



Personal Training, Program Development, and Recruiting Presentations

By: Helen Tompkins

Cassandra Cunningham coached a morning practice session, went for a run, got her hair done, put on a white dress and red tennis shoes, and then went on a hike into the Wissahickon Park with a minister and her fiancé. Coaching and running on her wedding day, Cunningham is passionate about all areas of her life, including her new company Power of 3, LLC. It only takes one conversation with her to understand she loves to live her work.

Power of 3 represents Prior, Proper, Planning – a motto to instill the fundamentals of obtaining a healthy, balanced training program.

Cunningham began her life in rowing as a novice at the California State University Sacramento, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Physical Education in 1996. She went on to earn two international silver medals in the women's lightweight quad at the 1998 World Rowing Championships and the 1999 Pan American Games. In 2002, when her rowing career ended, she earned a master of Administration of Education from the University of Massachusetts, while simultaneously coaching the school's varsity women's lightweight rowing team. She served as the assistant coach for the University of Pennsylvania women from 2012-2015 and has been coaching for the Women's Junior National Team since 2008.

Personal Training:

We all love rowing. It gets us out the door at 5:30am. There can be a variety of barriers, however, to gaining fitness and improving strokes. You may be tight in the hamstrings and hips, weak in your core, nursing an injury, or a complete novice. The physiological difficulty of taking fluid strokes is a reflection of the ability of our body to achieve the desired positions. As an elite rower, I spend about an hour every day working on physical therapy exercises. I need to maintain my body's ability to take strokes and that's when I'm not injured. It takes Prior, Proper, Planning alongside your time on the water to improve performance and fitness.

Among my favorite diehard masters athletes at Vesper is Sally Scott, a small woman with a huge smile and great wit. Sally came hopping down the stairs as I entered Vesper. Just finishing practice she was elated. *"I used to struggle with higher rates and now I can hit a 34. I think it's because I'm just more fit with Cass."*



Celia Martone, a high school junior, has been training with Power of 3 since fall 2015. Martone began rowing Freshman year, but felt she was not improving due to lack of attention from her coaches, who thought she should become a coxswain at 5 feet tall. Martone saw coxing as an option for college and felt she could be competitive as a rower in high school.

Martone meets Cunningham twice a week, for on and off the water sessions, and diligently follows the Power of 3 daily training program. Martone feels she has improved her stroke technique and is now applying all her body weight effectively.

Another high school freshman, Annie Walker, joined Power of 3 this winter. Walker's mother, Bonnie Pugh, saw a tremendous self-esteem increase in her daughter. Pugh says, "*Cass calls the girls, her Power of 3.*"



Pugh began her own training with Power of 3 this year. *“I was a tennis athlete but had let myself go.”* Pugh is working on strength and core training, with the goal of being strong enough to take quality first strokes in September.

Pugh says, *“with Cass, it's personal training and therapy combo, she has a great personality that makes her easy to talk to while holding me accountable.”*

Program Development:

In addition to working with athletes, Cunningham works with coaches to improve program development.

Emily Koenig has been the head women’s coach at Pacific Rowing Club in San Francisco for five years. She was a successful rower but had no experience leading a program. Koenig made sure the workouts were completed and the training program followed but the team was not reaching its goals.

“Cassandra picked up on my weaknesses - of being young and unsure - and validated the direction I want to take the program,” says Koenig.

Cunningham helped Koenig develop a platform from which the girls could grow. Altering the team culture from habitually showing up to practice and completing workouts, to emphasizing daily improvement. Cunningham changed Koenig’s mindset from just trying to log meters by doing 5 x

1500m, to a framework where the workouts, no matter how many meters long, are a catalyst for improvement. Koenig no longer lets a poor performance go by, but builds off of what went wrong so that the next is better.



"I was not allowing myself to run practices at 18 strokes per minute in the middle of race season. Cass validated the importance of maintaining long power driving strokes."

Recruiting Presentations:

Cunningham gives presentations for rowers and their families in navigating the collegiate and national team recruiting process.

I caught up with Junior National Team Women's Head Coach and Connecticut Boat Club Head Coach, Liz Trond, on her opinion of Cunningham's recruiting presentation.

"Cass's presentation to Connecticut Boat Club was one of the most efficient and effective things I have ever done for my team. Every parent and athlete left with excellent information and tools to move forward in the college process."

I highly recommend this presentation/program to every coach who has college-bound athletes and needs a source to help with the most current information, and a hands on process for moving ahead.

We will definitely be working with Coach Cass next year!"

Power of 3 will come to your program for presentations or coaching mentorship. If you are looking for personal training and you are not in the Philadelphia area, Cunningham will be holding a *clinic* *September 11th-16th at the Detroit Women's Rowing Association* in Detroit, Michigan. Prior, Proper, Planning might bring your training or program to the next level!