MEAT AXE ROWING

15 ERG SESSIONS

ERG WORKOUTS.

15 sessions to get you fit and build real confidence for your next erg test.

These are the erg sessions I want you doing to get fit and stay fit. Each one takes 45 minutes to an hour with a 10 to 15 minute warm-up and an easy cool-down, and every one gives you something to think about, so even the long boring ones keep your head in it while you get the volume done.

PICK YOUR INTENSITY

Intensity	Rate	What it is
UT3 (zone 2)	20 to 21	Talking pace, around 140 heart rate. Most of your work lives here.
UT2	21 to 22	One step up from zone 2.
UT1	Your call	Near max for a long piece, with a little left in the tank.
Threshold	26 to 30	The split you held for your 5K or 6K PB, plus one or two seconds.
2K pace	Race rate	Your 2K split. You know it.

PACE YOURSELF

Build into the session. In the first few pieces, be conservative while you find your cruising altitude. Don’t worry about your average split or what you did in the first piece. As you near the end of the session, start to pour on the gas. Some sessions are all about keeping things calm and settled.

YOUR WEEK

70 to 80 percent of your training should be at a low heart rate, the kind where you can still talk. Scale the sessions to how often you can train and keep the same mix: for every two engine sessions, one threshold and one speed. Training three times a week? Two engine sessions, then swap between threshold and speed week to week.

Drag. Normal drag is about 130 for men and 110 for women. On a dusty gym erg that’s usually damper 7 or 8, on a new one about 4. A few sessions change it, and the card says so. Set each session up on the monitor under Intervals.

ENGINE UT3 AND UT2

01 THE STAPLE

SESSION 3 x 20 minutes, 3:00 rest. UT3, rate 20 to 21.

FOCUS One split. Pick it in the first few minutes and hold it within a second for all three 20s.

02 THE STEADY 15S

SESSION 3 or 4 x 15 minutes, 3:00 rest. Start at UT3 and build, so by the end you're at UT2.

FOCUS A rate step: rate 20 for the first 15, 21 for the second, 22 for the third (and the fourth), with the split coming down a second or two each time.

03 THE 30-MINUTE BUILD

SESSION 30 minutes at rate 21, in five 6-minute blocks.

FOCUS Every block a little faster than the last, same rate. My row on 25 Oct: 8,383 metres at a 1:47.3 average, rate 21 throughout. The blocks went 1:50.5, 1:49.2, 1:47.6, 1:44.9 and 1:44.5.

04 THE HOUR OF RATE CHANGES

SESSION 60 minutes at UT3, in 5-minute blocks: rate 18, 19, 20, 21, then back down 20, 19, 18, 17, 16, then up again 17, 18, 20.

FOCUS Changing the rate and changing the split with it. When the rate goes up a pip, the split comes down. When it drops, hold as much of the speed as you can. This is the volume, made interesting.

THRESHOLD THE CONFIDENCE BUILDERS

05 THE 5 X 5

SESSION 5 minutes on, 2:00 rest, x 5. Threshold, rate 26 to 30.

FOCUS The same split on all five. Conservative on the first two, and the last one can be your best.

06 THE LONG THRESHOLD

SESSION 4 x 10 minutes, 3:00 rest. Threshold, rate 26 to 28.

BUILD UP 8 x 3 minutes, then 5 x 5, then 5 x 8, then 4 x 10.

FOCUS Find your cruising altitude in the first piece, then sit on it.

07 THE RATE PYRAMID

SESSION 2 x 20 minutes, 5:00 rest. Two minutes at each rate, climbing 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, then back down 28, 26, 24, 22.

FOCUS The split comes down a little with every step up. On the way down, hold the split you had at that rate on the way up.

SPEED AND BURSTS

08 THE 1 ON, 1 OFF, FOUR WAYS

SESSION 1 minute on, 1 minute off, x 10. Same session, four flavours. Pick one, or work through them across a season.

A Power strokes. Damper 10, rate 22 to 24. Get the best number you can every minute.

B The classic. Normal drag, race rate, 2K pace plus 1 second, or build through them to under your 2K pace.

C Legs firing. Damper 1, race rate, holding your race-pace split and going progressively faster. Just the legs.

D Extra, extra spicy. Damper 1 with a towel wrapped round the fan cover: overspeed leg drive, rate capped at 42. The split doesn't matter. It's all about the speed of contraction. Best closer to race season. Keep the towel on the outside of the cover, clear of the chain and the handle.

09 THE KILOMETRES

SESSION 4 x 1,000m, 3:00 rest, at 2K pace plus 2 to 3 seconds.

FOCUS A negative split across the four. The last one is the fastest.

10 THE LADDER

SESSION 1,000m, 750m, 500m, 250m, twice through. 3:00, 2:30 and 2:00 rest between pieces, 5:00 between ladders.

FOCUS A little faster as they get shorter: the 1,000 at 2K pace plus 2, down to the 250 quicker than 2K pace.

2K PREP

11 THE 500S

SESSION 6 x 500m, 2:00 rest, at your 2K pace. Not faster, not slower.

FOCUS The same split, all six. Still holding it on the sixth is a big confidence boost.

12 THE 2K LADDER

SESSION 3 x 2,000m, 4:00 rest. Every 500 is a set number of seconds slower than your 2K split. 2K one: +12, +9, +6, +3. 2K two: +3, +6, +9, +12. 2K three: +9, +6, +3, then 2K pace.

WHEN About a week before your 2K test, or up to 10 days before.

FOCUS Nailing every split. You might not, so stay in it anyway.

13 THE 30-MINUTE TEST

SESSION 30 minutes at UT1.

FOCUS Work near max for 30 minutes, but leave a little bit in the tank. The point is to see how strong you can make it feel.

FOR THE PEOPLE WANTING TO SUFFER

14 THE 40/20S

SESSION 40 seconds on, 20 seconds off, x 10, twice through, with 5:00 between sets.

FOCUS In the 40 seconds on, stay as close to your 2K pace as you can.

15 THE HURT LOCKER

SESSION 1 minute on, 7:30 rest, x 8. Open rate, every stroke as hard as you possibly can.

FOCUS Do it properly and you're in the hurt locker after 15 to 20 seconds. Then you do it seven more times. Everyone undercooks it the first time.

WHEN About three times in the lead-up to a 2K. Leave at least 10 days between the last one and the test.

YOUR LOG

Write down every session. Watching the splits come down is half the confidence.

Date	Session	Splits	Rate and heart rate	How it felt

Train smart. Build heavy, low-rate and max-effort work up gradually, keep it off back-to-back days, and hold strong positions. Stop and see a physio if you get rib or side pain on deep breaths, coughing or rolling over, back pain that travels down a leg, or pain that gets worse each session.

Send this to a Meataxe who needs to hear it.