

## **Sweep Rowing compared with Sculling in a nutshell.**

Sweep rowing and sculling have basically the same technique. There are, however, some critical differences which are mostly caused by the fact that sweep rowing, having only one oar per person, is asymmetrical. Instead of both hands behaving in the same manner, we have a difference between the inside and outside hands which is largely evident at the entry and the release and to a lesser degree during the recovery and drive.

**At the finish of the drive**, the outside hand in a sweep boat rotates outward, with the main contact to the handle made by the index and middle fingers. This keeps a straight line between the hand, wrist and elbow, which is also out from the body more or less continuing the line of the oar. The outside elbow is now in very much the same position as we have in a sculling boat and the wrist flat. **The Release** is executed with the same motion as in a sculling boat except we use only the outside arm, which is hinged (as in sculling) at the elbow. Once the extraction of the blade is accomplished, the inside hand feathers the oar. The outside hand/wrist remains flat and the handle simply rotates within it. As in sculling, it is best to try to learn to do this with as little wrist movement as possible. The handle simply rotates in the fingers of the outside hand which leads the handle away in the same pattern as sculling.

**The sequence of the Recovery** is exactly the same as for sculling. The arms swing away with a still, braced, stable (**Fortress of Stability**) trunk, making the same patterns. The body swings forward by the same rotation of

the pelvis and the knees come up once they are no longer a problem for the handles. As in sculling, we do not use the legs or feet to draw ourselves into the stern. We use the same method of applying pressure against the pin in the direction of the moving blade to propel ourselves. The only real difference comes as the upper body follows the arch of the one oar and the trunk rotates to keep the chest more or less parallel to the oar. **As with sculling, we are applying pressure against the pin with our entire core, keeping the hands loose and “soft”.** There is no lean out of the boat. As in sculling, every effort should be made to keep firm, yet relaxed, pressure of the button against the oarlock during the entire recovery through the entry of the blade into the water and the entire drive. We follow the same principle of trying to stabilize the boat rather than “balance” it. The hands should remain steady in our pattern and not moving up or down in an effort to balance the shell. As the great Australian Coach Steve Fairbairn instructed his crews, **“Don’t let your rigger rise”.**

**The Entry** for a sweep boat can be, I believe, more difficult than in a sculling boat. In the first place, the boat is generally moving faster. However, it is still necessary to respect the same principles of geometry and physics. Continuing the angular rotation of our trunk around the pin during the recovery, the sweep entry requires us to “swivel” around continuing to follow the arch of the handle. We use our inside arm to propel ourselves into the stern as we apply pressure against the pin in the direction of the moving blade, not our legs! We open the angle of the outside armpit as we “push” the blade into the water toward the bow. Simply put, the inside arm propels us into the stern and the outside arm places the blade.

**The Drive** differs slightly from sculling in that we emphasize the leverage advantage of the outside arm throughout most of the time except for just before the release. There are other subtle differences in the drive which are the result of the increased speed; however, the principle of keeping constant pressure applies and therefore the adjustments should not be a mystery. As with sculling, it is important to always be attune to the subtle changes of our relationship to the pin and the vector related to the movement of the blade.

**In General**, as with sculling, we are always applying constant pressure against the pin in the direction of the movement of the blade. At the finish of the drive, we are applying pressure toward the blade which is in the stern. As we swing forward, the vector is constantly shifting and becomes more lateral and then shifts toward the bow. Through the entry, the force is toward the blade, which is briefly moving toward the finish line and then begins to shift with the blade through to the release. As we finish the drive, while still using our outside arm to draw the handle, our emphasis shifts slightly to the inside arm which pushes the button firmly against the pin toward the blade. Just as at the entry, we have a division of labor between our outside and inside arms: outside drawing, inside pushing. This shift becomes obvious and natural if we are always thinking in terms of pressure against the pin.

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