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January 10, 2004

**RE: The BalancePoint Oar Handle**

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of the continued investigation and application of the BalancePoint Oar Handle. A former training partner, Mr. Edward Bell, made me aware of this technology. He was an internationally successful sculler for the United States in the early 1990s and has developed a novel and potentially very important design change for sweep oars.

By way of introduction, I am a physician who specializes in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. This type of medicine deals with the non-surgical evaluation and treatment of orthopaedic and neurologic problems. My subspecialty within P & R is spinal medicine. I am the non-surgical director of the Spine Center here at Orthopaedic Associates. I have a full time practice diagnosing and treating patients predominantly with low back pathology and associated incapacities. In the 1980s I competed as an elite level sculler and was a member of the United States Pan American Team in 1983. I have been fortunate enough to win national championships at both the elite level and the master's level in the United States. I continue to train and compete on a master's level in sculling events throughout North America.

Spine injuries are one of the very few potentially catastrophic medical problems associated with the sport of rowing. Many rowing careers have been cut short or rendered less successful because of chronic back problems. Most of these problems appear to be related to disc damage. The critical factors, which contribute to lumbar disc damage, remain uncertain. There is obviously a genetic component, but there also appears to be an influence of lifestyle, and possibly external biomechanical influences. I am most excited about the BalancePoint Oar Handle System because it addresses one of the most dangerous aspects of biomechanical lumbar stress associated with rowing. Anatomists know that the human lumbar intravertebral disc is at greater risk for injury under stresses that involve both flexion and rotation in combination. Such movement isolates only a part of the disc structure to bear tremendous mechanical loads. This is the reason why flexion and rotation is so much more likely to damage the structure

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of a susceptible disc. The advantage of the Balance Point Oar Handle is that it appears to reduce some of the rotation necessary to adequately bring a sweep oar handle through its effective arc of work. I believe this change can reduce some of the damaging stress on the low back and may lead to less destructive forces being placed on lumbar discs in sweep rowers. This should result in improved tolerance to training and competition in those athletes who have existing back problems and decrease the likelihood of new injuries. An improvement in symmetry during the high stresses associated with competitive rowing is intuitively advantageous.

Obviously the reality of these potential advantages will only be defined through further testing and use. It is my understanding that such use is progressing through a relationship between Power Athletics, Inc. (the company that produces the BalancePoint Oar Handle) and various prominent rowing groups in the United States at both an international elite, and collegiate level. I can only hope that such research is facilitated by all those who have the ability to do so. I would advise FISA to look favorably upon this type of brilliant innovation as a means of improving the safety of rowing and the longevity of rowers.

If this letter generates any questions or concerns, I would be very happy to discuss my opinions regarding low back injuries and rowing, as well as the biomechanical advantages of this device with anyone who wishes to exchange information. Please feel free to write or call. It is also important for everyone to understand that I have absolutely no financial relationship with Power Athletics and I have no involvement with the rights to this product. I am not being compensated in any way for providing this opinion.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Totta, M.D.

MJT/vc

D: 01/10/04 T: 01/12/4

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