

CREW CULTURE PLAYBOOK.

What made the Kiwi eight a crew, for coaches and captains.

It's not just having one amazing guy in the boat. We all had to be at that level. These are the things that made our Kiwi eight a crew.

01 A WHIP-CRACKER AND A JOKESTER

You need a mix of personalities. In our Kiwi eight, Hamish Bond and Tom Murray cracked the whip and pushed the standards. Tom Mackintosh (T-Mac) made you realise it's a silly sport that nobody really cares about apart from us.

"Yes, we want to go fast, but we can have a bit of fun while we're doing it."

Our whip-crackers	Our jokesters

02 POCKETS OF FILTH

Form little teams within the team, each with a job. Our bow three (Tom Murray, Michael Brake and me) owned the race start: get the boat off the line as fast as we could and set it up for the rest of the guys. We called it bow three filth. In stern pair, the job might be holding the rhythm through the third 500.

Our pocket	Its job

03 LET THE FASTEST CREW SET THE STANDARD

Rowing New Zealand timed every boat against its world record, a system called prognostics. Heading into Tokyo, the women's crews sat at the top of that list. When things were bad, we made excuses. Once the penny dropped that we were the problem, we closed the gap. Make the standard transparent, so everyone can see the gap.

04 THE MEETING THAT LAID IT ALL OUT

We had a team meeting and laid it all out: this is the reality of our situation, this is where we're at right now, and it's not good enough. Total transparency. The call was to lay down a marker, Hamish cracked the whip, and people started talking the talk and then walking the walk. Ruthlessly fast sessions became normal.

05 USE THE YOUNG GUYS WHO ARE BETTER THAN YOU

When young guys come in and they're just better than you, don't get butthurt about it. Use their energy, piggyback on it, then try and beat them. You can't have just one Hamish Bond in the boat.

“It's also your responsibility to bring others with you.”

06 THE EIGHT IS NOT A BIG SINGLE

For years we tried to row the eight like a single, a pair or a double, and it took a decade to learn. The bigger the boat, the more you dial up the aggression and the swing. That doesn't mean sloppy: you still row well with your teammates. The smaller the boat, the more you take care of it.

“That is not a boat that you treat nice, that is a boat that you slap into gear.”

07 COACH THE PERSON FIRST

Tony O'Connor coached our Kiwi eight. He'd check in on how you were doing and how things were at home. Were you supported the right way, in a good headspace, able to talk to him or your teammates? We knew how to work hard. It was the stuff around rowing that was letting us down.

“Coaching the person first, not the athlete.”

Who I'll check in with this week

08 KNOW WHEN TO PUSH AND WHEN TO BACK OFF

Ian Wright was hard to please, and he told you honestly whether you were doing a good job or a bad job. But when everyone was tired and the quality was starting to go, he'd give you a little reprieve or a session off, right when you needed it.

“That's what made him a really good coach, his ability to read people.”

Send this to a Meataxe, or a Meataxe's coach, who needs it.