

# October 2017

**The Road To Recovery - Using the Indoor Sculler after Spinal Surgery**

**Digital Feedback - Is it so important?**

**Music**



## **The Road to Recovery - Using the Indoor Sculler after Spinal Surgery**

I recently posted the video linked below, detailing some of the work I've been doing on the Indoor Sculler as part of my rehabilitation following spinal surgery back in May after an accident at surfboat training. A few observations:

- The disk I damaged was between L3 and L4, relatively high compared to many disk protrusions which occur around the L5-S1 disk space. So my left leg's femoral nerve is affected - it supplies the muscles either side of the knee rather than the sciatic, which as many people would understand is the nerve more frequently affected; the sciatic supplies the gluts and hamstrings. This has been incredibly lucky for me as the major muscles for rowing are not affected as badly as they might have been (at least in the sense that if I had to lose power in one or the other)
- I started using the Sculler about 10-11 weeks after surgery, and got back in the boat about two weeks after I found that was effective and not causing pain. Before then I did at least twenty minutes in a cold (15 degrees C) ocean pool every day, starting ten days after surgery. I could not recommend the cold pool sessions too highly - I didn't swim, I simply sweep my arms back and forth in a sculling action in chest-deep water, while jogging on the spot. I still do 200-300 reps almost every day, and the intensity has built over the months. When I got back to rowing I'm sure the upper body strength from this activity was a major factor in being able to row quite hard in a very short time. I would also hypothesise that the cold water was great for reducing pain and inflammation, and also for stimulating aerobic capacity (when you're cold only the aerobic system works to warm you up)



## **1. Vyacheslav Ivanov, Russian sculler, winner of '56, '60, and '64 Olympic Single Scull Championships**

I recently read "Long Lift" by this amazing man, co-written with Alex Konalov. I loved "The Boys in the Boat" - I enjoyed this more; it's the best sports book I've read and I couldn't recommend it too highly. I'll try to review it properly at another time, but the story of how he got started in rowing I found really interesting. He joined a local rowing club - more or less under protest - and being winter in Moscow all training was indoors in "stuffy" gyms and indoor rowing tanks. He hated the lack of ventilation, and one night wandered outside where he found an old kayak bolted to the side of the pontoon. Due to the current, there was a small area of unfrozen water near the pontoon, so he found a paddle and jumped in. For the next six weeks he arrived at training, went outside, and churned the water for an hour and a half. One night the coach wandered out and was amazed to find him training at all - he'd assumed Ivanov was a useless slacker who went outside to smoke! Three years later, at eighteen years of age, weighing the 77kg he competed at throughout his career, he won the first of his three Olympic Championships.

The thing which struck me was that he really learned to feel the water, and to concentrate on breathing and rhythm, before he ever stepped in a rowing boat. All his life he worked very hard on that feel; and of course he regularly tested himself over all sorts of distances - but not every session. Interesting. And he retained a lifelong love of exercising in fresh air.

## **2. Rob Waddell, New Zealand, 2000 Olympic Single Scull Gold Medal**

I had an interesting discussion with Rob at the pre-Olympic Regatta held in Sydney in late 1999. We had a stand promoting the original Rowperfect Classic, with the DOS software on a linked computer. Rob came over to row, and explained that he had been using one of the machines owned by the New Zealand Rowing Association. He said he had been using it for an hour a day since January of the previous year (i.e. 1998) but that he had never used the computer interface because no-one seemed to know how to use the software, so he had just practised rowing hard and well, using his breathing pattern and exertion level as his guide. Considering he had won the previous two World Championships the least we can infer is that it didn't seem to do him any harm. And Rob had just set a new record on the Concept2 in Boston, despite in his own words not having been on one for almost twelve months.

## **3. Kenyan Runners**

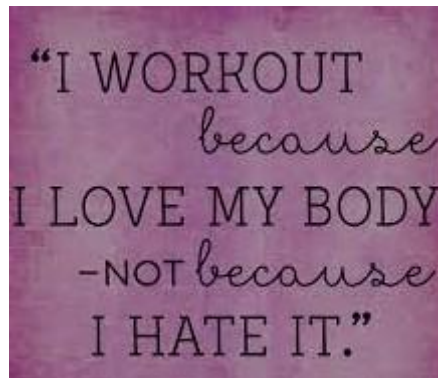
These guys do a lot of breath-control running (restricting their breathing rate) in their training. Essentially, they run as fast as possible with a restricted breathing rate, forcing them to improve their running efficiency (and probably stimulating other physiological improvements as well). So, another example of a group of extremely successful athletes who do a fair proportion of their training concentrating heavily on internal feedback rather than external digital feedback.

Do the above examples prove that digital feedback is unnecessary or useless? Of course not.

But they should remind us that we have a pretty impressive on-board computer ourselves, and we shouldn't forget to use it now and again

A recent Biorow newsletter from Dr Valery Kleshnev (August 2017) reported an extremely interesting case of two double scull crews of the same weight, rowing identical shells with identical oars. I think it's fair to say that the overwhelming majority of rowers and coaches would assume the crew producing more power would be faster, correct? Certainly a crew producing 5% more power would have to be faster, wouldn't they? Read the newsletter: the crew producing 8.6% more power finished....second. The faster crew had better seat timing. Perhaps a good time to draw your attention to the picture below - four sets of paired Rowperfect Indoor Scullers at a school in Sydney. The machines are actually eight years old, and they haven't been used as pairs until now; but they will be used that way regularly in the future!!





## Music

I'm still fascinated by the motivational effect of music. A few suggestions from the high rotation list over the last few months:

1. Two by **Jackie Wilson**: "**Baby Workout**" and "**(Your Love Keeps Lifting Me) Higher and Higher**". What a voice, and what a great entertainer. If you can listen while rowing and not start to dance a little, good for you :-)
2. **The Cult "She Sells Sanctuary"**. I find it very difficult to row at less than 90% pressure listening to Ian Astbury and the boys. A great track by a great band
3. **Sweet Lovin'** (featuring Bryn Christopher) by **Sigala - Ministry of Sound**. From an album named **Go Hard or Go Home!**
4. From left field (very left field): "**Everybody's Free (To Wear Sunscreen)**" By **Quentin Tarver** and **Baz Luhrmann**. From the soundtrack to Romeo and Juliet. Re-discovered it a few days ago - very entertaining, as well as thought-provoking; but what else would you expect from the guy who gave us Strictly Ballroom?

## All the best

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**Regards and all the best from all of us at Rowperfect!**

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