



WHILE MANY AMERICAN ROWING CLUBS ARE EMPHASIZING MEMBER PARTICIPATION OVER HIGH PERFORMANCE, VESPER HAS HIRED TRIPLE OLYMPIC MEDALLIST **MICHEL BARTMAN** FROM THE NETHERLANDS AND GIVEN HIM A SIMPLE BRIEF: PRODUCE VESPER OLYMPIANS. BARTMAN, 37, WAS PART OF THE *HOLLAND ACHT* THAT RAN AWAY WITH OLYMPIC GOLD IN 1996. HE ALSO EARNED OLYMPIC SILVER IN THE QUAD IN SYDNEY AND IN THE EIGHT IN ATHENS, WHERE HE SERVED AS BOTH STROKE AND ASSISTANT COACH.

megaphone

Clubs in the Netherlands regularly develop world-beating crews. Can you do the same at Vesper?

That's right, we don't have national team camps in the Netherlands. I was in a complete Nereus [Rowing Club] coxed four for three years, ending up with a [worlds'] bronze medal in '94. At Vesper I have now a group that has the ambition to become very good. Technically I have a little bit different vision, so it takes time to learn that.


How is your vision different?

We work really hard at simple movements, easy at the catch, no tension in the upper body, drive with the legs, and have a good body swing to accelerate the boat. That's typical of Dutch rowing—very efficient rowing because we don't have many people.

Your final sprint in Athens was breathtaking. Did you think you would catch the Americans?

No, because they were too far ahead. In that way it was similar to our race in '96. When you're that far ahead you know you're going to win, and it doesn't matter if you win by one second or five seconds. In '96 the Germans might have been closing a little bit at the end, but why go up in rating and start making mistakes? For the spectators maybe it was a nice race, but I think the guys in the American eight were pretty certain they were going to win.

You were both an athlete and a coach in the Dutch Olympic eight last year. Did that cause any conflict?

No, because we had a pretty young group. Maybe sometimes they thought 'Ok, shut up,' but they didn't say it. 

JEFF MOAG