

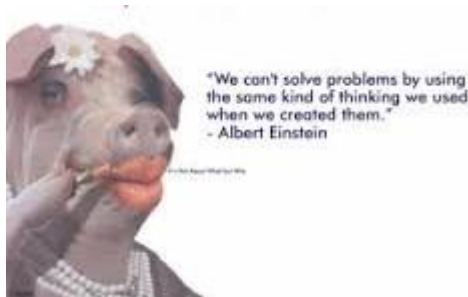
August 2016

Why 17kg Matters ("Apologies Miss Piggy")

Rowperfect on Tour

Music

INDOOR SCULLER Rowperfect



Why 17kg Matters (Apologies Miss Piggy...)

Tony Schwartz, the ghostwriter for Donald Trump's biography, recently gave many people around the world hope - and a laugh - when he said he regretted "putting lipstick on a pig" - the expression means he made Trump look a lot better than he was. Many times in our lives we only look at things superficially - a nice coat of paint or a piece of glitzy technology suspends our critical reasoning, and we fail to really *examine* whatever it is we are looking at. We see the lipstick but – initially at least – we miss the pig. Much of Nobel prizewinner Daniel Kahneman's best-selling book "*Thinking, Fast and Slow*" is an examination of our ability to jump to conclusions based on situations where our brain allows outward appearance to suspend or at least delay critical reasoning – our subconscious recognises the initial outward appearance but unless we turn it on, our conscious mind doesn't analyse the situation. This is great if the subconscious was

recognising the possible outline of a lion in the grass ahead of us a few thousand years back, but allows us to be regularly misled in so many instances – think fashion, marketing hype, political spin, a sentence taken out of context, and so on. Many, if not most of these examples illustrate the importance of the visual sense in jumping to these conclusions – if we close our eyes and use our ears, smell, taste or sense of feel it's much harder for us to be misled. Album covers have probably helped a few musicians sell an extra copy or two – but the vast majority of us don't rely on the cover, *we listen to the music*.

So many rowing machines now claim to be "rowing simulators", I think it might be timely, and fair, to describe what we did in the process of producing the Indoor Sculler – and **why** we did it.

I gave a very large chunk from the past twelve years of my life to producing our machine, together with David McGeary, Damian King and - for the first five years at least - Casper Rekers. The driving force behind everything we did was to produce a machine whose moving frame weighs no more, and preferably less, than the 19kg of the original Rowperfect Classic. Cas actually described it as the ***conditio sine qua non*** (the indispensable condition) of the project. The whole process was driven by a determination to produce a unit whose moving mainframe weighed as close as possible to the 17kg mass (per rower) of a minimum weight racing boat and its oars/sculls. After eight years – eight *years* – we managed to produce a product that is durable in the extreme, elegant, environmentally responsible (100% recyclable, designed to last for many years) - and our mainframe weighs 17 kilograms. We've refined it continuously since then – and every refinement is retrofittable.

That's great, but...why is the weight of a simulator so important ? Does it really matter if it weighs 17, or 22, or 40 or even 500 kilos?

The answer is yes, it matters enormously. Ask Roger Federer if he cares if his practice racquet weighs the same as his game racquet or is twice as heavy - or perhaps ask Chris Froome if he's happy to train on a bicycle 5 or 10 kilos overweight. Try handing a viola to Yehudi Menuhin and saying "Mate, it's got four strings and a bow – what else do you want?" No matter how many nice stickers, or fancy technical features, or complex software interfaces someone added to a piece of technology designed to mimic their usual equipment, they'd still see those ideas for what they are: a fraud, or at best an interesting

distraction, suitable for a one-off exercise in thinking outside the box.

The human brain and nervous system is truly a marvellous thing. Our balance and coordination are quite simply exquisite. Without waxing too lyrical, at our peak we are amazing. To get to our peak in any activity we need to practise whatever it is we are passionate about, with equipment as close as possible to that we will use in competition or performance. To pretend we might not notice if we were carrying a five kilo weight - or more - on our feet in a single scull is as ludicrous as saying we might not notice if we dropped a brick on those same feet.

And that's before we get to this fact: it's simply more enjoyable to train in a lightweight scull than a heavy training boat - just as it's more enjoyable to ride a light aluminium alloy bicycle than a heavy steel one - try it any time. (Note: being heavy and being able to increase drag or load are very different things – it's possible to increase drag without increasing the weight of the machine, that's why there's a sliding vane on our flywheel cage).

Anyone who tells you there isn't a difference between the different rowing machines in their ability to simulate a boat either hasn't tried them side-by-side – or they are involved in marketing a different product.

Give it some thought, using the **only** piece of technology that really matters: the one between your ears. Think about what you really want in your training equipment - **whether you're a competitive rower or not is irrelevant**. If you prefer something heavier than ours, or one without a dynamic action at all, that's fine – though I haven't to date found anyone who will say that after a direct comparison where they have rowed on our machine for at least twenty minutes, before comparing with any other. One thing I'm pretty certain you don't want: a pig wearing lipstick.

And yes, we're still giving two week money-back trials.



Rowperfect on Tour – Rowing Tourism?

I recently had the monumental good luck to do my first-ever rowing "tour" - no racing, just travelling to row with three great friends and three of our partners on the beautiful Lake Varese in Italy's lakes region, where the Australian rowing team is based when in Europe, and then to Henley in England to watch the final three days of a memorable Henley Royal Regatta. Of *course* we took an Indoor Sculler with us (doesn't everyone?). The total weight including bar and legs is only 35kg; divided between Gill and I that's well within international luggage allowance. Sure it's a little crazy – I've never claimed to be particularly sane, and I'll be honest and say straight up that Gill wasn't overwhelmed with joy – but being able to row in a beautiful garden overlooking the magnificent Lake Maggiore, beside a structure we decided was rowing's equivalent of the Temple at Delphi, made the effort worthwhile. We all used it every day, before or after our 16km row around Lake Varese. And no, I'm not claiming any ability as an oracle, though comparisons with Themistocles will be gratefully received *

Varese is beautiful – you can see the lake behind Genevieve Horton and Sally Keogh of the Australian Women's Double Scull (racing this week in the Rio Olympics - Go Girls!!) as

they carry their boat from the pontoon at Gavirate Rowing Club. That's about as rough as the water got while we were there by the way. We spent seven wonderful days at Gavirate, a great club headed by legendary rower Giovanni Calabrese and his wife Paola, and President Giancarlo Pomati. It is almost impossible to imagine a better holiday – starting the day with a 16 kilometre paddle around the lake, including a lap through each of the two fully buoyed 2000 metre rowing courses, back at the sheds by 8.30am in time to watch the Australian team complete their training before perhaps catching up with a few of the team members for a chat, and finally coffee at the lakeside café all of 50 metres from the club, is a great way to kick off a memorable day in what must be one of the most beautiful regions in Europe. Hopefully the photos give a fair idea of how lucky we were; I'd recommend it to anyone. We even found an early version of attempt at a sculling machine in the markets of Milan – unfortunately we had our own at that stage of the trip so it's still there.

In England we rented a lovely house near Henley. Between outings to London, the Cotswolds (everything they're cracked up to be, make sure to see the Broadway tower – sensational!) and all points between to see the sights, and wonderful meals at a great range of local pubs or equally wonderful meals cooked at home, we again rowed the Indoor Sculler through the week (that's my great mate Dave Wear rowing in the garden) before heading to Reading Rowing Club on the Saturday and Sunday to row on the Thames....after scrubbing the pontoon to remove the previous night's "productions" by the massive resident colony of ducks, geese and swans. Very funny – though the rowers wouldn't mind if the local bird lovers fed them just a *little* less bread from the park next door. Thanks to the guys at Reading we got to row on their wonderful stretch of the Thames. From Friday through to Sunday we caught the train to Henley to watch most of the day's racing. It's always an amazing regatta, and I can only say that the current Stewards led by Sir Steve Redgrave have taken it to even greater heights. Many highlights - but watching from the Stewards Enclosure as Hannes Obreno downed the reigning Olympic Champion Mahe Drysdale in the Diamond Sculls final, in one of the great upsets in modern rowing history, was a standout. If you haven't been to Henley, put it on the bucket list.

**** The original "outside the box" thinker, he suggested it was a good idea to get in the boats as the Persians were bearing down on Athens. Every time you vote in a democracy, say thanks to Themistocles: the other half of the population insisted the Oracles' suggestion to "take refuge behind a wooden wall" meant they should hide in the Acropolis' inner timber-walled chamber. They ended up very dead, while those who listened to Themistocles and went rowing famously***

immortalised themselves by winning the battle of Salamis! So;Go Rowing:-)



Developments

Indoor Sculler in England

On the last day of Henley we ran into a great friend who is currently coaching a large squad at a major English university. As he's currently trialling the machine we had with us I'll keep his name private for now – but he has kindly offered to allow anyone who would like to try the machine to do so. He's based an hour or so from London; contact us directly for his contact details.

Four Years of School Use and Holding Up Well

Last week I cleaned and adjusted, ungraded adjustable axles with new bolts (see below) and re-tensioned eight machines at a large school's boatshed here in Sydney. After four years of hard work and "not a lot" of maintenance, the sum total of breakages = one partially broken seat. It took me about half an hour per machine to strip, clean, check, replace bolts and then reassemble and tension. See picture above. There's no such thing as "Student Proof", but that's not bad..

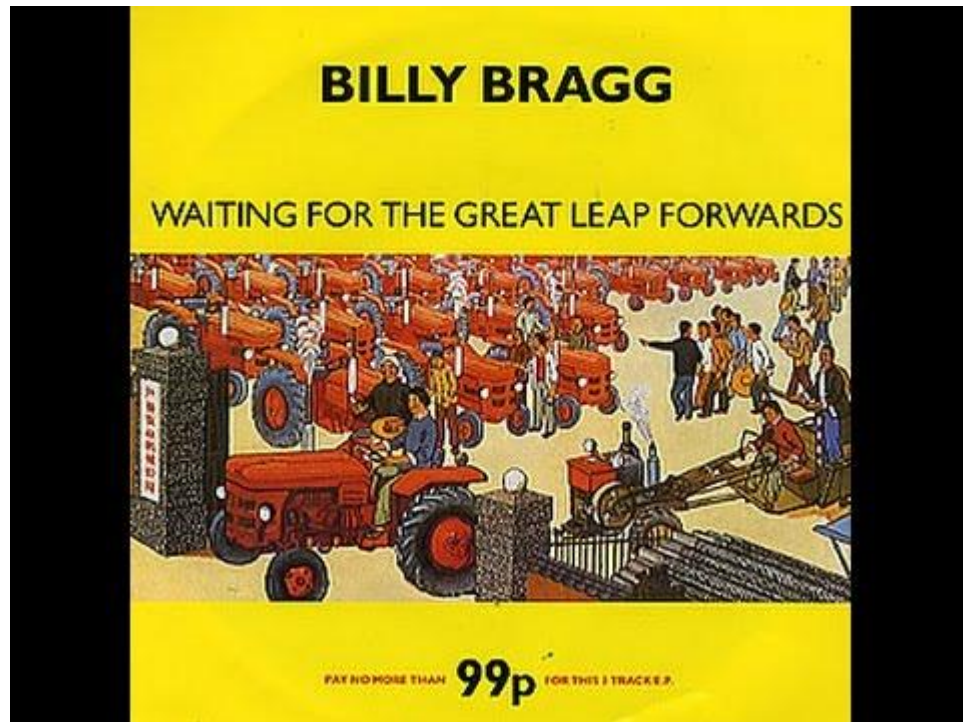
New Adjustable Axle Bolts – and Adjusting Tension on Footplates to Reduce Side Movement

Machines from Serial Number 3100 onwards have had M6 buttonhead bolts with a washer underneath on two of the axles which allow the mainframe to run on the bar. In your instructions you'll no doubt have read how to adjust them (he wrote hopefully). They're perfectly adequate, but we have recently decided to change to a deeper socket head style bolt which allows a larger M5 hex key. We'll happily send four bolts and a hex key to anyone who would like to upgrade their machine, just contact us directly at admin@rowperfect.com.au

Did you know: if there is a little sideways movement of the mainframe near the foot stretchers, it's easy to eliminate? Simply tighten the bolts holding the footplate in place, in particular the bolts closest to your feet which do not have spacers. If you look through the stretcher at the bar, you can easily see the space between the side roller-bearings and the bar. Gently tighten the Nyloc nuts to reduce the space; don't over-tighten. We will be posting a 'how to' video on our YouTube channel explaining both of the above procedures. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/simulatoar>

Stainless Steel – What does austenitic mean?

There are a number of reasons stainless steel is an amazing material. "Stainless" is an austenitic metal - which means it actually hardens with repeated rolling or use. In other words, as long as you keep the bar of your machine clean, and the adjustment mechanism is properly tensioned, it will actually become stronger with age. Stainless can be used in blast furnaces or jet engines, yet retains its ductility right down to absolute zero; and it's also 100% recyclable. Pretty amazing stuff. Each Rowperfect Indoor Sculler has about 17 kilos of stainless steel – the main bar, the legs and seat frame and all the axles and bolts are stainless. We don't use it in the frame for a very good reason: if stainless is bent it greatly resents straightening, so a stainless frame can't be straightened after even a small bend (not so "student proof"). Just in case you were interested....



Music

I remain fascinated by the motivational effect of music. I hadn't heard Billy Bragg's great song "Waiting for the Great Leap Forward" for at least five years, until I happened to catch it on radio a few weeks back. A wonderful song, an amazing artist. So far: more than twenty plays in two weeks....

Possible Olympic Triple Play...

These three songs came on in succession this afternoon as I was doing a sneaky 45 minute row before work re-started; a random selection with the Shuffle feature on my "Top Rated" playlist. Three of my all-time favourites, each completely different from the others, but somehow complementary – somehow struck me as a pretty good group with the Olympics happening as I write:

3 Billion People – the incredible Don Walker of Cold Chisel, writer of Khe Sahn, Flametrees and so many more. A wonderful song, and about the number who watch the Olympics every day I believe.

Money Talks – AC/DC. Great rhythm, stuck right near the top of my Favourites at the moment - and hard to argue that there isn't at least some truth in that statement in respect to the Olympics

Heroes Live Forever – Vanessa Amorosi, from the Opening Ceremony of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. What a voice, what a song – and what we hope the Games are truly about. The girls in the Australian Rugby Sevens team deserve to hear it on high rotation for – well, forever! Go you good things!

Start your own revolution and cut out the middleman!

Billy Bragg

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