

## “Weigh Enough!”

“Ok slide the boat out of the rack...up to shoulders in two, one...two, up! Ok walk it out, watch your rigger. And... spin towards the south dock, walk it down to the end...weigh enough!”

These are the first words that I actually listen to every morning on the week. I wake up at 5:00 A.M. to get to practice by 5:30, put on my uni-suit (a spandex suit worn during workout), proceed to the erg (rowing machine) room to stretch, and then head out to the boat bays. We are conducted by the coxswain who routinely runs through the above monologue like a flight attendant runs through her safety speech. But as routine as it is, how tired we are, and how easily we are able to run the process by ourselves through sheer repetition, there are two words which every rower is eternally alert to hear and react to: weigh enough.

These two words together have always been part of a rower's vocabulary since the creation of the sport. U.S. Rowing, the official federation of the sport of rowing, dictates that these words are part of a required vocabulary for all people who set foot in a boat. This is because they are the key to safety. Weigh enough literally mean, stop rowing. A crew shell, besides a piece of sports equipment, is a high velocity nautical ramming machine. Its very hard to turn, and if there is every a surprise obstruction in the path of the shell, the only way to avoid it is to stop as quickly as possible. In this case, the coxswain will scream, “weigh enough!” and all eight men, every time, will immediately stop rowing. It has been engrained into the heads of this community of people as something that will always be taken seriously, and always be responded to.

Weigh enough is used almost exclusively in and around a crew shell, when taking the shell in and out of the boathouse, or any time on the water. During a piece, a pre-determined set of strokes taken at full power, the coxswain will count the strokes, and at the end, say weigh enough. “Power 30 in two...one...two! One... ten... twenty... five more... and weigh enough!” All eight rowers will pause their stroke with their oar in their lap and with their body fully extended. Never have I experienced a time where a rower has not paused at those words. Coaches will also use the word frequently. “Do a steady state (long distance endurance) piece from the Ballard Bridge to the totem pole at the end of the cut, and then weigh enough.” The coach literally means stop, but this is interpreted by the rowers to mean something slightly different. To us, we hear “once you reach the totem pole at the end of the cut, the piece is over and we will wait for him there while we rest and get a drink.” The safety aspect of the phrase is not implied when the coach says it in this particular manner. The only time a coach would say stop as opposed to weigh enough, is if he were particularly mad. A coach saying stop carries the same tone as a parent calling their child their full name to indicate the utmost frustration.

Weigh enough is rarely used in conversation outside the boathouse unless accompanied by a comical undertone playfully mocking the sport. One breakfast as a team after a morning practice a group of us were looking for a good table, and as I passed an open one, a friend yelled from behind me, “weigh enough”, telling me to sit at that table, and everyone chuckled.

Stan Pocock, a man whose father was a famous boat builder and pioneer for the sport, wrote a book called “Way Enough” about his father. The different spellings of the word “way” occur because the term is almost always aural. It was never a written word

during the time of its creation, simply a call from the coxswain or coach. But the book was a required reading for the freshmen crew at Washington because George Pocock, Stan's father, was an integral part of the creation of the Washington crew. All the freshmen must read it as a right of passage onto the crew team. Titling the book "Way Enough" gives this term the rightful distinction it deserves.

Rowers live, and on the rare occasion, die (Hudson River, 2005, a shell was rammed by a speed boat which tragically killed a member of the crew) by the words weigh enough. If you ever wanted to stop a rower in his tracks in a crowd, just say those words, and a special light, specifically reserved for hearing those words, will go on in his or her head, and he or she will stop dead in their tracks. To a very specific group of people, the rowing community, a seemingly meaningless set of words dictate our very actions without fail.