

## **Tips for Racing at Indoor Rowing Championships**

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Optimal test or race performance entails a fairly detailed and specific preparation plan for the periods pre-race, race and post-race. This involves not only physical and mental preparation, but also paying attention to proper nutrition, hydration and rest. It is also important that preparation is tracked to enable accurate evaluation and decision-making for future training and racing.

### **Preparation involves practice!**

- Practice brings consistency
- Consistency = Confidence
- Confidence increases chances of success

Athletes and coaches need to find out what works and what doesn't before race day. Race/test preparation can be incorporated into a yearly training plan and worked into various training sessions. Tapering depends on the importance of the event and training can be tailored to tweak various systems to prepare the body for higher intensities. \*\*\* Please see RADAR specifications\*\*\*

### **Physical Preparation**

For a race such as the Canadian Indoors - 10 days to 2 weeks leading into race/test sessions can include:

- Practice race warm-up – keep in mind access to ergs in warm-up area may be limited, so an alternative types of warm-up may be needed.
- Race simulations at lower intensities (involves using race plan)
- Starts
- Full out sprint pieces up to 150m
- Short varying rate pieces (below and above race rate)
- Category 2 pieces (e.g. 3 to 4 x 500m faster than race pace with long rest i.e. 5 minutes + rest between)
- One to two shorter pieces at race pace (1250m or 1500m) with at least 10 minutes rest between

Testing race pace enables athlete to determine if goal pace is realistic or needs to be adjusted!

\*Please note that the RCA athlete monitoring (RADAR) concludes the week of testing with the various indoor erg races across Canada. \*\*\* RADAR week of testing protocol (page 10) on the following link

[http://www.rowingcanada.org/sites/rowingcanada/files/athletemonitoring\\_oct28.pdf](http://www.rowingcanada.org/sites/rowingcanada/files/athletemonitoring_oct28.pdf)

### **Mental preparation**

Optimally prepared athletes establish good mental strategies. Mental strategies should evolve over the season and, depending on the developmental age and experience of the athlete, involve techniques that the athlete can successfully implement. Key is that the athlete understands how and when to use mental strategies to stay motivated and focused.

**Tip #1: Use positive self-talk.** Pick words that are personal and motivating to you. Practice when in the race you want to think about them.

**Tip #2: Develop an external feedback plan.** Work with the coach and others on phrases you need to hear at different points in the race. These can be words that are technical in nature; maybe words that help you maintain good form when the coach observes signs of fatigue in the latter part of the race. It should be determined whether you prefer no external feedback. The words your coach uses should be familiar to you and motivating to you and not distracting.

**Tip #3: Use imagery.** Picture the regatta and race environment when you train. Visualize seeing splits, visualizing success, etc. Get comfortable with seeing yourself in the competition ahead of race day.

**Tip #4: Make a plan of what you will do just before your race.** Some athletes are excitable and perform better when able to prepare in quiet or secluded area before racing, others prefer the distractions and business of the Hershey arena to get “pumped up” for their race. Using music can also be another means to find the optimal state of arousal. Think about what you need and which environment you want to be in before you race.

### **Race Day Preparation**

Effective race plans can help minimize external distractions and assist with focus in a potentially “stressful” environment.

Race preparation planning also involves plotting out a timeline and list of items needed e.g. Clothing, food, music etc. Plan to arrive early. Timelines should include pre-race meal time and hydration, as well as post-race recovery plan. Timelines should be generous and allow for delays (e.g. Traffic) or account for change in start times (earlier or later) Lightweights should be aware of weigh-in times and rules well before hand  
\*\*\*note RADAR weight is different than regatta weight!

### **Race warm up**

20 minute warm up

The first 6 minutes should be used to warm up muscles and elevate the heart rate.

Start out with steady state (SS) erging (stroke rate 20 to 22) at RCA Category 6 (approximately 10 to 12 seconds slower than 2km race splits) and firm up the pressure in minutes 4 to 6. Incorporate approximately 80 to 120 hard, higher rate strokes into the warm-up. The following is a suggestion:

After each of the hard strokes row 1 minute SS

20 strokes at 6 strokes below race stroke rate (SR) then row SS

20 strokes at 4 strokes below race SR then row SS

10 strokes at 2 strokes below race SR then row SS

10 strokes at race SR then row SS

10 strokes at 2 strokes above race SS

2 x 10 stroke starts

10 strokes race pace

If not racing immediately make sure you keep warm!

Stay focused and minimize socializing.

## **Race plan**

### **Keep it relatively simple**

A typical race strategy involves a start, body and finish.

Breaking the race down into 500m's or 250m's is less daunting and more manageable than a 2km. It also enables the athlete to set up a series of checkpoints to keep on track with the goal.

The Start is a series of short high rate full out strokes that start the wheel spinning and uses advantage of the (approximately) 20 second window of the alactic anaerobic system. (around 15 strokes)

Through the 250m and by stroke 30, SR should transition into race rate and a good rhythm established.

Posture and breathing are important here to maintain proper oxygen intake. Race pace and rate should be maintainable!

The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> 250m should be relatively fluid and can include internal and external evaluation – “can I push harder?”, “Does my rate feel right?”, “what place am I?” and “are the other competitors slowing down or putting on a push?”

Making extraordinary hard 20 stroke pieces during the race may take up too much energy in the long run so emphasis should be put on solid technique to affect splits.

The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> 250m are usually the most mentally challenging part of races.

Internally focused 10's and 20's (legs, body, and arms) usually assist maintaining pressure while keeping the mind from wandering to the increasing burn.

The 7<sup>th</sup> 250m can be combination of motivational cues, technique and increase in rate by one or two.

The last 250m should be all out as high and hard as possible and a minimum of ¾ slide.

It is important that athlete continues moving on the slide after the piece is over to assist with recovery.

**Cool down** – should include a minimum of 10 minutes erging or biking. Rehydration and nutrient intake should occur with half an hour of the race to optimize recovery. Pay attention to staying warm and out of drafts.

**Evaluation** - is best done relatively soon after race. Looking at positive feedback and areas to improve on help develop better strategies and assist reaching peak performances.

**Keep in mind - we often believe the numbers we see are what we are capable of! Try practicing a couple of pieces with the monitor covered – most athletes are surprised to see that they are capable of so much more!**

**Have fun racing!**

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