

Strength and conditioning practices in rowing

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There is minimal research on the practices of strength and conditioning coaches in England. Information about training programme design could be useful in developing models of good practice and ecologically valid intervention studies. The aim of the research was to quantify the training practices of coaches responsible for the strength and conditioning of rowing athletes. A questionnaire was developed and consisted of six sections: (a) personal details, (b) physical testing, (c) strength/power development, (d) flexibility development (e) unique aspects of programme and (f) any further relevant comments regarding the athletes prescribed training programme. Twenty two rowing and ten strength and conditioning coaches with an average of 10.5+7.2 years experience agreed to complete the questionnaire. Approximately, 34% coached Olympic standard rowers, 34% national standard, 3% regional, 19% club, and 10% university standard rowers. All coaches agreed that strength training enhanced rowing performance and the majority (74%) indicated athletes strength trained 2–3 times a week. Most coaches (94%) reported their rowers performed strength training, with 81% using Olympic lifting, and 91% employing a periodised training model. The clean (63%) and squat (27%) were rated the most important exercises prescribed within the training programme. Approximately 50% of coaches used plyometrics such as depth jumps, box drills and standing jumps. Ninety four percent indicated they conducted physical testing on their rowers, typically assessing cardiovascular endurance (80%), muscular power (70%), muscular strength (70%) and anaerobic capacity (57%). On average, testing was conducted by coaches in pre-season (88%) and inseason (91%), while only 31% performed postseason testing. Coaches typically prescribed static stretching (97%), dynamic stretching (69%), PNF stretching (56%). This research provides detailed information on the current strength and conditioning provision in rowing within Great Britain. Future studies could use this information to develop experimental protocols to examine the effect of current or new strength and conditioning interventions on rowing performance.