

CoDe is the official organ of the BCU Coaching Scheme. Members are free to express their views within its pages. Articles and comments therefore reflect the thoughts of the author and do not necessarily state the policy of the National Coaching Committee. CoDe is programmed for publication with Focus. Contributions, including pictures, are welcome. Please send them to: BCU, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 5AS.

THE AIM OF THE BCU COACHING SCHEME IS:

To promote the sport and recreation of canoeing and to ensure that newcomers are introduced to canoeing in a safe and enjoyable way and that they and those already in the sport are assisted to progress to whatever level and in whichever discipline within canoeing suits them best.

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RESOURCES

A great deal of work has been undertaken in recent months in an endeavour to improve the resources available to organisers of courses for Coaching Awards.

There is still much to do, but currently guidance notes are available for examiners for all levels of course, except Placid Water Instructor and Senior Instructor.

Resources include OHP transparencies and videos, and these are being sent as available to those running awards training and assessment courses during 1991.

Please note that all courses for the training or assessment of coaching qualifications **must** receive the **prior** approval of the Regional Coaching Organiser.

Instructor Training Notes

A new publication, *Instructor Training Notes* is now available from the BCU office for those attending - or who have attended - a Kayak Instructor Training Course, price £2.50. Following is a schedule of the available material.

PUBLICATIONS

The Canoeing Handbook. The *Canoeing Handbook* is the only A-Z manual of the sport as practiced in Britain. It is essential reading for every Coaching Scheme member.
Price: £14.50 inc p&p.

Instructor Training Notes. Additional notes to assist those who have attended an Instructor Training course (Kayak).
Price: £2.50 inc p&p.

Supervisor Training Notes. Additional notes to assist those who have attended a BCU Supervisor course.
Price: £2.50 inc p&p.

VIDEOS

Come Canoeing - the basic skills training video of the BCU Coaching Scheme, featuring Richard Fox, four times World Kayak Slalom Champion. Directed by Ray Rowe.
Price: £24.25 inc VAT plus 85p postage.

Canoe Coaching Techniques - a video which demonstrates the fundamentals of teaching canoe groups, using the IDEAS method. Directed by Ray Rowe.
Price: £20 inc VAT and p&p.

Free loan: *The Sporting Chance*, *Challenge to Sport* and *Canoeing World* are available on loan for promotional use - £3 handling fee each. Please see p 52 of *Coaching Scheme Directory*.

Dear CoDe

Dear CoDe,

I attended the Eastern Region Coaching Panel's Regional Examiners Forum on 19 January. The meeting, held in St Ives, Cambridge, was well organised by David Coggins, the Eastern Region RCO, and it was well attended by panel members.

The forum was addressed by David Train who spoke about the Placid Water Scheme. I wholeheartedly support David's thoughts and philosophy behind the scheme, and I found what he had to say worthwhile and encouraging.

I must admit, however, to feeling more than a little dismayed by some of the negative comments passed by a small number of colleagues at the meeting, in relation to the Placid Water Scheme, and placid water canoeing in general. The comments were particularly disturbing, in my opinion, as they were made at a meeting which consisted of Senior Instructors or those working towards this award. All individuals involved in the coaching scheme should, I believe, do their utmost to promote all facets of our sport, not just one narrow specialist aspect of it.

There appears to be a tendency for some individuals in the Coaching Scheme to want to specialise in one narrow area of interest and, in doing so, restrict the range of experiences available to their pupils. I have heard of situations, for example, where novices have been exposed at a very early stage to 'playing' in fast-moving water. This has resulted in capsize and other poor experiences which has made pupils fearful, and turned them off canoeing.

We must realise that not all canoeists want to roar down rapids in freezing cold water on a winter's day. If this is the type of activity which 'turns you on' as an individual, then fine - follow that interest by all means in one's own time. In our roles as educators, however, we must constantly be mindful of our pupils' needs and aspirations, and teach to meet those needs and aspirations. We must not use our pupils, or their instruction time, as vehicles to satisfy our own needs and interests in the sport. To promote our sport, we must use our skills, expertise and enthusiasm wisely otherwise we run the risk of closing-down canoeing to a great number of people of all ages.

ALAN HALE, Halstead

Dear CoDe,

I refer to the editorial in December 1990 CoDe and am rather surprised at some of the assertions that you make.

As far as general canoeing is concerned on placid water, then the resources of this country are considerable and are a long way from being over extended. Whilst there is a shortage of water as far as whitewater is concerned then this should only give us a greater incentive towards directing the new canoeists towards placid water.

Facilities already exist in many parts of the country in the form of local canoe clubs and certainly the vast majority of them can absorb a considerably larger number than they have within their membership at the present moment. While special facilities in certain areas are highly desirable again particularly on the rough water sites there are still many thousands of miles of placid water which require virtually no facilities at all.

I must say that at the meeting with the Coaching Committee on placid water I was very heartened by the approach that was taken and can see only good from development of this scheme.

However the attitude of mind of many of the coaching scheme still gives cause for concern and I hope we are now moving in the right direction.

In the past few months I have perhaps become rather boring in talking about the role of clubs within canoeing in this country but I do firmly believe that this is the way forward to ensure that the sport remains on a structured basis and continues to grow. Hopefully very much faster than in the past.

ALAN LAWS, Chairman, BCU Marathon Committee

Geoff Good comments:

I agree with you, Alan, that 'placid water' canoeing is vastly under-developed, and has considerable room for expansion without stressing the environment. However, the article was aimed at the 90% of Coaching Scheme members who teach canoeing as an adventure-based activity, leading more naturally to white water.

There are many clubs which are well founded, with premises, and good management, and have the ability to absorb more newcomers. We need to build stronger links between those being introduced to the sport, and these clubs. However, in total, our club structure is not sufficient to absorb the numbers we could reasonably expect to want to continue in the sport following an introductory course, if our figures are correct that at least 1.5 million, and probably nearer 1 million, people 'have a go' annually.

REGISTRATION AND ASSESSMENT FEES

Course organisers please note that the Registration (training courses) or Assessment fee (Assessments) is now £4.50 for all Instructor and Senior Instructor training or assessment courses.

Assessment fees are payable in every case. Training course fees are payable for the first Instructor Training Course, and the first Senior Instructor Training Course only. eg an Instructor (Kayak) who attends a training course for Instructor (Canoe) does not have to pay another registration fee. He or she does have to pay a registration fee, however, when attending their first Senior Instructor Training course.

EXAMINERS PLEASE NOTE

The schedule of forums for grade II examiners, commencing in the autumn, will be listed in the next issue of CoDe.

If you are now setting out to obtain either grade I or grade II examiner status please note that an Examiners' Log Book must be obtained from the BCU office. The Log Book sets out the order of involvement with tests and awards courses which is necessary, and must be signed by the supervising Examiner in each case, provided he or she is satisfied that the trainee Examiner has performed in accordance with the requirements.

OBTAINING ALTERNATIVE AWARDS

The BCU Members' Yearbook, circulated with February Focus contained a revised version of the Tests and Awards Synopsis leaflet.

This did not introduce any changes, but was intended to make more clear the agreed system.

Unfortunately, in one respect it has proved ambiguous, and the wording should be amended as follows:

p57. Under the heading 'Senior Instructor' amend the first paragraph to read: 'To obtain a Senior Instructor qualification in an alternative discipline, a Senior Instructor must hold the entry qualifications and normally attend the relevant Senior Instructor training course prior to assessment.'

CANI MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE

Entry forms and fees for all tests and awards carried out by CANI members should be sent to: CANI, c/o House of Sport, Upper Malone Road, Belfast BT9 5LA. Cheques should be made payable to CANI.

CANI's own Start Test Certificates have now been produced, and CANI badges will be available shortly.

TESTING PEOPLE WHO ARE DISABLED

Terms of reference have been agreed detailing the Union's policy with regard to the awarding of tests or qualifications to people who are disabled.

The long-established principles have now been spelled out to assist those who need to exercise discretion in this area. Please send s.a.e. to the BCU office for a copy of the leaflet BCU Tests and Awards for People Who Are Disabled.

1991 COACHING CONFERENCES

The BCU COACHING CONFERENCE is planned to be held in Devon from 5-6 October (please note change of date).

A very full programme of workshops will include white water, touring, sea kayaking and surfing - the Dart, and the beautiful Devon coast, is nearby.

Costs will be kept down by offering camping, and local bed and breakfast facilities. Please reserve the date - full details in the next issue of CoDe.

The SCA COACHING CONFERENCE is to be staged from 2-3 November at Faskally Outdoor Centre, Pitlochry, Perthshire. Full details to follow.

IT'S LUCK, NOT SKILL !

by Dudley Courtman

A family holiday for me usually means the time when there is, for diplomatic reasons, an enforced separation from my canoe. The unformulated code is that at one time in the year I have to put my familial duties to the fore and content myself with the occasional flick through the latest canoeing magazine. Having spent many weekends during the year on rivers and estuaries various, far and wide, there comes a time when I have to put adventuring aside and accept that there is life after canoeing.

After the usual periodical hesitancy, indecision, and inertia, a holiday decision emerged: we were to accept a long-standing generous invitation to visit Finland. The land of lakes and untamed rivers - and no canoe! Fantasy would have to suffice I consoled myself. I would plan expeditions, take this rapid to the left, shoot the next on the right, portage the next, and pass the night in the log cabin at the lakeside. A few spectacular photographs might help to appease my craving and perhaps provide a canoeing conversation piece amongst 'the team' back home.

'Now we must try and arrange some canoeing for you'.

Imagine my incredulity when the full impact of these words penetrated my consciousness. My Finnish hostess, Liisa Kokkonen, had already demonstrated her determination to ensure that her English guests experienced all the scenic and cultural flavour of her country and now it was time for her to organise some canoeing.

At the very smart tourist office in Kussamo I sat at the desk and tried to answer the questions: 'What sort of canoeing do you want to do/How good are you?'

It would appear, from the smart brochures on display, that you could go rafting, or could join various kayaking parties. A whole day's advanced kayaking was a possibility although the cost was correspondingly advanced as well. The prospect of having to pay helped my concentration - it seemed unnatural, almost sacrilege, to have to pay to get afloat. The reality was. I calculated, that if I passed the opportunity by I would rue it forever: I therefore settled for the most adventurous, and expensive deal on offer - an organised seven hour expedition on the 'hairy' stuff in kayaks. Not too hairy I hoped, casting a worried glance at the 'come on' video at the end of the counter, where the stylised antics of the 'squirters' and 'pirouetters' were playing conspicuously, complete with deafening roars and applauding spectators.

'Ah yea! That's good. The guy at the hotel says you can join him tomorrow night at six o'clock. He's going out for a paddle with some of his friends' my hostess, Liisa, explained excitedly; she was pleased that she had managed to arrange something for me.

'How good are you?' she said as an afterthought.

I assured her that I paddled up to Grade IV whilst secretly hoping that it would be the lower end of that.

'Oh by the way,' she added, 'He said they would be in doubles.'

Oh dear, I thought, Canadians were not really my thing. I only aspired to the expertise of Bill Mason and still had a way to go. Nevertheless it sounded like a prospective adventure. And so it turned out to be!

The next day I prepared myself psychologically, crossbow, draws, J's, prys, sweeps, slaps etc., before I presented myself, in the evening, at the hotel Ruka Palxelu Oy, where I was to meet my new canoeing compatriots. Two of them worked at the hotel and, as far as I could gather, were responsible for the river rafting expeditions that were part of the hotel's special tourist attraction. They certainly had the gear! I was led to the equipment room for the fitting out ceremony: racks of hollofil zipped space suits, crash hats, buoyancy-aids, green wellies and, yes, rubber gloves. (The latter, it was explained, were to combat the rocks!) I acknowledged the wisdom having sustained very scabby injuries on submerged granite in the past by the importuned assumption of a swim bothered me a little.

I joked with my support crew (nearest and dearest, and Finnish friends);

'Take my photograph dressed to kill then we'll go home'.

They obliged then left me to my fate, thinking perhaps that the two huge Finnish leaders looked capable of carrying recalcitrant canoeists up rapids single handed.

The international canoeing camaraderie asserted itself: our vocabulary was limited but actions speak volumes and a hand came over the back seat of the mini-bus proffering a canoe-size can of beer. Oh my God, I thought, this is going to be an epic.

En route to the piste, no pun intended, Joki, for that was my large partner's name, provided a compelling prelude in halting English:

'You scared? Me scared. Top of rapid, really scared, big breath, let's go, fantastic!' He demonstrated with deep breathing, flaring nostrils, and blazing eyes.

I was beginning to wonder about this guy but attributed his playlet either to language limitations, or to the ferocity of the river, hoping that it was the former. This hunch was partly borne out by our conversation on embarkation.

'I will paddle in the front' I suggested.

'No, I'll sit there' Joki said, and promptly settled himself on the stern seat.

My support crew had joined us at this point to witness the departure and engage in final farewells, or so it seemed: there were ten kilometres of lake and rapids ahead and we looked very determined men. Liisa, sensing that there was a serious side to this escapade asked my compatriots in Finnish: 'You must need an awful lot of skill to paddle this river'.

'Oh no, not skill, just luck', replied Joki with a cavalier grin. Liisa convulsed with laughter and, mercifully for me, decided to keep the joke to herself.

The first rapid was a joy: bubbly water, contra-currents, nice clear V's. Knelt in the bow, I emulated my Canadian hero, Bill, or tried to, and kept us in the main flow. Joki appeared excited at my performance and shouted to his mate astern. I hoped it was complimentary. We came to a large lake, unzipped ourselves and paddled into the Finnish wilderness where the sky, land and water melted together in a blend of mirrored subtle colours which hide all horizons. Such beauty.

Joke, responding to the serenity of the lake and it's soothing spirits, felt a song was needed to speed us along.

'You have national song?' he asked.

I conceded that this was the case.

'You sing!' he commanded.

And so 'God Save the Queen' was rendered on a Finnish lake completely destroying its tranquility. It was countered with the Finnish equivalent which sounded far more seemly. Perhaps because I couldn't understand a word of it.

My reverie was temporarily disturbed by a strange rushing sound in the undergrowth on a passing island. Joki spoke 'A beer?' (My question mark not his). 'No thanks', I replied, thinking that for a hard canoeing man he was approaching grade seven. 'A beer', he insisted. 'No, not really just now thanks'. He was unimpressed. 'A beer, a beer!' The penny dropped - he meant a 'bear'! I quickly increased the stroke rate and marvelled how minor nuances in pronunciation can lead to major misconceptions with disastrous implications. The ridiculousness of my situation overwhelmed me and the canoe gently rocked to my restrained laughter for the next three kilometres. What a story, and the adventure had hardly begun!

Joki informed me that he was chief bear (beer!) spotter for the area and reported all findings to the Area Wildlife Centre: his score that summer was 40.

The lake funnelled into a gorge and we landed for an inspection and, inevitably, more beer. Cigarettes were 'de rigueur' with the confession that they soothed the nerves! What was in store? The plan seemed to be that if you downed enough beer you would gain the necessary courage to run the rapid.

It was a Grade III: very interesting with choices right or left with places definitely to avoid. I made the mistake of suggesting possible routes: the beer and Bill Mason's masterpiece 'Path of the Paddle' were talking. It was my undoing. There was a silence when I finished my pontificating. 'You go first' they said.

I shut up and zipped up. The planned route down the right hand side was a bit ambitious - it reminded me rather of Bala Mill where you think you are in charge and find the current really is. We went left, despite my declared intention to do the opposite and I assumed, probably wrongly, that it was because Joki had changed his mind. I headed, nevertheless, for the white stuff rather than the rocks: it was a thrilling wet ride and we survived quite well. Once we had safely landed at the bottom Joki became very excited, you might say ebullient.

'Great, great, great,' he said, and made his way to my end of the boat to shake hands.

I thought this reaction was a bit over demonstrative and wondered what he had expected at this point.

'Watch boys swimming now,' he said somewhat gleefully and pointed upstream at the point where his two compatriots were due to appear.

By now I was feeling concerned for them, after all one was the manager of the local sports centre and had only come to make up the numbers. Right from the start he had the appearance of someone who couldn't really believe it was happening to him. They did eventually arrive having followed a similar route to us. Surprisingly they survived.

The arrival of the next big one, a mile or so further on was signalled by the ceremonious breaking out of the beer again! This rapid was technical at the start, if you wanted it to be, with some big standing waves and stoppers further down. I was for spurning the straight run on the right and going for a neat break from the left stream into the central eddy - Bill would have loved me. Joki was with me all the way even to the extent of almost bringing the obligatory beer stop inspection to a sudden curtailment. As far as he was concerned I was his man and we were an unstoppable combination. The river had a thing or two yet to say on this score.

We made the left hand chute very neatly as planned, let ourselves down it under control and reached into the eddy, hanging draw, textbook stuff, for the turn, or as it turned out in this case, for the capsize. In the water in the eddy, which was a stage better than in the rapid amongst the rocks, I had a sneaking suspicion that Joki had jumped overboard in his excitement but put that thought aside as I struggled to redeem the situation. We could stand, so an empty and re-launch was relatively easy. Joki couldn't wait to see the boys!

Over they came on the right, saw the standing waves and, I swear, abandoned ship. Much wallowing and struggling for breath

and foot holds followed as Joki excitedly threw a line which, luckily, was too short otherwise we would have joined the swimming party.

The full significance of our predicament slowly penetrated my consciousness: it's getting dark, miles from anywhere, four people with one boat and two paddles between them, one boat and two paddles somewhere down a kilometre of rapid. The bodies seemed relatively safe, we must get the paddles or we're in trouble I thought. So off Joki and I set. At first we had an unfortunate skirmish with an upstream rock but survived. Joki became quite excited when I selected the interesting route. Yes, the stopper was quite big and filled us to within six inches of the gunwhale! Undeterred we pressed on and eventually caught up the paddles in slower water.

What now? I was for scrambling back along the bank to help the others. Joki wanted to paddle against the current. Was it the bears, I wondered? We paddled like hell: from rock to ferry glide, to rock, to bank and so on until we were within waving distance. Gesticulation with paddles left the two huddled figures on the bank unmoved.

Come on I thought, get into your boat and get yourselves down here. Within one hundred metres of the top of the rapid I was all for giving up but Joki insisted on us dragging our craft to the very top - he wanted to do it again! It wasn't fear of the bears after all!

Our compatriots were dejected, their boat was pinned on the bottom of the rapid with its bottom looking rather sagged. The two supermen tried a token pull but it was obviously there to stay. The airlock had to be broken: I waded in upstream with all 'the muscle' alongside me. 'One, two, three and heaven!' I heard myself saying as we ducked under in unison to get a grip on the upstream gunwhale. When I heard 'the boys' chanting with me in English I knew we could move mountains. And so we did. Up she came like a cork! We congratulated ourselves and set about reminding the polyethylene of its memory with the aid of a few well directed kicks.

The stopper again! A successful descent all round this time. We had learned our lessons. At the lake we searched our souls, thanked our stars and paddled steadily into the darkening night to where our support vehicle was waiting. On arrival we stripped off our suits on the lake shore, emptied our boats and re-adjusted ourselves. Nakedness is de rigueur in Finland and I stood as nature intended drying off. By way of adjusting the balance a little between giant Fin and visiting Englishmen, particularly with one who had dictated a lot of action, Joki critically surveyed my physique and held his two fingers an inch apart.

'Very little,' he said.

The cold and effort had taken its toll! I'm sure that more agile minds would have summoned up a suitable riposte. I was stumped. His generosity reasserted itself for on the way home he insisted on a team photograph at my chalet.

And so ended the four man descent of the Kita Joki river by Canadian canoe; we all felt we'd been there, right to the edge, together. I reflected that next time I might try to persuade my compatriots to kneel in the boat and aspire to skill rather than luck. But on second thoughts, I might not!

Dudley Courtman is Principal of the Newham Outdoor Education Centre in Essex. He was for many years Secretary of the British Schools Canoeing Association, and is now on the advisory committee of the British Canoe Youth initiative. He has produced a number of papers on canoeing in the curriculum.

INSTRUCTORS REQUIRED

Climbing, canoeing and sailing. Min grades BCU SI and RYA tidal. Experience in other activities preferable. Min age 21 years. Driving licence essential. Season vacancies March-November and July-September. Apply with CV and recent photo to The Director, Courtlands Centre, Kingsbridge, S Devon TQ7 4BN

CANOE COURSES and Adventure Holidays

on sea, surf, river and Dartmoor. Youngsters, adults and family multi adventure courses including canoeing, sailing, water-skiing, climbing, yachting. Specialist sea canoe courses, proficiency to advanced. See our video. Please contact: Mr D Garland, Courtlands Centre, Kingsbridge, S Devon TQ7 4BN. (0548) 550227

ADVANCED PROFICIENCY TRAINING - WHO IS IT FOR ?

asks Chris Dickinson

In the last couple of years I have become involved in the training and assessment of paddlers at the Advanced Proficiency level and it has forced me to reconsider just who I am aiming the training course at. I started out with the assumption that all the paddlers who might come on the course ultimately would aspire to the Award itself, my first mistake, but an understandable one. On the first training course I attracted paddlers of vastly different ability level. One paddler needed only some polishing and mind expanding before taking the test whilst at the other extreme was a paddler in a poorly suited boat, with Inland Proficiency and the ability to roll sometimes, little or no experience of paddling above grade 2 and no leadership experience. I should not have been surprised, for both paddlers met the entry requirements for the course, but each was there for different reasons and to be trained at a different level. On the other hand, the contrast in skill level was a great benefit to the course because for the weaker paddler it gave an image of where he was trying to get, whereas for the strong paddler it highlighted the care required to lead less experienced paddlers on more difficult rapids.

That first course convinced me that I should be flexible in my approach to the training according to the mixture of paddlers who applied and that it was vital to get as much of an indication of a paddlers ability and experience in advance as possible. In addition I saw that the course can and should appeal to paddlers with a wide range of end objectives and initial skill levels. Simon Dawson, in CoDe 37, comes out strongly in favour of the "typical advanced proficiency training course" presenting "individual skills training within the framework of a group descent of a river". I would generally endorse Simon's views but would like to go a stage further and suggest that the Advanced Proficiency Training course should be seen as perhaps the most important course within the coaching scheme structure, a status which it probably doesn't hold at present. Clearly you will want to see my justification for this statement and I must stress that it is only a personal view.

I believe that the Advanced Proficiency Training can and should cater for the following paddlers.

- 1 Paddlers desiring to lead others on grade 3 plus rivers.
- 2 Individuals aspiring to the acquisition of the award.
- 3 Individuals looking to improve their confidence and competence on grade 3 water and above who do not necessarily aspire to the award.
- 4 Trainee Senior Instructors who want to raise their personal competence and confidence levels before proceeding to Senior Instructor Assessment.

It is not uncommon to see advanced training as a post SI step and indeed many SI holders are "afraid" to undertake advanced training because they feel it may show them up to be vulnerable. This is a sorry state of affairs which is engendered by the commonly held and fallacious view that you can't go for advanced training unless you are

of the right calibre to pass the test in the near future. I now strongly recommend Trainee Senior Instructors to think of advanced training as a perfectly logical next step because in a two day TSI course I am obliged to concentrate on teaching moving water techniques and on group leadership and safety issues and often cannot devote as much time to the coaching of candidates personal skills as they really require.

We have also seen in the Canoeing press calls for a course which any paddler, club member or otherwise can go on to improve their river skills and awareness. We hear regular comments about paddlers tackling rivers too hard for their actual person skill levels. Simon Dawson states, "there is now a large body of paddlers with a good knowledge of rescue techniques and equipment, but whose basic paddling skills leave a lot to be desired". We also hear folk griping about such and such an SI who is barely Proficiency level and cannot roll. All of these things are true. What we have to do is to promote our advanced training courses as a most valuable learning experience for any paddler of Proficiency standard and above and make certain that when paddlers of a variety of skills arrive we tailor a course which really meets their individual needs (even if this implies some training on grade 2 water) rather than being slave to the test syllabus. The coaching scheme steps are now so numerous that it is unrealistic to expect coaches to lay on yet more courses, without the "Advanced Proficiency" billing, so we must sell the advanced training course to the full, as a course which is of potential value to a vast range of paddlers. We must also ensure that the courses, whilst having a serious objective, promote the idea that kayaking is fun at a more advanced level provided that your skills and judgement become more advanced too. The post training feedback is essential to allow the trainee to see where they are at and what they need to do to achieve their objectives, not necessarily just those of the Advanced Proficiency syllabus.

It is certainly true in Scotland that many advanced training courses are under subscribed and do not even run. This I cannot fathom because the course probably offers exactly what the bulk of keen paddlers need. So now it is up to us, the coaches, and the Coaching Scheme in general to promote the advanced training for what it is, a highly relevant training course which ought, after Proficiency Training, to be the most popular course in the calendar. In doing this it is time to play down the emphasis on the word "advanced" because it only succeeds in scaring away the very people who should really be benefitting from this course. Remember, the training is far more important than the assessment, and enjoying your paddling safely is the ultimate aim. Out of this philosophy will come the advanced leaders we are looking for.

Chris Dickinson is a member of Cowal Kayak Club, and is also a BCU Coach 'who will only accept trainees, or club members, who think that kayaking is fun'!

PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY

If you earn part of your income from canoeing instruction, or coaching, you are reminded that professional indemnity may be advisable.

Those who work entirely as volunteers, accepting only 'out of pocket expenses' are insured by the cover provided through their membership. This protects against claims made against them for negligence, and includes the cost of defending an action, and paying any damages which may be awarded, up to a maximum of £2,000,000.

An employer should normally protect those who are in their employ. If you 'freelance', however, or are in doubt as to whether or not you are always covered, then 'professional indemnity' is available upon receipt of your name and address and fee (renewable annually) of £7.50 at the BCU office. A receipt and certificate will be sent by the insurers.

The reason for the additional requirement is that if you accept payment for your services, you are in a professional relationship with your clients, and there is an enhanced 'duty of care'. In the event of negligence being proven, a court is likely to award a higher scale of damages. The insurance company, therefore, requires a higher premium against the increased risk.

Please note that this insurance can only be applied individually, and does not cover others 'in your employment' or sub-contracted by you. For information concerning insurance as an employer please contact Perkins Slade Ltd, Elizabeth House, 22 Suffolk St, Queensway, Birmingham B1 1LS (021 625 8080).

NATIONAL COACHING FOUNDATION COURSES

A full programme of courses is available at Introductory, Key Courses, and Advanced Workshops levels. Covering 'Working with Children', 'The Coach in Action', 'The Body in Action', 'Mind Over Matter', 'Coaching Yourself', 'Prevention - Not Injury' at all levels.

A Centre is available near you. Just phone (free) 0800 590381 for full details.

Please remember that the price is now £2.50 per test for Kayak and Canoe STAR TESTS, PLACID WATER and SURF TESTS. Purchased in advance, Certificates and Badges are £20.50 per ten (values may be mixed).

The discount on 50 tests redeems your membership fee !

MENTAL PREPARATION TECHNIQUE FOR RACING AND TRAINING

A paper presented to the 1991 Competition Coaches Conference

by BRIAN MILLER

When a canoeist competes in a major event he or she competes against other people who are fit, strong, flexible, powerful and skillful. All of the competitors have devoted time and energy to becoming a top-class canoeist.

But of course, there is only ever one champion and another couple of athletes who each receive a medal. Often, the difference between a medal and tenth place is only a matter of seconds.

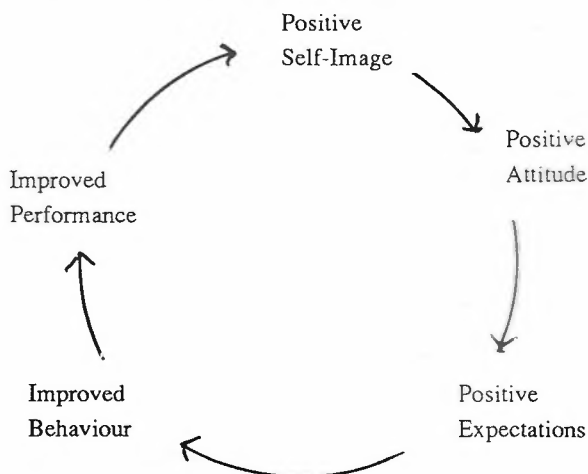
Interviews with the athletes who succeed at the highest level focus on what aspect of their preparation made them different from everyone else. Nine times out of ten, these great athletes refer to some mental edge, or some psychological toughness that gave them an advantage.

If you want to compete against other canoeists from around the world, then you need to think carefully about mental preparation for competition and training. It is not enough to expect to win simply because you've covered more mileage than the next athlete, or because you've lifted heavier weights. In the final analysis, it's often more important that you 'kept your head' in the pressurised environment of top-class competition.

THE SUCCESS CYCLE

The successful East German approach to psychology in sport was based around something called The Success Cycle. The cycle shows the relationship between how you feel about yourself and how you are likely to perform. I worked with the Australian Olympic paddlers in Seoul, and we concentrated on the idea of developing The Success Cycle.

FIGURE ONE: The Success Cycle



If you have a positive self-image, you are more likely to have a positive attitude and this in turn is likely to lead to higher expectations of yourself. This tends to lead to improved behaviours (like getting to bed a little earlier! or eating correctly), and because of these improvements the level of performance increases.

Consequently, your self-image is enhanced and everything moves along nicely! But the effects of a negative self-image can be just as powerful, so it's important that you learn to keep the cycle moving upwards rather than downwards.

The easiest way to ensure that this happens is to make sure that you're getting the most out of all training sessions and competitions. And one way of helping to make sure this happens is to set goals and targets for yourself.

We know that preparation is the key to success. A Texas oil billionaire once said that there were three secrets to success. First of all, an individual had to work out exactly what he wanted from a certain

situation. Not roughly or vaguely, but specifically. Then he had to work out what costs or sacrifices would be needed to get these things. And finally he had to be prepared to pay those costs and make those sacrifices.

Unfortunately, many athletes (from all sports) get two out of three right, but fail to get their hat-trick.

You should set yourself goals on a daily basis. These might relate to school/work or family commitments, as well as sport. Each training session serves a purpose in your build-up, and it's important that you set a goal on each occasion. The goal might be quantifiable, for instance you might be looking to clock a certain time over a certain distance. But the goals could also relate to qualities such as, maintaining your concentration throughout a lengthy training session, or increasing your commitment to the stretching element of the warm-down.

In any case it's important that you set a goal before the start of a given training session and then evaluate yourself once the session is over. In canoeing we tend to spend a lot more time training than competing, and it's vital that we get the most out of the training sessions. It should never get to the stage when you're 'just going through the motions' of another work-out. Once the coach has explained the major points or the workload for a training session, you should then start to get your 'mind in gear' and focus on one or two key elements for that session. Perhaps while you're going through the first part of your warm-up, you could set yourself a target for the rest of the work-out.

FIGURE TWO is a sample page of what a training diary for a young athlete might look like. I have previously used it with British and Australian Olympians. For each session the athlete gets a chance to set two goals. At the end of the session, she/he can then review her/himself on a scale of 1 to 10, and make any comments that seem relevant. These comments might help to set targets for the next day's training session.

FIGURE TWO

GOAL SETTING FOR TRAINING SESSIONS

GOALS:	1	
	2	
EVALUATION:	1	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		Terrible Very Good
	2	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		Terrible Very Good
Comments		

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After using this type of system for a while, any canoeist should be able to reflect on previous training sessions to see 'where he's come from' over the weeks or months. This would hopefully help lead to an enhanced self-image and this should contribute to The Success Cycle!

VISUALISATION

Another important aspect of competition preparation is known as visualisation or mental rehearsal. So what is this visualisation and how can it help canoeists? Basically, it's a form of skill training that complements traditional physical practice of skills and movements. Quite simply you can sit in a comfortable chair or lie on a bed, relax and think about your sport. It sounds too good to be true, but we know from a whole range of international research that the combination of physical and mental practice in the most effective way of refining a skill.

This is particularly true if you are trying to modify an ineffective technique that you have had for years. This situation is almost invariably more difficult than when an athlete is starting from scratch with an entirely new skill.

Why does visualisation work? Well, basically it helps to 'groove in' the correct blueprint for success. If an athlete becomes effective at the skill of visualisation, we find that his brain will send 'electrical messages' to his muscles in the same sequence as if he were physically doing the same action. The only difference is that the 'voltage' will not be large enough to actually make the muscles move. However, when an athlete lies still and mentally rehearses their paddling technique, for example, it is not uncommon to see the muscles in the shoulders and wrists making small, involuntary twitching movements.

While some coaches have been teaching versions of visualisation for many years, I feel that the practice can be optimised by following a few basic ground rules. There are seven key features that can maximise such training. These points are a summary of the latest research data that has been compiled from around the world.

TABLE ONE

- 1 You should adopt a comfortable position (sitting or lying) prior to the session. Your eyes should be closed, and ideally you should have a relatively quiet room to practice in.
- 2 Athletes are conditioned to using a warm-up prior to the start of any physical training session. Continue this theme in a mental training session. Start by spending a few minutes focusing on your breathing rate or on different muscle groups. Warm-up the brain!
- 3 The rehearsal should be seen in the correct time-frame. In other words, slow-motion or super-fast speeds are out. Chariots of Fire stuff won't help here!
- 4 You should see the movements as you do in real life. Rehearse the scene from an internal perspective ie looking through your own eye sockets. Try not to see the movement as if you were watching yourself on a TV.
- 5 Visualisation is a skill that needs practice. If you find it difficult to begin with you should persevere, as progress is made quickly with daily work-outs.
- 6 Don't leave your visualisation sessions to chance. They should have a place in your weekly training schedule. At certain times of the year, Soviet athletes have as much as one third of their training units devoted to mental practice sessions. These are programmed events which form part of their regular commitments.
- 7 Always see yourself performing well and positively. Don't rehearse nightmares!

Canoeists who are serious about improving their standard of performance should develop the skill of effectively visualising the technical elements of their sport. Having acquired this ability, they can use the strategy whenever and wherever they like.

COPING WITH PRE-COMPETITION NERVES

Nowadays canoeists of all standards devote time and effort to the sport. People make sacrifices in an effort to improve from one season to the next. Often they will make a financial commitment to the sport in the hope that, 'This year will see my biggest breakthrough'.

Despite these good intentions, and often despite some excellent performances in training or low-key competitions, many kayakers fail to live up to their expectations. They underachieve and in the world of international sport this is often described as 'choking'.

So how is it that some athletes seem to be able to perform consistently well when the pressure is really on, while others never quite produce the goods? Why don't all athletes choke?

One way that you can reduce this variation in performance at the crucial times, is to arm yourself with some coping strategies. These are techniques that will give you the power to gain some control over your reaction to pressure.

If you become distracted or overly 'hyped-up' in the days, hours or even minutes prior to an event, it's important that you can get yourself back in the 'groove' as quickly as possible. The Americans call it being 'in the zone' and they are referring to something known as the Zone of Optimal Functioning or ZOF.

Basically this is the state where an athlete feels good and feels sharp. They are in control of the pre-competition nervousness. They are neither too complacent or too 'pumped-up'. Their attentional focus is appropriate and they are focusing on the technical or tactical elements that are important to performance. They are in the ZOF.

However, even if athletes know what they are supposed to be thinking about, excessive nervousness still has a habit of making athletes underachieve. In these instances it is vital that you have some sort of coping skill, and the most commonly used techniques normally focus on breathing control.

Centering is a breathing technique originally developed about two thousand years ago by Tibetan monks! Today it is the world's most commonly used mental training device. Most Eastern European athletes are taught this skill.

Centering is basically a technique that can help you to reduce tension prior to, or even during, the competition. It gives athletes control over their bodies and allows them to dictate the level of pre-event arousal.

Canoeists who take the time to learn Centering can keep the technique as a weapon in their armoury. They don't have to use the skill every time they compete, but they know that it's there if they need it. This can be a great confidence booster, and once again it can help set you on The Success Cycle!

Normally, if an athlete practices Centering for about one minute a day (in front of a mirror) for a fortnight, they acquire the skill and then they've virtually got it for life. One or two minutes practice per week will allow you to stay in touch with the exercise, and then you can use it at any time prior to or during a competition. It would be used whenever you felt that your nervousness was just a little too high and you wanted to re-gain control.

JUDGING PERFORMANCE

Another area that you can work on, related to how you judge yourself after competitions. Kayakers at all levels of sport experience both successes and failures. As young athletes progress through the ranks they are bound to be exposed to a range of competition, and hence they experience a variety of results. This is all part of sport.

However, it appears that there are important differences concerning the ways in which athletes react to success or failure. Coaches, friends and loved-ones can play a vital role in helping athletes develop a healthy attitude towards performance.

Canoeists should be encouraged to accept responsibility for both success and failure. If you do very well in a race it should be perfectly acceptable to say, 'Yes, I deserved this victory because I trained hard and I put in the effort'. We should actively encourage this type of positive attitude.

But if you underachieve in a similar event, you should still accept responsibility. How many times have you heard competitors complain about the weather conditions, or their footwear or the journey to the

venue? You are encouraged to accept that certain elements of any poor performance are down to you.

In Seoul in 1988, American 800m star Johnny Gray, failed to make the final. In a scathing press conference that followed his elimination he blamed everyone except himself. He blamed the Korean organisers and he complained that the now standard 'holding-room' exercise at major championships was ruining international athletics. He claimed that the fact that athletes had to sit in a small room with their opposition for some time before the race was restricting performance.

While there is some truth in what Gray said, the fact of the matter is that those conditions are the same for everyone else, and those conditions have been around for some time now. In reality, Gray was simply trying to blame external circumstances for his disappointment. If athletes are willing to accept internal reasons ("I trained hard" or "I really went for it") when they are successful, then they should also accept them when they are unsuccessful.

This area of sport psychology is known as attribution theory, and has an important role to play in competition preparation. Unless canoeists are taught to evaluate their performances in a helpful way, then their progress will be affected. Judgmental comments such as, 'I was great' or 'I was lousy' are not constructive. Rather, tri-athletes should be encouraged to review a number of processes or mechanisms that influence their performance.

A review of interviews given by some of the more successful athletes in Seoul showed a remarkable similarity. Relatively few said things like, 'I just want the gold' or 'I'm only interested in winning'. Many athletes talked about taking care of the factors they could control, and forgetting about the ones they could not. In most instances it seemed

that the athletes deliberately tried to focus on the mechanisms of success, rather than just the result.

Research has shown that athletes who lose sight of these mechanisms or processes are often the ones who underachieve. It seems as if they are distracted by a focus that only looks towards the end result. Coaches should try to develop a process-orientation with young athletes. In other words, the end result is not the only measure of success in sport.

If athletes are encouraged to use the internalised system for accepting successes and failures, and they are also schooled in the use of being able to evaluate performance in terms of a number of processes or mechanisms, then they are well on the way to developing an appropriate and healthy attitude towards competition.

SUMMARY

I believe that if British canoeists are to reach their full potential in the international arena, they have to consider the mental part of their training programme. By using such techniques as goal setting, visualisation and centering they can increase their chances of reaching their goals. In addition, if they review their performances in an honest and open manner, they will be able to learn more from each competitive experience.

The combination of appropriate physical and mental training, and a healthy attitude towards the sport will allow canoeists to perform creditably in the pressurised environment of top-class sport. Canoeists who make a commitment to improving themselves on all fronts, will be rewarded by a successful and enjoyable sporting career

Brian Miller is Sports Psychologist and proprietor of One Track Mind Consultancy, PO Box 352, Harlow, Essex. He has worked as team psychologist to the Australian team at the Commonwealth Games, the World Student Games and at the Seoul Olympics. Here he introduces the idea of sports psychology and some groundwork for goal setting over the winter months.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

I used to call Coaching Panel meetings for Hampshire two or three times a year. Usually the same 6-8 members would attend, out of a Panel of about 100.

It dawned on me one day that those involved came from different parts of the County.

The idea then developed that they should be asked to become focal points for their localities.

I suggested that they should contact each and every Coaching Scheme member, and other canoeing interested persons in the area, living within about 10 miles, and get them together to see what could be done to improve opportunities and facilities for canoeing in the area.

Only one member actually did this. John Drew wrote to about 23 Coaching Scheme members in and around Portsmouth, and set up a meeting.

Sixteen attended the first one. He phoned those who didn't, and got even more the next time.

Initially the group decided to paddle together, and John set up a series of meets. There was no interest in forming a club 'with all that that entailed'.

The authority-owned sailing base had canoes but 'hadn't been able to get anyone interested in canoeing'. That changed, and soon the base had difficulty in coping with the demand.

After a year or so it became evident that a club was necessary for the area, and Portsmouth canoe Club was born. This family-based club is still going strong.

All this took place in the mid 70's. John sadly died suddenly in 1984. The evidence that canoeing opportunities will be developed by paddlers and canoeing interested group representatives getting together locally, lives on.

The Plan

LCOs have been asked to identify volunteers willing to act as District Organisers in the John Drew mould. A full blue-print and agenda to assist DOs to call and run an initial meeting has been sent out. Address labels and further support are available.

Are you willing to act as a co-ordinator to see if better liaison, shared use of facilities, the provision of more events, better relationships with the local club - or getting a club established - greater use by the community of the local canoeing base, or sports centre, can be achieved for the benefit of all?

Your region can only improve its relevance to the average member through increased activity.

Please contact your LCO if you are willing to set up the initial get together, to determine what needs to be done in your locality.

The 'John Drew Initiative' could dramatically improve participation and opportunities for paddlers, and would-be paddlers, in your neighbourhood, almost overnight!

Geoff Good