

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

Editor: Director of Coaching

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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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CHRISTMAS IS COMING

ideas for a canoeing instructor's stocking !

Canoeing Handbook	£14.50
Instructors Plasticised Crib Cards	£7.95
Star Test Plasticised Marking Cards - Kayak	£7.95
Star Test Plasticised Marking Cards - Canoe	£7.95
Log Book	£2.50

Prices include p&p. Cheque with order to BCU office please. Orders despatched same day as received.

Please remember the fees:

		non-members
Star/PW/Canoe Tests	£2.50	£3.50 (3 Star-only)
Proficiency/Advanced	£5	£7
Rescue/Resuscitation/Pool	£3.50	£5
Canoeing Safety Test	£2.00 certificate /	£2 badge

LYME BAY

The trial of the two directors on four counts of manslaughter has been opened. There will be another hearing in February, but the main trial is unlikely to take place until next autumn.

In the meantime, we have been told that the evidence is now all sub judice, and so opinion is not permissible.

What is of public record, however, is the fact that the whole incident revolved around the group being blown out to sea by an offshore wind. It has no direct relevance, therefore, in situations where this is not a possibility.

Some of the news broadcasts have given the impression that the sad deaths occurred almost instantaneously. This is not so. The 'raft' was held together for a long time before the first kayaks swamped. Another period of time then elapsed after all the group was in the water, before hypothermia set in and drowning occurred.

TELEPHONE ENQUIRIES

Please note the revised schedule

Would members please note that telephone enquiries to the Coaching Department at the BCU office, which require direct contact, should be made during the following times.

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday - 0900-1630.

The Coaching Clerk, Secretary or Director of Coaching will not be available for telephone enquirers on Wednesdays.

An answerphone service operates between 1630 and 0900 each night, and at weekends.

It is appreciated that everyone is very busy, but where possible, if applications for routine items such as Star Test entry forms could be made in writing, it does assist considerably - a pre-paid order form is now sent out routinely with each test entry form book.

COMPETITION COACHES CONFERENCE

PLEASE NOTE THE REVISED DATE

3-4 December 1994 - not February as previously stated

The planned theme is 'Quality Control'.

Full details will be sent direct to all registered Competition Trainers and Coaches when available.

Please reserve the REVISED date.

Dear CoDe

Dear CoDe,

It has taken me a long time to get round to writing this, but Sue Burns (CoDe 53) ended her letter with a question so I felt she should have some response.

No, Sue, I am sure you are not alone in thinking that women don't need special courses. Sport, and within it, canoeing, has long been dominated by men. Many would say so it should be. Sport is rough and tough and if women can't take it, then they - and the not so rough and tough men - should stay out of it.

Fortunately recent history has allowed a rethink of this. It is now widely recognised that sport offers many benefits to people, male and female. Some sports and areas of sport will attract only the committed and strong, the rough and tough. Some have room and make room for others.

Now, while both men and women can be committed, strong and tough, some are not or choose not to be. I think that canoeing still has something to offer them. Not everybody wants to train and be seriously involved in their paddling. The fact that men's squads seem keener does not, for me, fundamentally imply that we should not encourage women into the sport. As one who appreciates canoe-sport for its width and diversity, my stance would be that diversity in the people involved also enhances the sport.

Perhaps I can appreciate, more than some, the reasons to make it more accessible to those for whom it has been less well tailored for in the past. There are those in canoeing, and unfortunately in the coaching scheme, who have no respect for other disciplines, other approaches, other aspirations. I know both men and women who have been discouraged by narrow vision and chauvinistic (in its original sense) attitudes.

There are lots of girls and women who get the opportunity to try canoeing, yet not many of them manage to filter through to even Senior Instructor level. For many, lack of confidence, but for some reason women do this more than men. It is certainly not within the scope of this letter to research the reasons why, but it does seem worth it to me to try to provide help, encouragement and support.

We need in the Coaching Scheme, not just those who see canoeing as an assortment of strokes, skills, practices and results. We need people who can empathise with others. We need instructors and coaches who can be sympathetic and acceptant of wide differences in personality, approach and physical ability. I would say that we need women, as well as men, and just now it seems that some would appreciate a bit of extra support.

That Sue doesn't think that women need special treatment of special privileges does not surprise me. There are probably many who, knowing me, will be surprised that I am writing this. But just because I've coped, doesn't mean that I can't see beyond myself and my experience to see that some more help and encouragement could be needed by others.

I think there's probably even more feeling of 'What's the problem?' within Scottish canoeing. Up here we generally have far more access to water, and that water tends to be less crowded. Limited space and resources rarely bring out the best in people, and rare access, and crowded eddies, certainly demonstrate this. Assertiveness and even aggression become almost necessary skills. Women generally tend not to excel at these. I don't suggest that we need 'female only' courses to give extra training in this. I do though believe that in increasing the confidence of women paddlers, and in raising awareness of all those involved in coaching, will in the long run be to the benefit of the Coaching Scheme and canoeing as a whole

GILL BERROW, Dunoon

Dear CoDe,

Regarding the letter from Sue Burns on 'female friendly' canoeing courses, I feel I must disagree strongly with the statement that these courses encourage women to try canoeing, but that they do not change the sport as a whole, and that such women do not stay long in the sport.

Firstly, the sport will not be changed overnight and the effects of more women starting canoeing at 'grass roots' level will not filter through to the more elite sections of the sport for a long time.

Secondly, from the experience we have had in the Conwy area of North Wales, where we have run a number of women only courses, and deliberately promulgate a policy of encouraging women to join our club, (membership of which includes females and males of all ages), I would say that women who start canoeing in this way definitely do stay in the sport in at least equal numbers to men, and many who have joined our club as a result of this type of start have made great strides in personal development, in self defence and in canoeing ability, and have become very positive and useful members of the club.

Our approach is to use only open cockpit canoes and kayaks in our introductory courses to avoid the off-putting effects many people experience from enforced capsized drills early in their canoeing career.

If Sue Burns' main experience is in slalom, she may well be tuned into the closed cockpit kayak as an introductory boat, and I can only thin her impression that women do not stay long in canoeing is because she has seen many who are put off by capsized drills and the fear of being trapped in a kayak where their knees are held under the deck, at a time when they need plenty of encouragement to overcome their lack of confidence and anxieties in a less stressful way.

Remember, people do not necessarily tell you the real reasons why they do not pursue a particular sport, especially if they think that might make them look a bit wimpy or inadequate!

JACKIE WYNNE-FREER, Gwynedd

Dear CoDe,

I read with interest the article by Roderick Galway which encouraged more SI's to attend the Coach Training courses.

Perhaps the coaching department could clarify the situation, by giving us the following statistics, regarding the new scheme:

- When did the first new style Coach Training scheme first run?
- How many in total have now completed this new course?
- How many have since been awarded full Coach status?
- What was the average period from attending the course, to achieving Coach status?

CLIVE BEATTIE, Chalfont St Peter

DoC comments: The 'new style' Coach course has been running since 1981. Over the years a steady evolution has occurred, to the current situation where the one-week courses at the national centres are regarded as training courses only - the 2-day 'hard assessment' at the end has been omitted.

There has also latterly been a change of emphasis from coaching and demonstrating prescribed skills to a consideration of how motor skills are acquired, and how coaching skills are applied in a variety of situations.

This has been the pattern for two years now, and appears to be very successful. In the current year Plas y Brenin staged an additional course in November, and has just filled an additional one for next year, to be run in April.

Since the change in emphasis and assessment method, a total of 40 candidates have come through the national centres, and another 12 through the two regional courses which have been staged, with 6 currently in training.

As a result of the 'coach tutor' system, with candidates having between 6 months and 3 years to qualify, following the course, there are now a number 'in the pipeline' with 18 of those having been confirmed as Coaches.

Dear CoDe

I am very angry with the BCU after two recent incidents. I am a very busy E2, I run a lot of courses and examine a lot of people, all of this takes me a great deal of time, not only in running the courses but mainly with the seemingly endless paperwork that I have to fill in to satisfy the BCU.

I do this however so far without complaint. However in two separate instructor assessments that I have run, three candidates that I have failed have received their Instructor certificates. Well done the BCU for totally undermining me as an examiner, and giving a licence to kill to people that have been found not up to a safe standard.

With the amount of money the BCU received from these assessments I would have thought they could have got things right by now. How many other Instructors have received their awards in this way, I wonder?

In one stroke, the BCU have destroyed any confidence I had in them as a professional organisation, and have shown to me that they are indeed the amateurs I always feared they were.

Unless I am assured that anything like this can never happen again, I will no longer be either running courses or introducing people to the BCU.

For many years now the people running the BCU have come up with excuses when they have been found to be at fault, some valid, some not, but these mistakes are totally inexcusable, and undermine all those who have anything to do with the coaching scheme.

ROBERT GASSON, London

DoC comments: Robert Gasson's C3s were clearly marked as Fail, and a simple clerical error occurred in confirming Instructor status for the two candidates involved. Whether or not such a mistake is 'totally inexcusable' is a matter for debate - to the best of my knowledge one person only in the entire world claims to be infallible, and then only in matters of doctrine when speaking on behalf of One who is above.

The mistake is not one that we take lightly, however, and the candidates involved have been written to by recorded delivery, with our profound apologies, but with a request for the Certificates to be returned, and a clear statement made that they are not qualified.

In view of the serious nature of such an error, we have also checked the entire file for the year, and our clerk found one more wrong accreditation, in July 93, which has also been remedied.

I am afraid that I cannot give a cast-iron guarantee that no further mistakes can possibly occur, nor can any other mortal.

Members may like to know that our new permanent Coaching Clerk, Maria Winfield, spent most of her spare evenings during her first two weeks of employment sorting out a considerable inherited backlog at home - unasked and unpaid. She has now restored us to the point where most awards are processed within 14 days of receipt in the office, and tests within 7 days.

Dear CoDe,

I see from the CoDe just sent with an article under insurance that you only back volunteer instructors with the insurance. So because I work at a centre, I am backed by the local authority but not by you. But I have to pay my membership to you, but do not get full support from you. I feel this is wrong and I feel this is a big con. But I have to be a member to work at the centre I work at.

ADRIAN GREEN, Chichester.

DoC comments: It is the law, not the BCU, which determines that an employer is liable in the case of an accident. There is always the possibility that the individual instructor may be sued, however, and in this case the BCU insurance would protect you up to a certain level. If you are concerned, additional insurance is available at £5 pa. This would cost you £60 or more if you were not a BCU member.

As one who has worked in a Centre for 11 years, and like many others, spent all my limited spare time in voluntarily running events, and taking youngsters around, and so forth, it is disappointing to find there are those who earn their living from the sport, but are unwilling to put anything back - even to the point of being resentful at having to pay a subscription to help us support better those who are voluntarily contributing their time and efforts to the community.

An instructor is able to recover his or her membership fee from those whom they teach - unlike the other volunteers on whose efforts canoeing, and every other sport, depends for its survival.

Dear CoDe

Response to letter from Mike Bruce in October 1993 issue of *Canoe Focus*.

I was most alarmed to read Mike Bruce's letter concerning the work of UK Instructors based in France. The picture he paints presents a distorted picture and raises many ill-founded doubts about the quality and competence of UK Instructors working on the other side of the English Channel.

Certainly, Mr Bruce's comments do not reflect the experience of Ski Europe, probably the major employer of BASI qualified skiers in France and its parent company, the PGL Group, which is certainly the major employer of UK Summer Instructional staff in France.

PGL first gained an equivalence under the old law some 15 years ago and we had several of our own centres inspected and recognised by the French Ministry of Youth and Sport. The points raised by Mr Bruce are nothing new.

Turning to this matter of skiing, I suggest that BASI 3 is an entirely adequate qualification for introductory teaching for young skiers. Indeed, Ski Europe is one of the few organisations which enable UK Instructors to progress up the BASI ladder. I suggest a canoeist should have nothing but admiration for anyone who attains BASI 3, considering the problems the UK skier faces in gaining access to snow.

Over the years we have employed many of these "highly qualified" French Instructors, most of which are excellent, although some do become bored when teaching beginners. Language is a problem and the French concept of acceptable risk is different to ours. You might also try asking for the certificates of the many Instructors who appear in the ESF jackets of previous years during the peak periods of the season. The French have their own concept of the "meaning of law"!

The attitude in France has nothing whatsoever to do with safety or quality of instruction. It is entirely about restrictive practice. As such, it is, at the very least, contrary to the spirit of EEC legislation. BASI have made significant progress towards gaining equivalence for its qualifications and the leading groups like PGL are helping to bring this experience to the benefit of the BCU, and other sports bodies. By funding a joint approach to the French authorities, there are also benefits to such companies themselves.

Mike Bruce is in a dream world if he thinks this legislation could ever lead to the employment of what he considers "proper" Instructors. By this, I presume he means Instructors concerned with traditional skills teaching with its focus on excellence and skill development. PGL and other leading activity providers are committed to the provision of safe and enjoyable activity courses and adventure holidays of which individual activities such as canoeing form an important, but not necessarily the most important part. I would point out that over 20 years we have provided over 100,000 children with a safe and enjoyable experience on the Ardeche and we are proud of this unique achievement.

I am delighted that most national bodies are now recognising there is a need for qualification levels appropriate to the taster activities provided by groups like PGL. There is also a growing acceptance that such openings present excellent recruiting opportunities for the individual sports concerned.

Eventually, the NVQ structure will gain European recognition and it would seem to me that any national sporting body not grasping this opportunity to participate in the increased level of training will find themselves marginalised. You are looking at an industry which turns over millions of pounds, pays taxes and provides employment throughout Europe. It is not going to go away and neither is it going to change its employment structure to one which would raise costs to a level that school children could not support. PGL Group is committed to providing an effective training framework for 2,000 experienced people each year, with nearly two thirds returning for a second season in the following year. It is utterly irresponsible to suggest that we "drive down wages". Profits are reinvested in the business and a 70% repeat booking rate indicates a very high level of client satisfaction. We are not in competition with traditional outdoor centres and we are pleased if youngsters enthused by their "taster" with us go on to specialist centres which provide employment for more advanced Instructors.

JIM THORPE, PGL

NVQs - PROS AND CONS

At its March 1994 meeting the National Coaching Committee will have to decide whether or not to recommend to the Council of the BCU that we should proceed with seeking to have our system of qualifications approved by City and Guilds as National Vocational Qualifications.

Following is a list of the advantages as determined by the National Coaching Foundation, for governing bodies to have their qualifications so recognised:

For NGBs:

- * provides a clearly defined framework from which the coach's ability can be determined.
- * gives nationally recognised status to coaching awards
- * provides a structure for quality assurance
- * will allow greater transferability between sports and also into other sectors of 'employment'
- * will fit into the European framework of coaching qualifications.
- * will enhance the credibility of NGB awards.
- * will allow 'employers' eg Local Authorities, to easily define 'employee' requirements - across all sports.
- * will give NGBs the opportunity to influence future developments in the national standards.
- * will attract additional Sports Council support in the training of assessors and verifiers and in the implementation procedures.

For Coaches:

- * will give recognition of competence.
- * will show clearly defined steps for progression to higher coaching levels.
- * will give an award recognised by everyone, nationally.
- * will enhance 'employment' opportunities.
- * will enhance the status of the coach in the eyes of the general public.
- * will allow the coach to take advantage of the tax incentives for training leading to NVQs.
- * will give the coach greater ownership and opportunities for self-development.

The disadvantages

We have to fit a formula which has been determined to accommodate a very wide variety of trades and professions. As such it is a compromise, and has inherent artificial requirements.

Recognition involves the training of assessors and additional monitors of assessors, called verifiers, which in the longer term will inevitably lead to an increase in the cost of obtaining a qualification.

There are some practical difficulties, such as:

The necessity to assess candidates as competent to teach adults, separately to their ability to teach children.

We cannot insist upon the holding of a test of ability, or attendance of a training course as a pre-requisite to assessment

'Trainee' status is not NVQ-able - therefore, how does a candidate obtain experience prior to assessment, if he or she has to hold an NVQ in order to gain experience? - we return to the 'Catch 22' situation where we told trainees to gain experience, but the 'employers' would not let them loose with children until they were fully qualified. The solution was to make Trainee status a 'qualification' which could be operated on 'very sheltered water' only. It is not practical to suggest that every Trainee, or potential instructor, can work under the direct guidance of a person who is currently qualified.

There is a final 'registration' cost, currently forecast at around £40, to the awarding body - City and Guilds - which provides the candidate with a certificate and their name entered on a national computer, and nothing else. This cannot be a popular requirement when one considers the correspondence from discontented members at having to pay

currently £24 a year which provides them with a bi-monthly specialist coaching magazine, a glossy bi-monthly magazine to keep them up to date with the sport generally, an annual yearbook containing information on everything from access to Weil's disease, plus several thousand events and courses, a licence to paddle on all 2,000 miles of BWW waters, plus several other rivers and canals, third party insurance, their name supplied to local authorities and similar seeking paid instructional help, a network of organisers, the maintenance of the whole structure of tests and awards of which they are a part, to say nothing of the considerable amount of the 'behind the scenes' work to protect their interests.

Are there no alternatives?

What a pity that a parallel system could not have been devised by sport, and kept within sport, to mirror the NVQ system, acceptable to HM Government, but which would have been related far more to the real world of Coaching, Teaching and Instruction, and from which, if there was profit to be made, at least it would have been going back into sport for the development of sport.

The fact of the matter is, however, that NVQs are an unstoppable bandwagon, backed by £1.5 billion of government money. There is an enthusiasm for them among those who are paid to produce and administer them within their occupation, and a distinct lack of enthusiasm among those for whom the work involved is an additional burden in a situation which is already in considerable overload, making the whole thing a nightmare. Also, the 'advantages' are not well perceived by the volunteers who can see only the imposition of more artificial barriers to their carrying out unpaid, and largely unsung work for the benefit of the community.

I would estimate that sport is dependent to the extent of some 90% of its participation and success on this army of volunteers - and in many instances its paid employees also contribute to this, through running events, assisting in clubs, or helping with Scouts and so forth, outside of their employment as instructors. Apart perhaps from voluntary involvement in a Trade Union, and similar, it is difficult to see a parallel to this, on such a scale, in any other industry - I am not aware of many dentists pulling teeth for free in their spare time, in deprived parts of the community, for instance.

In the final analysis, however, my recommendation has to be that the BCU Coaching Service (that is, in its truly federal sense including CANI, SCA and WCA) has little option but to seek NCVQ approval.

Several thousand of its members obtain their living in part because they hold a canoeing instructor's certificate, and employers are likely increasingly to require an NVQ.

Already funding is being restricted through TECs to those courses which are leading to NVQs.

The requirement for NVQs could well extend to the hire or use of authority owned premises - only available if the instructors qualifications are NVQs, even though it is a totally voluntary group which is doing the hiring.

We may well find in due course that grant aid levels could be affected if we do not offer coaching qualifications which are NVQs.

The final decision

The final crunch to my mind is that if the BCU decides not to bother, the door is open for a group of BCU qualified entrepreneurs to put together a package acceptable to City and Guilds for recognition as the 'Approved Centre', taking the whole system out of our hands.

Whilst there is strong opinion to the effect that it would be extremely difficult for such an enterprise to be set up, it is hard to see how the pressure for there to be 'NVQs for canoeing' could be resisted indefinitely.

My belief, therefore, is that our only option in this matter is to 'lie back and think of England' - sorry, also Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, of course: we are all being ravished together!

Remember, your RCO or representative will have to cast a concluding vote on this issue at the March 1994 meeting of NCC.

NATIONAL COACHING COMMITTEE

notes of the November meeting

National Canoeing Day

Council has decided that this will run only if a specialist committee suggests a theme and undertakes the organisation.

Centres Approval Scheme

Revised guidelines were considered which seek to set out more thoroughly the supervisory arrangements which are acceptable. Referred to a working party to resolve some of the issues raised. It was agreed not to approve centres in foreign countries other than France. Very low key provisions to be considered on their merits by the RCO.

Review of the Coaching Service

Concern was expressed at the overload on headquarters, with the resultant inability to provide the desired level of service. The situation is under review.

Awards courses - minimum numbers

It was agreed that for Supervisor and Instructor level, 1 candidate only could be trained or assessed where necessary. For Senior Instructor level, the normal minimum should be 2 candidates, but with RCO discretion in particular circumstances.

Conferences

There was disappointment that the 1993 London Conference had not attracted sufficient interest to run. It was decided not to hold a conference in 1994, but to review the situation for 1995.

Competition coaching

Very pleasing developments had occurred in both Slalom and Racing. A Slalom Coaching Development Panel had reviewed the Trainer/Coach awards, and produced a new formula, which was proving successful. The panel is now concentrating on the infrastructure to make more opportunity for training available at more local level. Similarly for Placid Water, where Richard Ward had recruited a team of regional coaches who had met, produced a calendar of courses, and agreed the formula for the Senior Instructor level.

Women in Canoeing

The success of the first course held under the Sports Council sponsored 'apprenticeship' scheme was noted with pleasure.

Recruitment

A Coaching Scheme initiative aimed at encouraging star test candidates to try tours and various forms of competition was awaiting acceptance by the Sports Management Committee.

Youth matters

A national conference held under the British Canoe Youth banner had been successful, and indicated mainly the need to create channels of opportunity for young people, and for the provision of local co-ordinators. Concern was expressed at the potential loss of opportunity through changes to the national curriculum.

A copy of the full minutes is available upon request to the BCU office - see please.

NOTICES

RATIONALISATION OF FEES

Course organisers please note that from 1 January 1994 the registration fee or the assessment fee for all coaching awards courses will be £7.

An assessment fee is always payable. A registration fee is payable for the first Trainee Instructor course, and the first Senior Instructor Training course undertaken, only.

The annual registration fee for Supervisors / PW Teachers will also be £7 (also payable for 3 years at £21).

NO MORE POLES

Please note that neither bamboo nor metal poles for canoe poling are now stocked at the BCU office.

THE BCU SURF AWARDS

There was a pleasing increase in interest in 1993 in the BCU Surf Awards, master-minded by Dennis Ball, the National Coach (Surf).

Please note that candidates now need to hold the grade III surf test in their major discipline (ie kayak or ski) but grade II only in the alternative discipline.

The consensus view of both coaches and participants is that the standards are easily attainable by experienced surfers, and there is therefore no need for separate Senior Instructor awards for kayak and ski.

ENDORSEMENT COURSE - CANOEING FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The BCU Northern Region / Calvert Trust, Keswick, is running a course from 18-20 March 1994, tutored by Geoff Smedley. Details: Steve Derwin, 5 Hawthorne Grove, Yarm, Cleveland TS15 9EZ.

Also at Combe Park, Coventry from 16-17 April. Details: Geoff Smedley, 11 High Beech, Coventry CV5 7QD.

THE COACH AWARD

Revised guidelines are now available setting out the *raison d'être* and the training and evaluation method for the Coach Award. Please send *sae* to the BCU office.

Courses for 1994 are planned as follows:

Glenmore Lodge	15-22 October
Plas y Brenin	6-11 November

LIFE SAVING EXAMINERS' KEY

Your membership card, when renewed, should contain a list in code form of all the qualifications which you hold. We do not issue new cards, for reasons of cost, each time an award is added, but upon membership renewal the new card should contain all relevant data.

Following your name on the address label for *Focus/Code* there will also be a current list of all your qualifications.

Following are the codes which denote the different types of life saving test examiner:

ST1	Canoeing Safety Test examiner
LS2	Rescue Test examiner
LSE	Examiner prior to implementation of new rule

Lifeguards members:

CL1	Canoe Lifeguard Trainer
LG1/2	Lifeguard Examiner Grade 1
LG2/3	Lifeguard Examiner Grade 2

The final number after each code signifies the year of issue. The gradings are valid for 3 years.

A PANEL'S THANKS

I would like to thank Mike Devlin and Current Trends for hosting the Examiners' Forum on 26 September.

We had several interesting discussions on a variety of skills related topics, with the instructors, senior instructors and coaches who attended giving a lot of feedback. We all went away having learned a lot, as well as having a great deal to think about - which was the object of the day.

Also I would like to thank Simon Dawson for his valuable input to a most successful day.

From comments made to me I feel we all found it a useful and informative get-together. Watch this space for the date of the next one.

KEITH SYKES, RCO East Midlands

WILD WATER RACING: A BLACK ART

by NIGEL STEVENSON

Wild water racing is an aspect of canoeing which has given me an immense amount of enjoyment. The idea of paying a fiver for a weekends canoeing, with all access sorted, no one sat in the stoppers and a race chucked in at the end is very appealing.

This passion I have for the sport has encouraged me to introduce others to the sport. 2-3 star paddlers soon find that they can cope on the easier Div C races - the Ironbridge, the Nene - progressing to more intermediate races like the North Tyne and the Eden. With a moderate amount of training Div A is made in a season. This then leaves a summer to work hard on the flat. WWR is very good to this point at rewarding paddlers for work - the more they paddle the faster they get. There is a lot of information around that, with the help and advice of local paddlers and coaches, they make good progress through the summer.

And so to the autumn series of Div A races, all keen and confident in their speed, looking forward to beating their training partners, but alas, this rarely happens. More experienced paddlers who they have been beating by a minute in 20 during training will come home first. After a few disappointing results they start to loose enthusiasm, training drops off as does speed. What they need to do is learn how to put all the strength and efficiency they have on the flat into turbulent water. This is the black art.

The kayak

The first thing that should be addressed is the kayak. It should 'fit' the paddler. The footrest should be far enough down the boat for the legs to be able to pump but near enough to be able to grip the boat in turbulent water. For the footrest itself I prefer wood, the surface which the foot pushes on should be at least 2" wide, and a rough surface applied to it (I pour resin on the wood then put sand or grit onto the setting resin). Bear in mind that the wood should be strong enough to stop you in the event of a sudden stop. When fitting the footrest make sure you wear the clothes you would when racing, especially on your feet, its no good fitting the footrest wearing trainers if you race in wind-surfing boots ! Some paddlers prefer bracing for the knees to grip in rough water, I prefer ether foam pads stuck to the underside of the deck. The next thing to address is the seat. I find seats that arrive with new boats are too wide and are attached to the boat by the rim.

I cut them out and fit a new seat that I make from an old english designed W.W. racer. This seat has flanges on the side and I also stick flanges to the boat which is how I attach the seat to the boat.

There are two advantages to this system for me, first, the seat is narrow and needs less padding, and second, the lower sides allow

more movement of the hips, enabling the boat to be steered more easily. Remember to paddle the race boat occasionally, more frequently before competing.

Weir training

Next; to Weir training. Now we have a stable paddling platform we can start learning to put all the flat water speed into rough water sped. this skill is learned just like all the others, its just more difficult to get help and advice.

We are fortunate in Nottinghamshire to have lots of weirs, some of these are very useful for rough water training. A word of caution, some are safe and some aren't, so get local advice before paddling on new water. NEVER, NEVER train alone and always wear your buoyancy aid and crash helmet; if in any doubt ... don't paddle !

First get thoroughly warmed up whenever you paddle on the rough. The first thing I do is ferry gliding from one side to the other. After a few minutes find a piece of water that matches a fast touring speed (riding stoppers is of little use for anything we are trying to achieve). Facing up stream try to hold your position, relative to the sides of the river. Concentrate on your paddling style, good trunk rotation and paddle entry; whilst letting the boat move under you, steering with your hips, the boat will be very responsive, subtlety is the art here. When you feel comfortable move further up the turbulent water. Continue until boredom or cold sets in, but its imperative that the paddling 'style' is concentrated on at all times.

The next form of weir training involves sprinting across the flow; from eddy, across the flow, turn round and sprint back to the starting point. These should be flat out, the weir does have to be wide(ish) and have eddy's on both sides. Again the aim is to paddle as efficiently as possible, accelerating the boat from the starting and turning point and keeping the power on across the turbulent water. This exercise on the Trent weirs lasts between a minute and a half and two minutes. So training the APT and LA system, vary the rest intervals to suit your need. For further entertainment, 'dog fighting' can take place. All you need is a paddler of your own speed and ability, the idea is that you start off together line astern, the paddler behind tries to keep up, and if possible overtake the lead paddler, most forms of cheating and gamesmanship are recommended. The idea behind 'dog-fighting' is two-fold. First its the competitive element between the two paddles, secondly it stops you from finding a 'favourite' route across the turbulence.

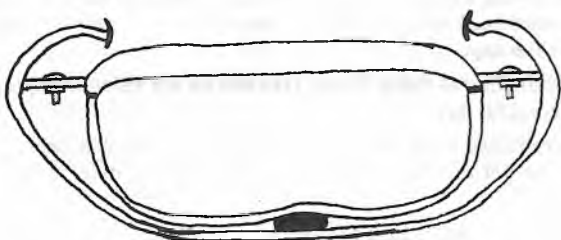
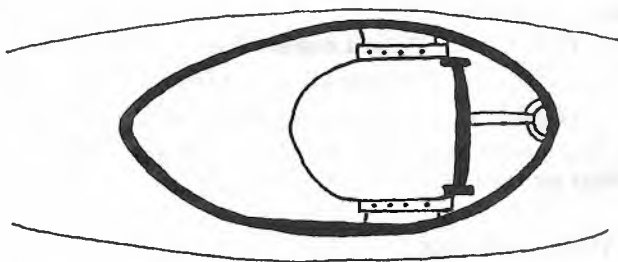
River training

In the olden days river training had a lot more continuity to it, as the Div A races were not the first races on that river in the season, it was possible to train and race on the tees I for the race a few weeks later, similarly with the Dee, the continuity is sadly lost, but the value of river training cannot be overstated. The value of routes is well known, but don't be too pragmatic, and be prepared to experiment when practising.

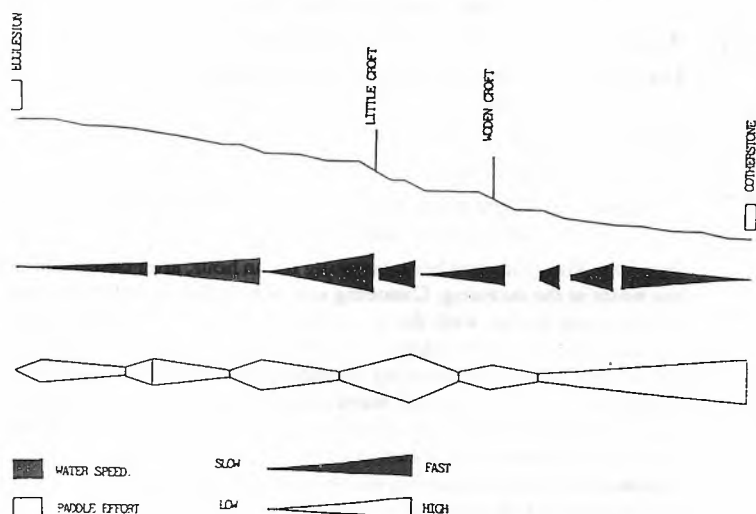
Once you are happy and confident in your routes we need to continue with our programme of converting flat water speed into rough water speed. I do not recommend any of the following the day before an important event.

Rapid sprints

As the name suggests, this involves sprinting down rapids using race routes. Start above the rapid and paddle as fast as possible all the way down, especially in the last 1/4 of the rapid and cruise the flats between rapids. The reason behind rapid sprints is two-fold. Firstly to practice our stroke for good efficiency, and secondly, if you have paddled rapids above race pace you will find them much easier when you come to race as you will be approaching obstacles slower. Learn the rapids well so that you gain the most from the water as it accelerates down the slope, avoid putting your paddle in eddy's just behind big rocks and learn how to raise your paddling strokes in shallow water. This session by sprinting the rapids at 100% effort and then cruising the flats, becomes a good interval session. The next form of river training is an extension of rapid sprints, I call it 'race pace'



THE TEES



training. It involves paddling the whole course from starting point to the finish at, or slightly above race pace, especially the flat sections, again use the water to your advantage. I try to divide the river into 5 minute sections, most Div A courses will end up with 3 or 4 sections.

Paddle hard on one section per run and cruise the rest, it can take a while to paddle the whole course, again I do not recommend this training the day before an important event.

Race day

Now that we are confident that we can go as fast or faster on the rough as we can on the flat we have to use the skill to our best advantage. Below is a diagram which shows, one, a section of the Tees, showing the gradient; two an illustration of the relative water speeds as it flows down the course; and three, the amount of effort that I would use relative to the rapids and flats.

Essentially, after accelerating the boat to race speed and close to my aerobic threshold. I rest in the first quarter of the rapid, then accelerate the boat down the remainder of the rapid to launch the boat down the flat section, where the boat gradually slows (unless you're Neil Blackman). By using the water in this way, you will find that your speed relative to more experienced racers should narrow.

INTRODUCING WOMEN TO PADDLING

The text of a talk given to a group of Placid Water Senior Instructor assessors on a recent course.

by JACKIE WYNNE FREER

I think one should bear in mind from the beginning that the reasons people give for not continuing, or indeed, trying, paddling, may not be the real reasons. This is especially so if the truth might make them lose face in some way, by appearing to be wimpish, silly, undignified or neurotic, for example. I'm sure this statement is as true of men as of women!

As far as women are concerned, one has to start from the premise that most women have been brought up to think of themselves as weak, nervous, helpless, incompetent, fragile, lacking in courage and ability, and so on, where anything of an outdoor physical, possibly wet, cold, muddy nature is involved.

Their self confidence is often non-existent in this area.

Add to this the generally held public view that canoeing inevitably means having to perform capsize drills, "turn upside down", as it is commonly expressed to me, risk being trapped upside down, get cold and wet, swim to the side, and altogether endure a very unpleasant experience - this before you have had a chance to even find out whether you enjoy canoeing for its own sake.

Therefore, reassurance and explanation that it doesn't have to be like that - often repeated over and over again - is essential.

Confidence-building is the key to successful introduction of women to paddling. That may take quite a long time, or it may just need one or two sessions, to overcome some of these pre-conceived ideas.

Patience is an essential quality when dealing with the nervous paddler. You may be grinding your teeth (indeed, I often have been!) but somehow you mustn't let that show, or the slowly developing confidence may be crushed instantly, and possibly for ever.

So, how do we build up this confidence?

Well, obviously the open cockpit kayak or canoe has to be the boat of choice - once women can see for themselves, when sitting in the boat, that they are not trapped, and you can explain how they can slide out sideways still keeping their head uppermost, if the worst comes to the worst, they immediately feel much happier.

Open canoes are generally the best to start with. There are a number of reasons for this.

The boats are bigger, the paddler is further away from the water, they are very stable and user friendly, and they are doubles. Single kayaks can make the newcomer feel a bit 'out there on their own', but the moral support of someone else, even if you are both incompetent, is reassuring.

When dealing with the most nervous, you can put an instructor or other competent paddler in the canoe with them until they feel ready to cope without this backup.

I have found that many women very quickly develop enough confidence and interest to want to try an open cockpit kayak.

Here may I say, as an aside, that we don't use Poly-Pippins, but our starter kayaks are Rapides - very stable boats but with the advantage of a rudder, which on a windy tidal estuary can have distinct advantages over a short rudderless boat.

At our club we have, as many of you know, run courses specially for women only, and a course of 4 x 2 hour sessions can work wonders in terms of developing confidence and a positive approach to the activity.

The other very important issue to be addressed here is the question of women-only courses and instructors.

Women-only courses work well - there is no aggressive competing or showing off, the women are not pushed to the back of the queue as often happens in mixed sex groups, and in my experience they help each other and co-operate very well, even if all are complete strangers to each other.

All-female instructors are also very important - more so than I had anticipated. I suspect that there is a tendency for some male instructors to be on a bit of an ego trip, and to make comments and give instructions in a manner which is derogatory and sexist - although they may not be aware of it. This does nothing to aid the build-up of fragile self confidence.

I am not saying all male instructors are like this, but you must remember that women have spent their lives being on the receiving end of this kind of attitude from men, but it members of their family, schoolteachers, club leaders, employers and so forth, so they start from a position of anticipating it.

Lastly, I would like to say that in my experience women who start paddling on 'women only' courses do stay in the sport in good numbers. They often become very good club members contributing a helpful and positive input.

Having overcome their early anxieties, they continue in a variety of ways. Some have no further ambition than leisurely touring in open canoes. The others spread themselves along a continuum with some at the opposite extreme developing an interest in white water/closed cockpit paddling.

Some of you may have seen a letter in a previous CoDe from Sue Burns, casting doubt on the benefit of what she calls 'female friendly' courses. I have of course replied to this! Our experience runs totally contrary to the opinions she expressed in that letter. Indeed, we have been so successful in keeping women in the club that there is now pressure from members to run some 'men only' courses next year!

RCO/LCO ELECTIONS

The following posts are subject to election/re-election. Current coaching service members from the local or regional panel concerned are invited to submit alternative nominations which must be proposed and seconded. Nominations for RCO not involving an LCO must be supported by 5 members of the regional panel.

Nominations must be received by the Director of Coaching at the BCU office by 31 December 1993.

In the event of no further nominations being received the appointees listed will be confirmed. Should alternative nominations be made, a ballot will be announced in the next edition of CoDe.

LONDON

RCO: Paul Kilham, Rm 21, Wandsworth Town Hall, SW18 2JU

LCO North East (West) London - Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Waltham Forest, Enfield, Redbridge, Harringay: Alan Gregory, 41 Kinveachy Gdns, Charlton, London. SE7 8EE

LCO North West London - Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow: Brin Hughes, 14 Reeves Avenue, Kingsbury, London, NW9 8LP.

LCO North Central London - Hammersmith, Kensington, Westminster, Camden, Islington, City: Vacant

LCO South Central London - Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark: Damon Guy, Surrey Docks Watersports Centre, Rope Street, Off Plough Lane, Rotherhithe, SE16

LCO South West London (East) - Merton, Sutton, Wandsworth: Paul Kilham, Room 21, Wandsworth Town Hall, London SW18 2PU

LCO South East London (North) - Greenwich, Bexley Ray Cowan, Southmere Education Centre, Binsey Walk, Thamesmead London, SE2 9TU

LCO South East London (South) - Bromley & Croydon: Ian Snowden, 40 Hoylelake Gdns, Mitcham, Surrey. CG4 1ET

LCO London South East (South) Kingston upon Thames & Richmond upon Thames: Ross Faragher, 91 Selbourne Ave, New Haw, Weybridge, Surrey. KT15 3NT

LCO London North East (East) Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Newham: Jerry Elsmore, The River Outdoor Centre, 176 Abbey Road, Barking 1GH 7BT

As no further nominations have been received, the following are declared elected to the relevant posts:

South East Region

RCO: Paul Newman, 20 The Rise, Hempstead, Gillingham, Kent

LCO East Sussex: Chris Childs, 92 Stanford Avenue, Brighton, E Sussex BN1 6PE.

LCO East Kent: Steve Devlin, 41 Adelaide Road, Elvington, Kent CT15 4DS.

LCO West Kent: Grant Scammel, 4 The Bines, Paddock Wood, Kent TN12 6LN.

LCO Surrey: Bob Thomson, 3 Elmtree Rd, Teddington, Middlesex.

West Midlands

LCO Herefordshire: Paul Marshall, Alton Court, Penyard Lane, Ross on Wye, Herefordshire.

Yorkshire and Humberside

LCO South Humberside: Derick Kendrick, 45 Farlings Road, Barton on Humber, DN18 5AZ

Notice of meeting - West Sussex

There will be a meeting open to all Coaching members in West Sussex, to be held at the Adur Water Sports Centre on Wednesday 19 January commencing 7.30 pm to elect an LCO: Voting will be by simple majority of those present. Proxy votes are not permitted. The candidates are:

Mike Watson, 6 Hillside Crescent, Angmering, West Sussex BN16 4AA (the present post holder).

Mark Osborne, 2 Weavers Croft, Weavers Hill, Angmering, West Sussex BN16 4BP. Prop R Williams. Sec J Gordon.

Vacancies

Vacancies still exist for LCOs in the following areas. If you are willing to volunteer, or know of someone who would do a good job, and who you think should be 'volunteered', or might volunteer with a little persuasion, please get in touch with your RCO: Hertfordshire.

INCIDENT A

Group: Ten 13/14-year olds, mixed, novices
Staff: Leader & assistant leader in canoes
Activity: Canoeing in slalom canoes
Location: Slow-flowing river, 30m wide, winding, largely tree lined
Month: November
Time: 3.30pm
Weather: Light wind, sudden deterioration, fierce gusts and driving rain, cold.

Incident: The group has been canoeing for an hour, after two hours on the water in the morning. Canoeing one behind the other they follow the assistant leader with the leader at the rear. The sudden squall capsizes the assistant leader and three other canoes. He is seen unharmed on the surface towing his canoe but without a paddle. Three others of the group are in the water, one is clinging to her canoe and being swept ahead of the group out of sight around the next bend. Two other canoeists are in the water, one seemingly unconscious with a cut forehead, the other swimming with his canoe back to the bank, the rest of the group are shaken and in disarray.

The above 'incident' is part of an assignment for a B-Tec course in 'outdoor pursuits'. Two letters have been received recently seeking comment..

Well, we have all been there, haven't we? Squalls on narrow, slow moving rivers causing multiple capsize, concussion and injury, with people being swept away - it happens all the time! Perhaps we do all need to be Senior Instructors before we go afloat?

With just a little more effort someone could have been found to set this question who knew even less about the activity!

Southend Environmental & Outdoor Education Centre

EASTERN ESPLANADE, SOUTHEND-ON-SEA, ESSEX

BCU APPROVED

We require the Services of a Competent and Experienced B.C.U. Senior Instructor (Sea), to lead our Canoeing Team during 1994. Candidates should be committed to teaching Canoeing on the Sea and assisting with the development of a programme to suit all abilities.

The Centre is prepared to offer suitably experienced Candidates an attractive package of Remuneration together with In-Service training in other areas of Outdoor Education and Youth Work.

For further details please contact Chris on 0702 612770.

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL  COMMUNITY EDUCATION