



## **Row Your Way to a Better Body**

You don't have to be an aspiring Olympic rower to feel the need to hop onto a stationary ergo. The rowing machine (or commonly known as the Concept II brand) offers far more benefits than most stationary cardio equipment, with a far less chance of injury, yet they seem to be the one piece of equipment that is always available for use (unlike the Q for the treadmill). Indoor rowing classes (similar to the spinning concept) does not seem to have taken off in this country just yet, but in the States and the UK you can guarantee group rowing workouts which definitely takes the boredom away by adding in different strokes, lengths, speeds and resistance, ensuring a complete body blast. Rowing definitely offers a great cardio vascular work out but it also incorporates all the major muscle groups – back, arms, bum & upper legs – but with no impact on the joints.

Working out on an ergo is beneficial to any sports background, conditioning key muscle groups and increasing fitness levels substantially with the introduction of interval training. If you like incentives to train then a great one would be the C.R.A.S.H. – B Indoor World Rowing Champs which is held in Boston every February, with a racing distance of 2000 metres. Anyone can enter and where else would you get the opportunity to race against Olympians such as James Cracknell? It's a phenomenal experience seeing hundreds of Concept II rowing machines lined up with the fastest seeded athletes in the front row linked up to TV screens so you can see the race unfolding. Something worth thinking about, and Boston is beautiful.

### **So Where Do You Start?**

If you are relatively fit then a 2000m row should be within your grasp, so set aside one training session to complete a 2000m time trial and keep a record of your time. Now you have set a benchmark and from here its time to improve, and by following some simple guidelines and training tips you will be well on your way.

Never complete the 2000m distance each time you go to the gym. That's not the way to improve and you will soon become sick of the sight of a rowing machine. You only need to complete a 2000m time trial every 2-3 weeks to monitor progress. If rowing is usually the first piece of equipment you use, make sure you do at least a 5 minute light bike warm up and stretch to get the heart, lungs and muscles prepared, because believe me if you're not prepared, your lungs will be on fire and your muscles full of lactic build up. Very unpleasant!

### **Training**

As with any sport it is essential to incorporate other forms of training to compliment your routine e.g. Cycle, treadmill, resistance training etc. A strong muscular foundation can definitely help if you can manage the lactic acid build up effectively, allowing you to maintain the power strokes for longer.

Here are six separate training sessions specifically for the rowing machine. Use 2-3 of these sessions per week over a 2-3 week period accompanied by your regular resistance and cardio training program. Once you have completed all the rowing sessions, take a days rest and then prepare for another time trial. You will be



amazed at how much faster you will complete the 2000m distance. A useful tip – when completing the 2000m trial, break it down into sections. Never go flat out from the start or you will burn out. Take it 500m at a time and keep increasing the intensity level and then for the last 200m go all out to finish.

#### Session No.1

3 x 1000m at 80% effort level – use heavier gear level. Rest for 3-5 minutes in between each one

#### Session No.2

8 x 1 minute, with 1 minute rest period at 90% effort level – use heavier gear level. (1 minute fast rowing at 32-34 \*SPM followed by 1 minute slow rowing at 20-24 SPM)

During the 1 minute slow period try to gain breathe back but not stop completely.

\*SPM = Strokes Per Minute

#### Session No.3

3000m at 90% effort level – use medium to heavy gear level

#### Session No.4

5 x 500m at 90% effort level – use heavier gear level. Rest for 2-3 minutes in between each one

#### Session No.5

2500m at 90% effort level – use heavier gear level

#### Session No.6

2000m at 75% effort level – use heavier gear level

1500m at 80% effort level – use one lighter gear level

1000m at 85% effort level – use one lighter gear level

Rest for 3-5 minutes in between each one

It is essential to ensure that your rowing technique is correct to prevent any unnecessary strain on the back. Use lighter gear levels to begin with until you have perfected your technique. Consult with a qualified instructor on correct posture and rowing technique.