

# COXING CARE

**Andrea Worley** relives her early days as a cox and gives five tips for staying safe on and off the water

“ Look out – there’s an island ahead!”  
There I was, an inexperienced cox, in an Imperial College novice eight in the middle of a dinghy race near Eel Pie Island. It was a recipe for disaster.

I had been so busy avoiding the dinghies that I had not seen the island. Luckily we stopped just in time.

That was a long time ago. I kept coxing and soon learned that the job of the cox is to look after the crew and get the best out of them. Here are some tips on how you can look after your crew.

## 1 – Wellbeing

Before you go afloat, prepare your crew for the outing or the race. Are they physically prepared? Are they feeling well? Wearing the right clothing? Do they have drinks with them?

If it is a training outing then check that everyone is happy and feeling fine. Are they too hot or too cold? Are they enjoying themselves with nothing hurting?

When it is cold, keep the crew moving; don’t let them rest too long and get cold. Remind them to have a drink; even in winter you can get dehydrated. Keep them warm and dry.

In summer make sure that they are protected from the sun.

If you are about to race then check that the crew is relaxed, mentally prepared and motivated. Find a quiet, shaded place and go through the race plan with them. Keep them calm and quiet, and reassure anyone who seems to be nervous.

## 2 – Lifting and handling

When getting the boat out, check that the crew is lifting and handling it correctly to avoid injury and damage. Watch for hazards like obstacles or slippery surfaces when launching.

## 3 – Check equipment

Check the boat and equipment over with the crew and fix any problems. When the crew is in the boat, check that it is properly adjusted for each rower and that all the gates are fastened properly.



## 4 – Steering and boat handling

Learn how to handle the boat – how to steer, how to use the rudder correctly, and how the wind and current can help you when manoeuvring. Know where you are rowing and the circulation plan you should follow – what are the hazards; temporary and permanent? Know how to leave and approach the landing.

“ EAT! THERE IS MORE TO BEING A COX THAN BEING LIGHT ”



PHOTO: PETER SPURRIER

### 5 – During the outing

Keep a good lookout at all times throughout the outing. If you cannot see, ask the crew at the stern or bow to help. If you are training in the dark, make sure you have the correct lights on the boat. Think about safety all the time you are on the water. For example: is the weather changing; what are other water users doing; is your crew getting

Above: A cox protests at a boat cutting across and putting his crew in danger at the Fours Head

too cold, hot or tired; has the tide turned?

Don't forget yourself. Make sure that you are dressed appropriately for the weather. Wear your lifejacket; check it over before you put it on.

Eat! There is more to being a cox than being light. You cannot be a good cox if you are hungry and uncomfortable.

You are a member of the crew,

so look after yourself as well as you look after the rest of the crew.

Oh, and one last thing – try not to hit any islands! 🇮🇪

If you would like to find out more about coxing, you can find an online course at [www.rowhow.org](http://www.rowhow.org) – or look in previous editions of R&R!

