boats parallel while stopped. You should always be adjusting your point even if the coach is talking (use your stern or bow pair, make brief low-volume comments, trying not to interrupt the coach), so that you are ready to go when the practice is ready to continue. Communicate to other coxswains what you are doing and if you need their help. Do not wait for the coach to tell you to “get your point” or rely upon the coach to direct the boat from drifting into a bad situation (like the mangroves or a dock).

## Turning Around From a Stopped Position

- Whenever possible turn your boat in accordance with the traffic pattern.
- Always begin the turn by backing first (unless you will hit something behind you!).
- Maintain a set boat during the entire turn. This isn’t the time to go swimming.
- Unless otherwise directed, turn your boat one side at a time (i.e., ports to back, starboards to row, ready back, row, back”, etc...).
- If two or more boats are turning, stagger the boats so that all boats can turn without collision.
- Always turn your boat so that you end up facing in the right direction for the traffic pattern when you finish your turn.

## Commands

- Your voice, execution of drills and workouts set the tone for your boat. A coxswain with a confident voice and precise calling of commands will ensure the focus of your rowers and the quality of the row.

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<sup>1</sup> “Weigh-enough” is pronounced “way-enough”.

## Attitude

- Have confidence in your ability to make accurate decisions and in correcting mistakes. Do not frequently apologize. Just make the change in your command, learn from the experience, and then continue.
- Demand attention and focus from your rowers on and off the water.
- Treat the rowers with respect, and work to earn their respect.

## Voice

- Use a deep voice versus a high/shrill squeal.
- Don't be afraid to be quiet as you assess a situation and then make a decision. Try not to think out loud.
- If you anticipate a tight situation, or there is a wake coming, give the rowers a calm warning. "Starboards, we're passing another crew on your side, heads up." Or "Wake coming from the port side in 3 strokes."
- As the intensity of a practice or race increases, your voice needs to remain calm and relaxed. Do not increase the volume or speed of your voice unless it is for specific emphasis or need (i.e., power ten, passing a boat, etc...). Increase the intensity of your voice rather than the volume.
- Your voice affects your rowers. If you talk fast, the slide will tend to increase. If you panic, your rowers may panic. When you're nervous, your rowers may be nervous. It is very important that you remain calm under stress whether you are lining up for a race or trying to maneuver your boat in a tricky situation during practice.
- Use a strong and assertive speaking voice. Never yell or scream at your rowers. Remember that just because you need to speak loudly in the boatyard or on the dock, you do not have to take an angry tone.
- Be positive! Let the crew know how their actions are having or can have a positive impact. "We're coming up on them! We just picked up two seats!" Don't convey negative or disheartening thoughts to the crew. "Wow! Those guys look strong! Look how fast they are!", or "Crap! A bridge!"

## Timing

- Always count your strokes at precisely the same moment as the Stroke's catch. Calling the count before or after the catch will confuse your rowers and can lead to unmatched rowing. Never count at the release.
- Always tell your crew what they are supposed to do and then say "in two...", or "on this one..." depending on the situation.

## Miscellaneous

- Always raise your hand after a coach gives you instruction, to acknowledge that you understand.
- Keep your hand in the air or signal the coach if you do not understand an instruction. Always ask questions if you do not understand an instruction.
- Always stop even with other crews or immediately pull your boat up to the other boats by fours or pairs (do not wait for the coach to tell you to do this).
- Contribute your ideas to the coach in private. Communicate problems/concerns (i.e., not understanding instructions, internal boat conflicts, etc...) to your coach.
- There should be no talking in the boat other than from you or unless rowers are responding to a question or have an emergency (i.e., broken equipment, injury, etc...). An exception is any necessary, short conversation with Stroke. Stroke might say "They're rushing!", or "We're down on Port." The Stroke seat rower can also see things that are behind you and might, for example, let you know of another boat that is coming up on you.
- Do not speak when the coach is talking. Keep the count in your head and then continue calling the piece when the coach has stopped talking. Use silence to your benefit by letting the rowers hear the rhythm and listen for the bubbles, while giving yourself a break too. If you talk nonstop, rowers will tune you out.

## Boat Handling

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### Carrying boats

- Stand and face your rowers as you call your commands. They cannot hear you if you turn your face away from them.
- There should be no talking other than from you in the boat yard or as you walk your boat to/from the dock.
- In general you want to lead the walking of the boat. That is, as the boat leaves the yard you want to be up by the bow ball. As the boat is brought back up to the yard, you want to be walking the stern into the yard. In any case, you have main responsibility for making sure that the boat doesn't hit anything (like other boats, the racks, the fence) as it is carried.
- Demand that all rowers carry the boat on their shoulders, or just above if they are not as tall as others. Rowers that don't help carry the boat are putting extra weight on others' shoulders, which can lead to injuries (or hard feelings).
- Lining the rowers up by height (as necessary) before boats are lifted can improve everyone's ability to contribute to carrying their share of the weight.
- Have rowers split opposite to riggers (i.e., ports split right, starboards split left). People helping carry a heavier boat should split so that sides are equal (have rowers tip their heads in the direction they are going to go, while the boat is still overheads just before the split).



## Launching

- As the boat is rolled into the water, make sure the crew pushes it out away from the dock and lowers the boat gently into the water. Move to the stern and make sure the skeg does not hit the dock or anything else.
- We get oars after the boat is in the water. Make sure rowers hustle as they retrieve the oars. Hold the stern while the crew is getting oars; you can at the same time be getting the Cox Box in place, headset on, check the volume over your microphone, etc. It is a good idea also to ask the Bow seat rower to stay with the boat (and have 2 seat get their oar).
- Have rowers count down from bow and immediately have the rowers push out their oars ("run them out", or "oars across"). Make sure this motion occurs at the same time. Hands should not leave the oars after this point. If you see a rower who is not holding their oar handle, call them out ("two seat, hold that oar").
- Make sure the boat is held a couple of inches away from the dock so the bolts and riggers won't get caught on or hit the dock as rowers get in/out of the boat. No part of any boat should ever touch anything except water, the rack or rowers.
- We call for the port side rowers to enter the boat first ("port side, one foot in, and down", (when not loading the entire boat at one time.....depending on the skill of the crew). After the port rowers are in, you load the starboard rowers with a similar command. You always enter last.
- Again, always make sure rowers keep their hands on their oars. Many a crew have flipped at a dock.
- It is good etiquette to clear docks as quickly as possible, especially if another crew is waiting to launch or land. Your crew can tie in after leaving the dock if this is the case. If you let them lollygag leaving the dock you are the one who is most likely going to be scolded!
- Call for a quick count down of the rowers from bow (if needed), immediately call for the crew to lean away, and to walk (or push) the boat off the dock (e.g. "hands on the dock, aaaand push!).
- As soon as Bow seat's blade is on the water, you can call for a few strokes in order to move away from the dock, and likely have 2 seat then join in rowing with Bow. Don't turn away from the dock, however, so abruptly that the stern hits the dock!
- If the crew has not yet tied into the foot stretchers, you can weigh enough once you have cleared the immediate dock area to have them tie in.
- Clearing the marina waterway near the dock should be done slowly and cautiously. You might have the crew start their standard warm-up (e.g. pick drill), but do so cautiously and looking out for any other boat traffic or obstacles.
- If you are waiting for another boat and/or the coach to launch and join your practice, wait where the coach has told you to go to. This often might be where the entrance to the marina first joins the canal, or sometimes the coach might have directed you to turn to starboard into the main canal when you leave the

marina and continue down to the end of the first straight-away (and then wait there). If you are the last boat to launch, be efficient in getting the crew tied in and into their warm-up piece so that you can go join up with the coach and/or other boats (as directed).

- At the end of the first warm-up piece, it is a good practice to weigh enough briefly so that the crew can make any quick adjustments which may be necessary, shed clothing layers, take a quick drink, etc. Often this can be done in concert with getting instructions for the practice from the coach in the launch.

## Docking

- Always approach the dock slowly by pairs. Using the bow pair makes for more nimble control of the boat (because their actions can quickly pull the bow of the boat around as needed), but keep in mind that as the dock approaches to the point where the port side rowers [first 2, then 4 also, etc.] have their blades interact with the dock, you may need to use the stern pair for any last quick maneuvers.
- Notice which way the wind will blow you and adjust for it.
- Remember that if you have your rowers lean to one side (“lean away”), the boat will travel in that direction.
- Zero wind landings –
  - In calm weather, approach the dock at a 15-degree angle aiming for the beginning [corner] of the dock. Approach the dock slowly dropping from all eight rowers as you first enter the marina, then to four, then to a pair for the last boat length or two. Glide the boat in as everyone leans away from the dock to lift the riggers over the dock edge & bumper. At our dock it is critical to NOT come in with any substantial velocity at all, as you can NOT afford to overshoot the dock (in which case you will likely hit rocks and/or pilings at the end of our dock!). Note that by having the 7 seat rower square their blade up slightly just before you arrive at the dock, that your angle to the dock can be brought in to parallel (i.e. having 7 seat square their blade briefly will kick the stern of the boat around towards the dock).
- Cross wind landings –
  - In strong crosswinds that push you off the dock, you will often require help from someone on the dock. Decrease your angle of docking to 5-10 degrees for cross winds off the dock. Remember that the wind will either continually blow you closer to the dock as you approach it, or it will blow you away. For this reason you may need to start your approach closer or further away than you would if there was no wind. In heavy winds you need to be ready to call for quick maneuvering strokes from your key rowers (bow or stern pair).

- You can be the person to get out first, or get out with the port rowers (“port side, one foot back; port side, up and out”). Hold the boat while your rowers get out and remove their oars.
- Boats are taken into the yard and stored on the racks stern first.

## Safety

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### Boat handling

- Always tell your rowers what it is you want them to do before you ask them to do it.
- Stand facing the rowers so that everyone can hear you.
- Make sure rowers synchronize their movements. For example, when setting the boat in the water or picking it up, make sure that everyone does so at the same time.
- Make sure everyone is carrying the boat on his or her shoulders or above.
- When pressing the boat “up and over heads” or setting the boat into the water, make sure everyone in your boat is working and contributing.
- There should be no talking by the crew during boat handling procedures.

### Steering

- Stay within the correct traffic pattern at all times. Traffic patterns on our waterways are almost always counterclockwise, keeping the near shore on your starboard side. Coxswains should always stay either in the center of the waterway (if there is no oncoming boat traffic) or to their right and closest to the shore (on their starboard side) unless otherwise instructed by their coach.
- When turning your boat around in a wide stretch of water, turn only 90 degrees and then row your boat across the water before finishing the remaining 90-degree of your turn. In a narrow stretch of water, make your turn 180-degrees and immediately get your new point.
- Act quickly and with forethought. Anticipate what will be asked of you next. Never let yourself drift into an undesired position (e.g. mangroves, docks, mudflats, other boats, the coach’s launch,...). If your decision is wrong, at least you will know and you can quickly change your command.
- Periodically check behind you to see what traffic is coming up. Large vessels (or even small ones) under power may not see you! Get out of the way as needed!
- If you are stopping, pull the boat over to the right as possible and out of the way of other boats that may be coming up behind you.

## **Rowing**

- Rowers should remain quiet while on the water.
- Rowers should synchronize their motions so that the boat remains set at all times.
- Never let the boat ride or sit in an unset position. If it is consistently down to the same side for several strokes in a row, call for the rowers to set the boat immediately.
- Give clear commands so that the rowers know what is expected of them.
- Always raise your hand after a coach gives you an instruction to acknowledge.
- If your crew is rowing in the dark (or anticipate that it may be dark before you return to the dock), be sure that the boat has the appropriate running lights and that they are turned ON before you leave the dock.

## **Obstruction in the water**

- When something wraps around the skeg, you will feel a vibration in the stern. You may also not be able to steer well. You (or Stroke in a bow-loader) should be able to clear it quickly by reaching under the boat and pulling the debris off.
- If you have snagged a line or other large object on your skeg (fin), stop immediately so that it does not rip off your skeg. Then reach under the boat and clear it.
- Do not push down on an object under the hull since it may push back up through the hull.
- If you run over a solid object you will probably hear a loud 'thunk'. If the skeg is ripped off, your boat will veer from side to side. The skeg could also be bent or it could be pushed up through the hull of the boat. In any case, you must alert the coach and/or row back to the boathouse immediately. Remember, if there is damage to, or loss of the skeg, your ability to steer will be greatly impaired so row back with great caution. One way to do this is to row with the stern 6 only, and have either Bow or 2 seat row as needed for steering.

## **Miscellaneous**

- Command: "Heads Up!" - pay attention, something to watch out for is near you. This command should always be used when someone may not see your shell coming at him or her such as when leaving the boathouse or launching/carrying boats at a regatta. If a single shell (or other boat) is approaching you with risk of collision, take evasive action and with the volume quickly turned up on your Cox Box alert the other boat ("Heads Up In the Single!!")
- Always have one person at each end of the boat when launching/carrying at a regatta. Lots of opportunities to hit people and boats!

# Equipment

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## Oars

- Oars should be carried blades forward and set in our racks at the yard or on the dock with blades up.
- Make sure everyone has the correct oar (port or starboard) and that it is placed in its oarlock correctly before launching.
- Encourage the crew to care for the oars properly as they put them in/take them out of the oarlocks, and in and out of the rack. If you are aware that anyone has bled on an oar handle, make sure they know to wash the oar down and to disinfect the handle before the oar is placed back on the boat yard rack.

## Foot stretchers

- Foot stretchers should be set at “the catch”, meaning: When the rowers sits in the catch position, the center of the rower’s seat and the pin (the part of the rigger that holds the oarlock in place) of the rigger should be in the same line.

## Oar height

- Make sure rowers have enough clearance as they row. Moving spacers above the oarlock will lower the height and moving spacers below the oarlock will increase the height. Set height at the release position.

## Washing boats down

- Boats should be washed and rinsed after each row. This is not necessarily your job unless you want it to be. While half the rowers fetch oars from the dock, the other half can be washing the boat.

## Cox Boxes

- Know where your Cox Box is at all times. Always replace your Cox Box immediately after you row and make sure it is plugged into its charger. Cox Boxes MUST be turned off before plugging them into the charger.
- Always carry your Cox Box by the handle and head-set (together) – never just by the head-set. Never leave a Cox Box on the dock or sitting on the ground.

## **Clothing**

- It is wise to always have rain gear accessible in case the weather is nasty or you are in a bow loader.
- Dress warmly at all times if the weather is less than perfect. Cold coxswains are less effective.
- Have a spare set of clothes at the boathouse to change into in case you get wet during practice.

## **Rigging Boats**

- You should know how to take riggers off and put riggers back on. Be aware of the nuts and bolts required to hold a rigger onto the boat and know which order they go. When in doubt, ask the coach or an experienced rower for help.

## Special Considerations on our Waterways

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The narrow width of the Spreader canal presents some unique hazards that the Cox (and rowers) need to be fully aware of at all times.

- Maintain as safe as possible distance from the mangroves and sea walls. On the mangrove side the water can be very shallow (and so, can remove your skag). The seawall side has many obstructions (e.g. boats and boat docks protruding out into the canal).
- Stay alert for the following hazards and situations –
  - Weather: Florida weather conditions can change suddenly and dramatically. Rowing can be suspended due to: High wind, fog, threat of lightning, heavy rain, breaking waves, extreme heat, or any other condition deemed dangerous by the coach, or session manager. If you have started out on a practice and run into inclement weather or thunder and lightning are approaching, turn around and head back towards the dock or to where you can get instructions from the coach. Be aware that returning powerboats may be rushing to return to home port and may not see a rowing shell in low visibility conditions.
  - Corners: Never cut the corners at sharp turns in the canal without the guidance of someone in a launch. Blind spots prohibit you from seeing oncoming boat traffic or them from seeing you. Keep track in your mind of other boats from our yard that are on the water and that you will likely encounter (I know that single left about 20 minutes before we did, so I'm likely to meet up with him/her soon as they are coming back my way, maybe on this corner coming up). If you are especially concerned about your ability to see oncoming boat traffic around a corner, you can ask the Bow seat rower to be alert and to let you know if any traffic is coming as you move through the corner.
  - Wakes: Alert your crew to stay relaxed as they row through a wake. Tell them which side it's coming from.
  - Debris: Floating debris like palm fronds is relatively common. If you cannot easily enough maneuver to totally avoid small debris, alert the rowers ("Debris coming up under starboard blades"). Avoid collisions with debris! If necessary, call for a quick stop before hitting debris that can damage the boat or endanger the crew ("All Eight Hold Water!").
  - Manatees: Not uncommon in our waters at some times of the year.
  - Fishing boats and People fishing from docks or shore: Don't expect them to move, and be aware that the fishing lines they may have out can extend well beyond their location and represent a potential snagging hazard for your boat (and crew). We share the canal with others, so please be considerate of them. It is you who must get out of the way.
  - Sailboats: When under sail they have the right of way.

- Rowboats and kayaks: Have the right of way over boats under power. Kayaks can be especially hard for you to see from your position in the boat!
- Coxed boats give way to un-coxed (“blind”) boats.
- Faster, more maneuverable boats give way to slower boats.
- For example, a coxed eight gives way to a coxed four; a coxed four gives way to a straight four, and everyone gives way to singles and doubles.
- Avoid collisions regardless of who has the right of way!

## Typical Commands

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The following are typical coxswain’s commands as might be called on any given day of practice. These are given approximately in order, as the crew would carry the boat from the yard to the dock, then during a row, and then in carrying the boat back to the rack.

### **Moving the boat from the yard to the dock**

You’ve already unstrapped the boat, and the crew is ready.

“Hands on” or “Reach across” (depends on the height of the boat on the rack, etc.)

“Up an inch”

“Walk it towards me”

If the crew has had to reach across the boat to get hands on, they are now standing all on one side with the boat at about waist height. You now call for (half of) them to move under the boat one at a time, starting from the bow. “2, go under”, then “4, go under”, etc. Don’t let them jump under the boat to the other side in an uncontrolled way [e.g. if four of them decide on their own to jump under or around the boat at the same time, then they are leaving the other four people temporarily holding the boat all by themselves!]

“Ready to go up and over heads, aaaaand up!”

“Walk it out; watch the riggers” (you are in front at this point and keeping an eye out not to hit anything; if needed you can call for the crew to tilt the boat in some tight circumstances, but in our current yard this is typically not necessary)

Normally you will not be directing the boat straight down to the dock, but rather into slings that you’ve previously located on the gravel or grass just outside the yard; so that the crew can set lineup, adjust their own foot stretchers, etc. If this is the case, you have the crew walk the boat up on one side of the slings. You call: “weigh enough”. “Ready to roll the boat down into the slings on your right (or left), aaaaand roll!, gently”. At this point you can also test your Cox Box to make sure it is working well, and you



should close any open ports or hatches on the boat. You can also quickly eyeball the boat overall to double-check that there are no apparent mechanical issues or damage (the crew should do this also at and around their seats). When the crew is ready you again call "Hands on" (they should all be on one side of the boat now, and need to reach across as they put hands on). "ready to go up and over heads, aaaaand up!" "ready to split to shoulders, aaaaand split!" "walk it forward"

At our current location, you need to walk the crew in a gentle arc out away from the yard and then towards the dock. As you approach the ramp leading down to the dock you need to call "weigh enough", "ready to go up and over heads, aaaaand up!", "walk it forward, nice and slow down the ramp". Be aware that the ramp can be slippery (especially when wet) and warn the crew of this as warranted. As the crew has now carried the boat down the ramp, be sure that they don't walk the person up in Bow off the end of the dock! When they are at the correct position on the dock, call "weigh enough", "side step to your left", "toe over the edge", "roll it gently into the water", "reach out... and down". Your best position to be in as the boat is rolled down into the water is at the stern, so that you can keep an eye on and protect the skeg.

### **Launching and leaving the dock**

You are in the stern on the dock. Hold the boat, have Bow seat stay with the boat also if possible (while 2 seat gets their oar). The rest of the crew get oars; you get your Cox Box in, put head set on, check volume.

"Give me a count" or "Count down from bow"

"Oars across" or "run em' out"

"Port side, one foot in, aaaaand down"

"Starboards, one foot in, aaaaand down"

You get in the boat, stepping onto your seat as you enter, not down onto the hull of the boat. If it is not an inconvenience to other crews coming or going from the dock, you can call for the crew to tie in and give a count. If you need to clear the dock more quickly without letting the crew tie in first, go onto the next call.

(Get a quick count from bow if needed)

"Hands on the dock, lean away, on my call give the dock a push, aaaaand push!", or

"Hands on the dock, lean away, now let's walk it down the dock"

"Bow, give me a few strokes" (to angle away from the dock)

"2, join in " (to clear the dock with bow pair rowing)

"weigh enough"

"tie in and give me a count when ready" (if the crew needs to still tie in)

## **Starting up**

The crew will start into a piece either from the finish, or at the catch. (Racing starts may be from the three-quarters catch. Specialized racing calls and coxing technique are beyond the intended scope of this handbook.)

For example:

“All eight sit ready at the finish (or catch)”

“Ready all, Row!”

## **Warm up pieces**

Typically our crews warm up with a ‘pick drill’ by fours or sixes (in an eight) or by pairs (in a four). The progression of strokes in the pick drill is: arms only; then arms and backs (from arms only some coxes say “in two, add the pivot” to go to arms and backs); then half slide; then full slide. When you call each progression, give the rowers two strokes warning, calling strokes at the catch. For example, from rowing with arms only, you can call “In two we’ll add the backs; one, two; arms and backs here”.

## **Pressure commands**

“on the paddle” (means light rowing but with good technique of course)

“one quarter pressure”

“half pressure”

“three quarters pressure”

“full pressure”

## **Stopping**

“In two we’re going to weigh enough”

“one” (calling these at the catch)

“two”

“weigh enough” (the crew stops rowing at hands away, and then as the boat nears a stop...)

“blades down”

A variation is to call for the crew to “let it run”. This command implies that the crew will weigh enough at arms away and with their handles on the gunwales, working to keep a good set as the boat slows.

“In two we’re going to let it run”

“one” (calling these at the catch)

“two”

“let it run” (the crew stops rowing with oar handles on the gunwales, and then as the boat nears a stop...)

“blades down”

## Docking

You’ve successfully navigated the boat back to the dock. You can quickly exit the boat at this point, and kneeling and holding the boat (so that you can still use your microphone), you call...

“untie” (many of the crew if they are experienced may have already untied and shed socks)

“port side, one foot back. up and out, hold the boat”

“starboards, one foot back, up and out”

The crew remove their oars and put them in the dockside rack. You can call for Bow to stay with the boat on their end as needed. You remove your Cox Box.

“hands on”

“ready to go up and over heads, aaaaand up!”

“side step a bit to your left”

“walk it up” (keeping the crew with the boat overheads as they go up the ramp and onto the grass)

“weigh enough”

“ready to split to shoulders, aaaaand split!”

“walk it up” (leading the crew off towards the right and away from the yard so that you will be in a position to have them do an about face to bring the stern into the yard)

With the crew now facing directly away from the yard...

“weigh enough”

“about face”

“walk it up”

The crew approaches the slings outside the yard...

“weigh enough”

“ready to go down to high waist and into the slings, aaaaand down!”

(the boat is now upside down in slings, double check the position of the slings, make any adjustments)

If the crew needs direction at this point you can direct half to get oars and half to wash the boat. You probably have time to take the Cox Box to the charger and plug it in.

When the crew is ready...

“hands on”

“ready to go up to shoulders, aaaaand up!”

(it is usually good practice to have the boat over heads as we enter the yard, so then...)

“ready to go up and over heads, aaaaand up!”

“walk it in, watch the riggers”

When the crew is next to the appropriate rack, it then depends on the position of the rack exactly how the boat is put away. If the rack is high leave the crew with the boat overheads and have them side step the boat into the rack. Make sure they never step over other boats already in the rack and lower! Basically, reverse the procedures and calls for when you initially took the boat out of the rack, making sure also that the boat is not in the rack with any riggers touching the rack. With the boat back in the rack make sure it is secured with straps and open any appropriate ports. Make sure each strap is secured around a large upright beam (as well as around the boat and the cross beam that the boat is resting on) and without undue pressure on the hull. Also make sure that the metal buckles of each strap are not touching the hull. Secure any excess strap length (i.e. don't let them hang loose). Good job, your row is done for today!

## Acknowledgements

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## Additional Reading

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This Handbook is intended to serve only as a brief introduction to coxing at the CCRC. There is no substitute for experience (of course), but for the aspiring Cox who wants to increase their skills and knowledge there are some excellent additional resources available. One of the most current and affordable resources is:

George D. Kirschbaum. The Down and Dirty Guide to Coxing, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.. 2003.

Also available to supplement this guide is "The Down and Dirty Guide to Coxing – On the Water Audio" CD, which contains ten MP3 files of some of the world's best coxes directing their crews in practice and races.

To purchase either of the above, see: <http://www.thecoxguide.com/>. The club also owns copies of both, which are available for checkout.