



Talent Identification and Development

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GB **ROWING** TEAM

Historical Background: The Recruitment and Development of Rowers in Great Britain

A multi-strand approach

- **School / Junior:** GB has a great tradition of rowing in its private schools > historically > most of the JM sweep team. Most of GBs success at this level.
- Some girls schools also row.

- **Clubs:** GB has always had a large and widespread club structure – increasing numbers have Junior programmes.

Historically where most of the scullers and women rowers have come from.

- **Universities:** Strong tradition in some GB universities developing juniors and also recruiting (at 18+). Expanding quite rapidly and widening the number of disciplines developed. (best and worst example is the Boat Race).

- No year-round National Age-Group Squads
- National Teams formed for Junior, Under 23, FISU Championships (only for 2 – 6 weeks).
- Supported by professional GB Rowing Team head coaches.

Additional Talent Stream

- 12 years ago, it was felt that GB needed an ***outside source of extra athletes***, both to supplement the traditional routes and to strengthen the disciplines where we were not so strong.
- After a pilot scheme, Peter Shakespear (Aus) was recruited to develop this. Start was started (begun?) 9 years ago.

- Originally

3 centres (with a coach each)

10-20 athletes

.....has now developed to..



10 full time coaches in 10 centres
around the country

- Some (currently 12) Satellites:
(trusted volunteer coaches work with
athletes who cannot be relocated)
- Approx 120 athletes aged 14-24



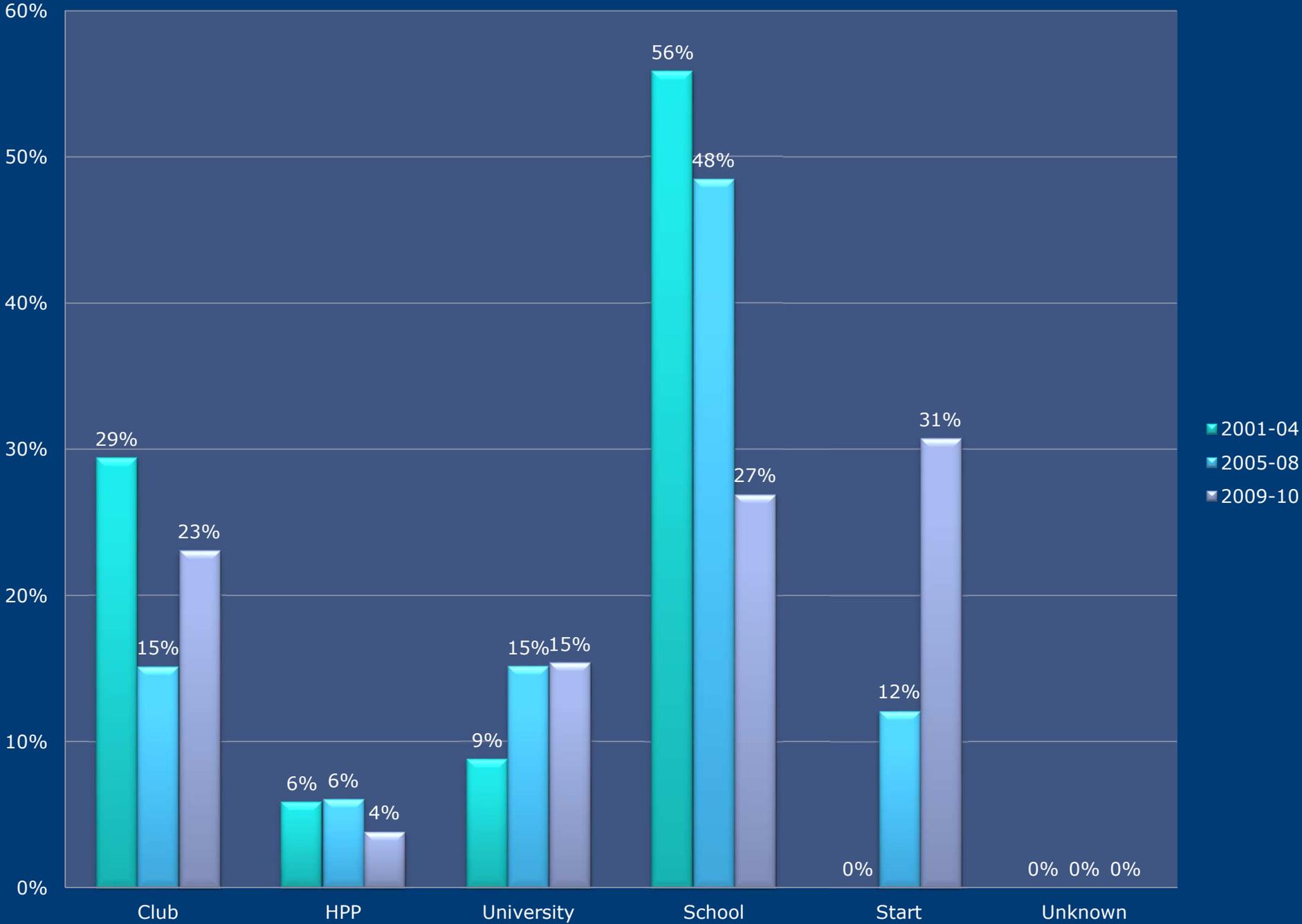
**Identify
Recruit Olympic Rowers
Develop**

An Extra Talent Stream

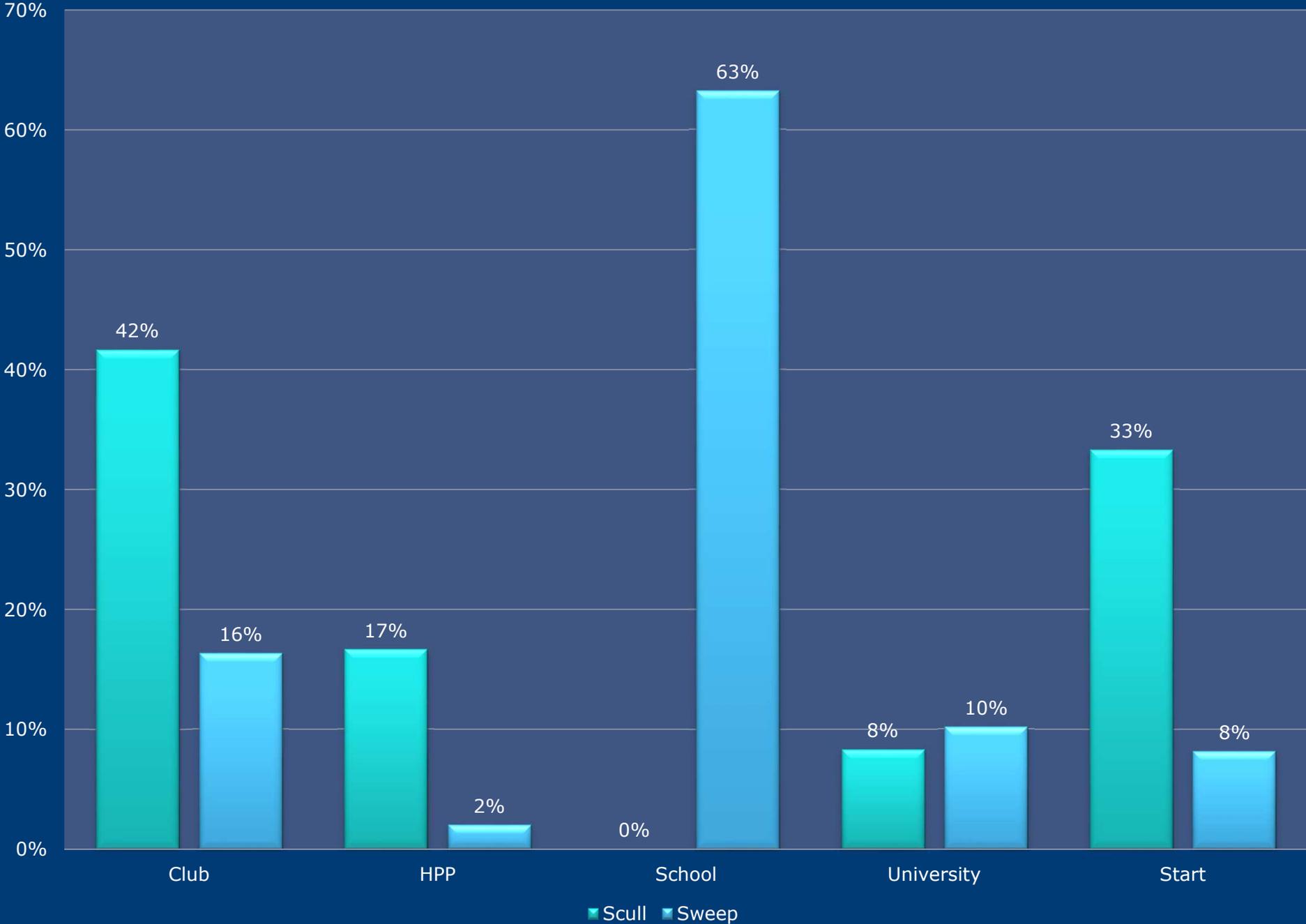
Non Rowers (or under - provided ones)

Start must Add Value

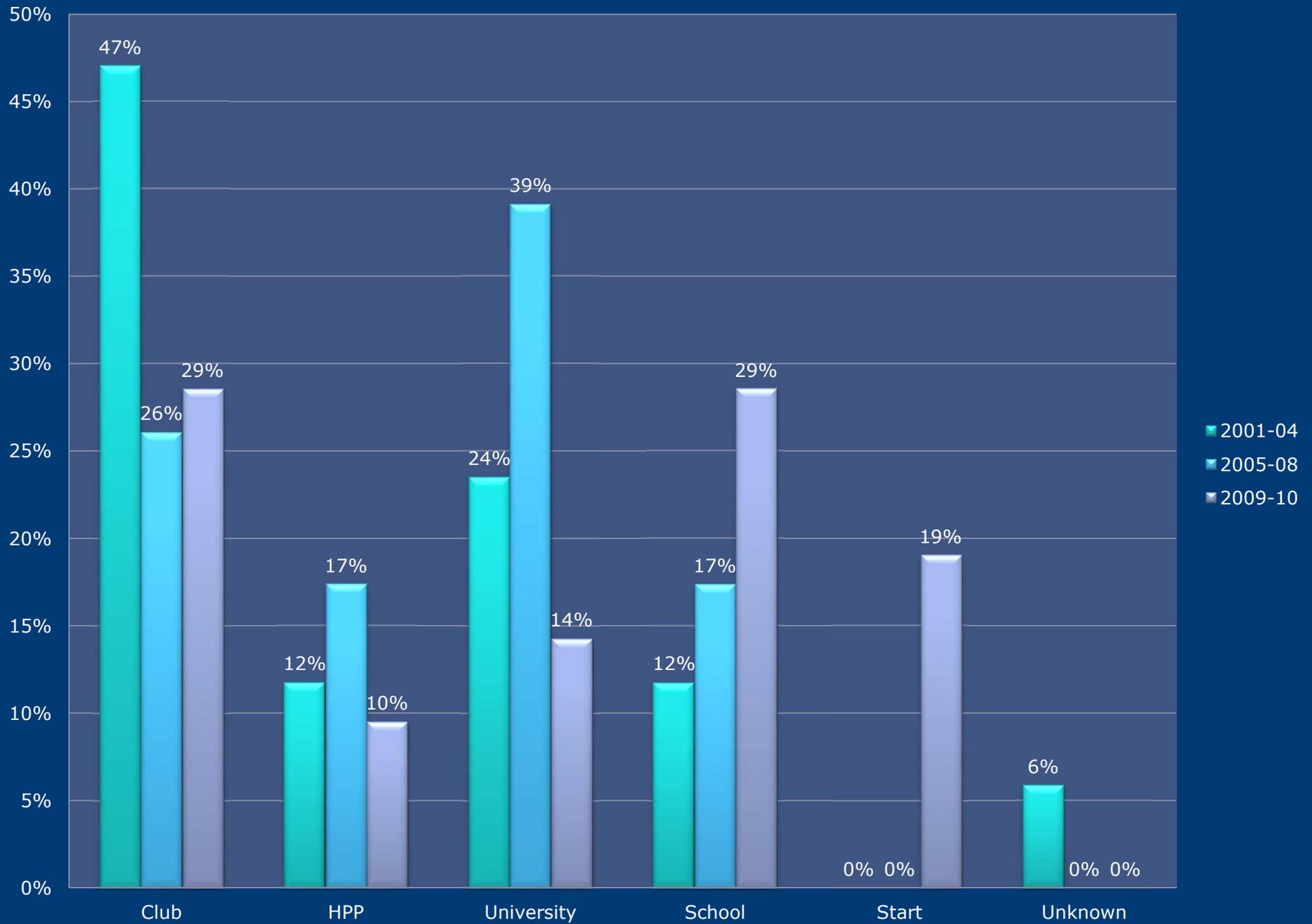
Openweight Men – Original Base



Sculling vs. Sweep Original Base



Openweight Women - Original Base



IDENTIFICATION

Population:

Numbers - <2% population (height alone).

Perhaps 5-10% of those have other characteristics as well

Of those 5-10% make it to Senior Teams

Perhaps 1 in 10,000 (ish)

IDENTIFICATION

- BUT Population needs to be AVAILABLE...
- Social / Cultural pressures (how rowing is perceived)
- Small Towns rather than Big Cities

Talent I. D. Tests

- Must be
 - Robust
 - Repeatable
 - (ideally) Transportable
 - Easy to administer
- Must Identify Key Factors in Potential for the required sport.....
.....in athletes who have not been specifically trained in that sport

Talent I. D. Tests

- Height, Arm Span, (weight)
- Strength Test (C2 Dyno)
 - Power Endurance Test (~ Wingate)
- Endurance Test (Arm & Leg Bike)
Max Step Test
- **NO Prior Training Required**

Identification / Recruitment Strategies

■ Active

(we go to them)

- Go into Local Schools
- Local University Freshers' Weeks

■ Passive

(they come to us)

- Big Campaigns with UK Sport & other NGBs
- Local Contacts
- Cold Calls

Advantages & Disadvantages

■ **Active**

- Local to centres, Network of help, (relatively) easy to administer, recruitment straightforward, On-going.
- Limited genetic pool, Motivation? Inefficient Testing.

Advantages & Disadvantages

■ **Passive**

- Much larger genetic pool (but getting the word out!), High levels of motivation, Concentrated testing resources.
- Recruitment may not be easy (relocation & timing), Stress on testers, Only once in (4?) years.

Example

- Tall & Talented – Talent 2016
- Run with UK Sport and British Basketball.
- Launched Oct 2009
- Publicity.....
- 1500+ sign ups

Tall & Talented

- **Phase 1: 900 Tested in January 2010, 7 days, 5 locations.**
- **Phase 2: 2 camps (100) in April**
- **Phase 3: c. 44 Athletes now on START (joined Aug – Oct)**



What we'd like to know.....

- Trainability
- Skill Learning ability
- Mental Stuff
- Injury History / Vulnerability

“CONFIRMATION”

- Are we right for them? Are they right for us?
- Probation period
- Care with Juniors

Development



- The concept of the

**HIGH PERFORMANCE
NOVICE**

SWOT ANALYSIS

- Strengths

Mr/Ms Average

- Weaknesses

Well "balanced"
Ambition grows with
Knowledge

Lack of Power
Limited Levers



Will learn faster
Fit into crews easily

Limited possibilities

- Opportunities

- Threats

SWOT ANALYSIS

High Performance Novice

Strengths

Abnormally tall (good levers)
Very Strong Major Drive
Muscles. Fit, Highly
motivated

Weaknesses

Other muscles
comparatively weak, poor
posture & flexibility, Naïve
/ ignorant



Very high power outputs,
Big Ergo Scores,
Major Boat Mover,
GB athlete

Injury, learns bad
technique, builds a
limiting factor in trying to
learn / load too quickly

Opportunities

Threats

High Performance Novices

- Exceptionally Good at some things
BUT Average at the rest
- = Big differences = “unbalanced athlete”
- “medium people” are easier to coach / deal with

Development Strategy

- High Level Professional Development right from recruitment is vital to maximise the chance of successful long term development
- The Quality of Coaching is crucial. They must understand and be sympathetic to the problems posed by taking athletes from Zero to Olympics.

“A Clean Sheet to paint your own picture on(?)”

- Not true – what have they done since birth?
- Ability sets
- Skill Sets
- THEN - Technique

Flexibility

Core

Balance

Morphology

Strength

Speed

etc

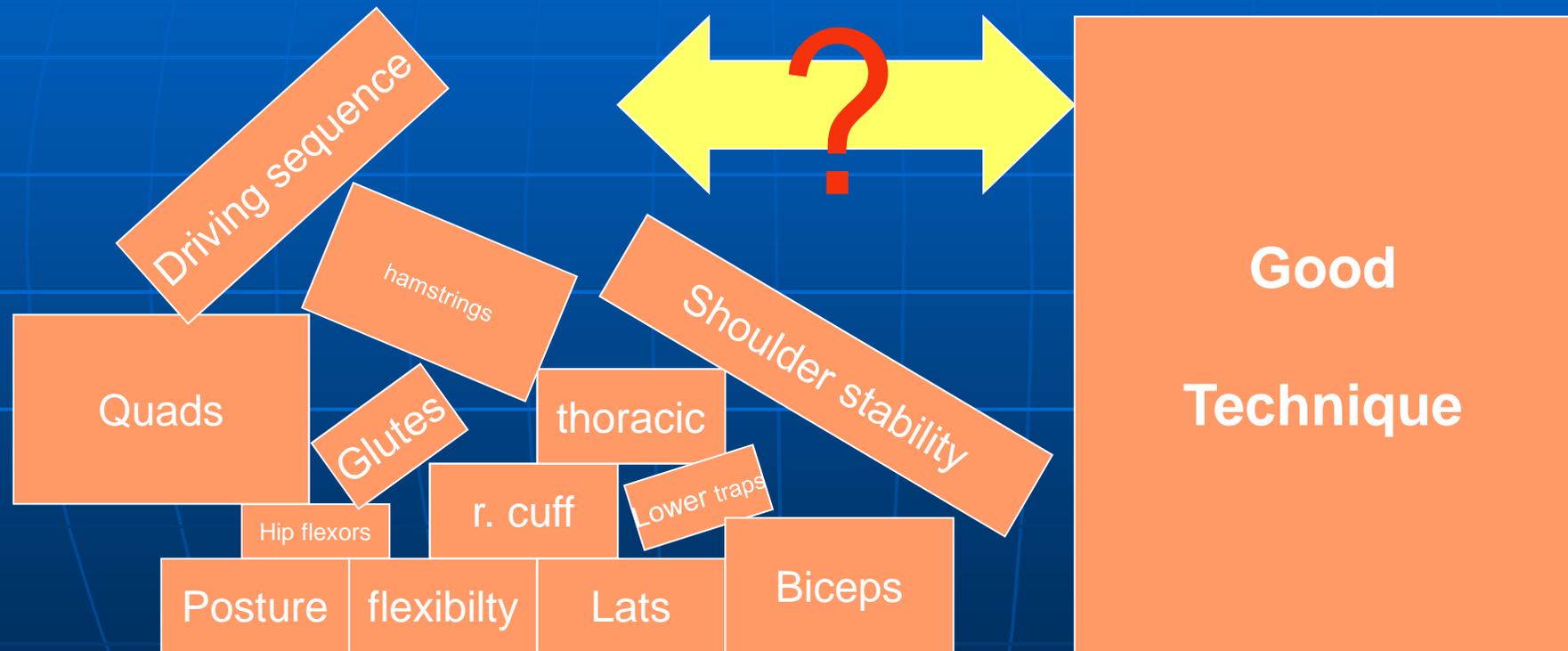
Technical Model

**Is it
Real?**

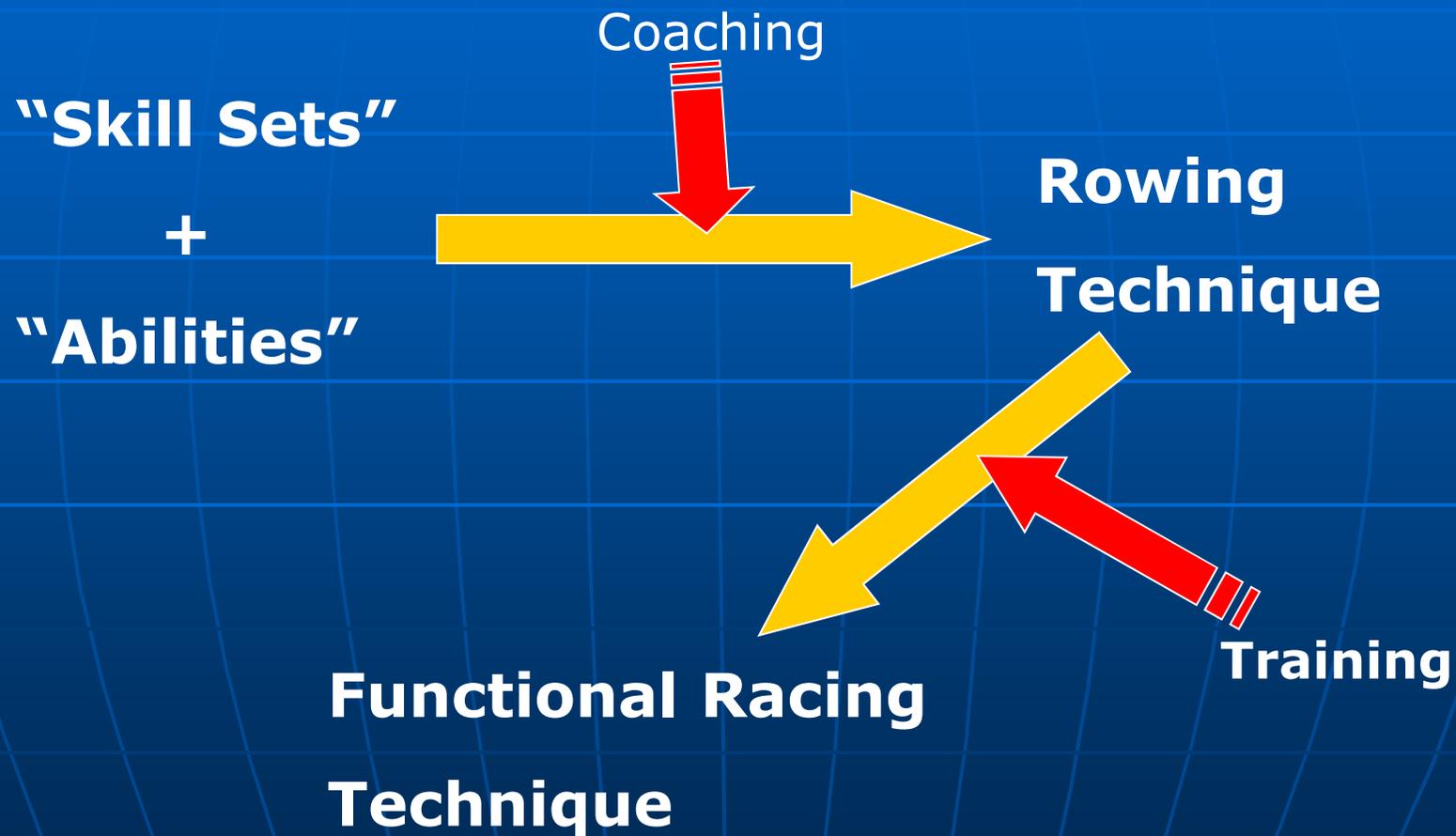
BUT
**What are
The
Key Elements?**

Developing H P Novices

- Make the bricks before the wall



Why Don't People Row Well?



- It is important to try to deal with each threat or imbalance.
- And to develop good technique before poor movement patterns cause limited performance or injury
- (Resulting in loss of motivation and failure)

Before Technique

- May need to address

- Skill sets

“Abilities”

Core

Flexibility

Body Shape

Confidence

Balance

How?

- Confidence drills
- Core / Flexibility & Weights etc Programme
- Limited Sculling (don't take bad strokes)
- Cross Training until rowing training can be done technically well.

Challenges

- Motivation
- Enough rowing/racing to make it interesting
- Individualised pace of learning – high coach / athlete ratio required

Fast Track?

- Beware of training sport specific movement until it can be done correctly.
- Avoid the temptation to accelerate rowing performance too early.
- Paradoxically slow and careful development leads to the fastest results

Monitoring

- Start athletes brought together 7 times per year for testing and education camps.
- Performance, skill attainment and various physical factors are measured *and published*.
- Camp Results help to drive the programme in between the camps

Support

- Investment is via Coaching
- Athletes are not paid or given grants (until performance eg. WC junior or U23 medal)
- Support services minimal – generally as education and consultancy for coaches
- Allows Maximum numbers of coaches

Coaches



- **Specialised task (hence the problem of satellites)**
- **Induction**
- **Development, Collegiality and Competition**
- **Leadership and Innovation (rather than Management, Control and Dogma)**

End Point

- Ideally when athletes “graduate” by joining the senior national squads.
- Athletes who fail to progress are helped and counselled. Very few are “sacked” most withdraw themselves (due to transparency?). Encouraged to continue rowing or coaching whenever possible.

Success?

- 2008 Olympics:
3 (female) athletes (2 medals)
- 2009
14 World Champs athletes (2 medals)
6 athletes at World Under 23's
2 athletes at World Juniors

- 2010

- 16 World Champs Athletes (4 new)(7 medals)

- 5 athletes at World under 23's

- 3 athletes at Junior Worlds



Future Questions

- Age for recruitment?
- Recruitment of Females
- Central resourced academy

vs

Widespread club-based system

Questions?

Thanks for
Listening