

FIVE PILLARS SCORECARD.

Score yourself out of 10 on the five things that make you fast.

I wish I knew this earlier in my rowing career. There are pillars to going fast in this sport, and every athlete will be strong in some and a little bit weaker in others. You don't need to be tens across the board. We use these five pillars to focus conversations.

“Play to your strengths and work on your weaknesses.”

SCORE YOURSELF

Give yourself a score out of 10 on each one, then try and elevate all of them. My scores are the example.

Pillar	What it covers	Mine	Yours
1. Physiology	Your physical ability	7 or 8	
2. Technique	Your technical capability: being a boat mover	6 or 7	
3. Teammate	Playing well with others and supporting your team	9	
4. Mindset	Your confidence, your resilience, your self-talk	7 or 8	
5. Injury prevention	Staying uninjured: stretching, smart training, nutrition, sleep	9	

Technique is a six or a seven for me, which is why I'm a Meataxe. Mindset is a seven or an eight: I had a bad tendency for negative self-talk.

The fifth is about remaining uninjured, because it has such a massive impact on your ability to perform. Stack the odds: stretch before and after every session, be smart with your training, look after your nutrition and your sleep, and listen to the people giving you advice. I was a 9 here.

“You only have one back and it needs to last you your entire life.”

STRONGEST AND WEAKEST

Emphasise your strengths and minimise your weaknesses. If you're not much of a technician, like us Meataxes, you can make up for that by being a bit stronger, or by having a good mindset. Being really strong somewhere else means you're important to the team, and you'll go faster.

My strongest pillar	How I'll lean on it

My weakest pillar	How I'll make up for it

TOOLS FOR THE MINDSET PILLAR

Nerves mean you care

I was nervous racing the Olympic final, and just as nervous in domestic races here in New Zealand. Nerves are a sign you care, and they're never going away. When you're too dialled up, sit back and box breathe: in for four, hold for four, out for four, hold for four, and repeat.

Tell yourself a better story

Self-belief is something you can train. It's all about the stories you tell yourself in your head, so be your own best hype man, even when it feels a bit manufactured at the start.

“You will become the stories you tell yourself. So just tell yourself a better story.”

The story I'll tell myself on the start line

Stop sizing up the opposition

It's a waste of energy, and you'll probably be wrong. I once raced an eight with guys who looked close to seven foot. We beat them, and when I asked one of them his 2K, it was five seconds slower than mine.

Don't chase perfection

It's never perfect. Something will always go wrong, and the crews that can deal with that handle it best. Fail fast, learn quickly, and adjust based on what didn't work.

Trust the process

My 2K was stuck for four years. That's normal. The gains get so small you don't even recognise them, and getting negative about it slowed me down even more. Keep turning up, stay as positive as you can, and be patient.

On the erg, you're only racing you

The only person you're competing with on a rowing machine is you. If the self-inflicted pressure of the machine is getting to you, be a little bit kinder on yourself.

The tool I'll use this week

Send this to a Meataxe who needs to hear it.