

# Unlocking the Performance Journey: A Study of Athletic Cognition of NCAA Division 1 Women's Rowers

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## Abstract

"Rowing is a distinctive sport accessible to individuals of all ages (World Rowing, 2023), providing both participatory and competitive opportunities for teams and individuals (Will Ruth, 2022). According to Will Ruth, a contributor to the USRowing American Development Model task force, the path of a rowing athlete's journey can be delineated into five stages: Stage 1 - Discover, Learn, Play; Stage 2 - Participate, Develop, Challenge; Stage 3 - Train and Compete; Stage 4 - Perform and Excel; and Stage 5 - Row for Life. At the collegiate level, athletes are expected to reach Stage 4, where those engaged in consistent training are projected to yield high-performance outcomes over time. Nevertheless, observations of rowers at the collegiate level over the years indicate that athletes often peak in performance after a few semesters in college, resembling the product life cycle model introduced by Raymond Vernon. This trend appears to be increasing annually. Theoretically, student-athletes in rowing should demonstrate their peak performance in their senior year, disregarding the impact of injuries.

In consequence, this study seeks to understand the performance life cycle of collegiate women's rowers. It aims to identify preventive measures by analyzing performance data from around 60 athletes and conducting research on the self-reflection of student-athletes and coaching perspectives. The investigation will specifically explore the existence and impact of a "cognitive gap" on performance. Notably, in the realm of rowing, emotions, thoughts, and mental energy are identified as three significant factors influencing performance (Willi Railo, 2020). Consequently, the survey will place emphasis on the examination of personality and mentality."