

CoDe

the magazine of the BCU Coaching Service
No 62 - April 1995



CoDe is the official organ of the BCU Coaching Service. 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

THE AIM OF THE BCU COACHING SERVICE 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.

IN THIS ISSUE

2 Dear Code

4 Developing Psychological Risk Awareness and sound judgement whilst canoeing by Alan Williams

6 Quality Feedback by Ray Goodwin

7 Teaching Vertical Kayaking by Kevin Danforth

THE STAGING OF QUALIFICATION COURSES

Please note that ALL courses involving BCU qualifications for the teaching of canoeing must be authorised by the Regional Coaching Organiser of the person setting up the course, and agreed by the RCO of the region in which the course is to be staged, if that is different. The course organiser's RCO is responsible for standards, the RCO of the region in which the course is to be staged is responsible for ensuring that there are no clashes of date or interest, or over-use of a particular site or section.

The river adviser must always be consulted, also.

CHANGES TO THE ADVANCED SYLLABUS

The revised syllabus for the 5 Star (Advanced Proficiency) tests for white water kayak, and for sea kayak, have been agreed by NCC following presentation at, and feedback from, the Conference of Coaches in February.

Courses programmed for this year will run to the new syllabus. The criterion for both awards is that they should be obtainable by the good club paddler after about 3 seasons of regular paddling. A copy of the syllabus is available from the BCU office - see please.

TRAINING/ASSESSING/RECOMMENDING

There has been a long standing principle, perhaps not stated sufficiently strongly or frequently, that examiners should not test candidates whom they have trained.

This is particularly important where Instructor and Senior Instructor qualifications are concerned, where those involved are related, and where trainee examiners are being recommended.

THE OBTAINING OF EXAMINER STATUS

NCC agreed to enlarge the rules concerning recommendations for examiner status. With immediate effect signatures must be obtained from at least two different grade I examiners for recommendation for Proficiency Testing examiner (E1) and at least 3 different grade II examiners for the recommendations for E2 status.

Before commencing on the process of becoming a grade II examiner, the person concerned must register the fact with their Regional Coaching Organiser.

Those who are already embarked upon the process, and are not in conformity with the above, should contact their RCO directly, in order to discuss how to satisfactorily complete their grading.

A revised Examiners Log Book is available from the BCU office - see please.

TESTS AND AWARDS REVISION AND PROGRESS WITH NVQs

Recent feedback has indicated that some members consider that they have not been given sufficient, or clear, information concerning progress with the revisions to the tests and awards, and the acceptance of our system as National Vocational Qualifications.

At present the fine detail is being put on the syllabus of the tests, and the awards syllabus are being revised within the process of matching them to the NVQ framework.

It is planned that the whole system will be presented in the format, and to the outline syllabus shown in a previous edition of CoDe.

The revised tests and awards schemes should be in place by 1 January 1996, and courses next season should run to the revised syllabi.

Forums will take place in the autumn, and next spring, to update examiners on the syllabi and system. These forums will be necessary for all grade 2 examiners, regardless of NVQs, in order to inform everyone of the changes.

Some courses at NVQ level 2 (Instructor Inland Kayak) will be available shortly, following the training of the first wave of NVQ assessors. For this year, the existing system will continue without change, with a few NVQ courses running in parallel.

Once the piloting of these NVQ courses is satisfactorily under way, canoeing specific training will be offered to those E2s who have registered as holding units D32 and D33 in another context. Further training will then be offered for E2s who do not hold NVQ units D32 and D33, separately in England/Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The decision has still to be taken as to whether or not there will be two separate systems of qualifications on a permanent basis. Once the full implications of the cost and complexity of offering BCU qualifications as NVQs are known, and the possible detrimental effect on the voluntary sector evaluated, it will be possible to determine whether there needs to be two separate systems.

This would involve 1: a set of BCU qualifications for the voluntary sector, run entirely by, and registered with the BCU and the National Associations, as at present, but in accordance with the revisions which have been agreed; and 2: NVQs registered both with the BCU and City and Guilds (or other awarding body).

Should it be determined that two systems are necessary every endeavour would be made to provide the means whereby holders of BCU awards had a 'packaged' means of converting to an NVQ at a later stage. Current surveys indicate that 56% (about 5,600 members) are volunteers, while 44% (about 4,400 members) earn the whole or part of their living as instructors.

Dear CoDe

Dear CoDe,

I read with complete agreement the letter from Andrew Morley in the February CoDe magazine, where he expressed his wish to retain his Senior Instructor title in preference to the word 'Coach' and a number.

I feel that the move to change the titles is being imposed by a relatively small number in the Coaching Scheme, and whilst I agree entirely that the title 'Coach' should be used for those involved in the sporting disciplines of canoeing, the titles 'Supervisor' 'Instructor' and 'Senior Instructor' are the most correct for the activities that the other forms of teaching take.

I have carried out my own poll of every Instructor and Senior Instructor I know, asking them how they feel about the change. It may not surprise you to find out that of everyone questioned, all bar two were definite that they wanted to keep their present titles, the remaining two not particularly bothered either way.

Like Mr Morley, I have worked hard for my title, I am proud of it, and I am not a number!

Rather than have long term repercussions (for example my own feeling is that I will probably simply move away from the scheme as I intensely dislike the 'Coach' title), why not do things democratically and send a small form with the next issue of CoDe asking a) the present title, and b) do you want to keep it? When the results are checked I am sure that the strong feeling I detect at ground level may initiate a change in direction.

Like Andrew Morley, as far as the changes to the actual Star Tests are concerned, I am in complete agreement, and feel that the new layout has a lot of commendable features.

So come on CoDe! Let's do something about the negative feedback.

DAVID O'DONNELL, Peterborough

DofC comments: There has been some adverse reaction to the proposal that to achieve rationalisation, and avoid the proliferation of names which we currently employ, there should be a simple designation for our qualifications of grade 1 coach, to grade V coach.

Supervisor, Placid Water Teacher, Instructor, Senior Instructor, Coach, are not necessarily understood by those outside the scheme. In fact, a recent survey has shown that they are barely understood by those within it!

Some would consider that a Supervisor was the person in overall charge - that is its meaning in business. Others consider that a 'teacher' is a far higher designation than a mere 'instructor' - someone who teaches by rote!

Often we have had people quoted in the press as 'the BCU's senior instructor'. In fact, for a long time, there was no-one for the senior instructor to be senior too, apart from a trainee.

With the widespread advent of NVQs throughout industry, as well as sport, there will be a common recognition that level 1 is the first rung on the ladder, and level 5 the top rung. Those pursuing an NVQ for their canoeing qualification will receive a certificate which says 'NVQ level 2 BCU canoeing coach - (Inland Kayak)'. It could just as easily say 'NVQ level 2 canoeing coach - BCU Instructor (Inland Kayak)'. That might, however, be more confusing.

It is not a question of a few people trying to impose their will on the majority. The working party consists of a cross-section of members, and it is presumed that any other cross-section of members, given the topic and the debating time, would probably come up with roughly the same conclusion, once all the whys and wherefors and contra-arguments had been rehearsed.

In fact, when the proposal was first put to the working party, the reaction was adverse. It was only after the process of debate, that everyone became comfortable with, and finally supportive of, the idea.

Dear CoDe

I was interested in the article in the last edition of CoDe, on breaking in and out. Several points need stressing as I wasn't too clear what was being recommended.

First, there is nothing wrong with a sweep stroke to get you in position before a breakout - you can keep your weight on the downstream edge as you execute it. The problem occurs if you try a low brace as well, and change your edge.

Second, beginners' problems rest with recognising the eddy line. So as they punch into the eddy the downstream edge becomes the upstream edge and a swim ensues.

Breaking out needs concentration on positioning the boat in advance (if you can) using a forward sweep, driving into the eddy at a 45° angle upstream, identifying the eddy-line and adjusting the edge accordingly. You can use the low brace to tidy things up only if needed.

DUDLEY COURTMAN, Wickham Bishops

Dear CoDe,

I would like to draw to your attention my concerns over the 'voluntary sector'. It is becoming increasingly difficult to keep up to date, complete all the paperwork, maintain a vigilance over reviews and revisions, attend conferences, seminars and a variety of courses. All this in ones 'spare' time, and completely at ones own expense with little support from employers either in terms of time or finance.

For all persons involved in the organisation of courses the above is becoming classed as a requirement - not a luxury (rightly so) - but it does mean that for those in the 'industry', time and money are, to some extent, made available. This is not so in the voluntary sector. I believe the sport will rue the day when voluntary instructors, et alia, can no longer offer courses at local level, in clubs etc. Courses will soon be the prerogative of the 'professionals' - the full time instructors - and worse still, available as 'commercially run' courses only, run by people whose priority is profit. It seems to me this is the direction we are heading. I have nothing against full time instructors (I was one once!) nor commercially organised courses, but I believe the current variety and flexibility is a strength, especially for clubs, and clubs are our future.

Unfortunately I do not have an answer, but it seems to me we must retain our 'volunteers'. What is it that we can do to retain them? Perhaps statistics will show that my concerns are unjustified, I suspect not, judging from the enquiries and comments I receive regarding courses. In any case I think it is a subject worthy of discussion. For example I will raise the old issue of how many of our 'volunteers' are in fact employed within the outdoor activities/education/equipment pursuits industry? When key decisions are made it would be unrealistic not to expect them to have at least one eye on how such decisions might affect the industry compared with the sport; we are all human! Will one day all our volunteers have a vested interest?

Another issue might be the costs of courses. For example, on a commercially run senior instructor training course what percentage of the course fee is 'labour costs' or accommodation? All courses need to run without making a loss. Most courses will want to make a profit. I am concerned that profits should be going back into the sport through the clubs where possible and not disappearing into the accounts of an organisation whose main motive for existence is profit.

All courses are valuable and should continue to compete with each other in the 'market place' but I believe it to be very important for the sport that in so far as is possible the 'voluntary sector' can continue to coexist with professional bodies. I wish I could suggest an answer. Is it at least worthy of broad discussion?

STUART BRIGGS, Burton-on-Trent

Dear CoDe,

For some time I have been unable to understand the logic of the little crosses in the "Closed Cockpit kayak" section of the Teaching awards table. Why is a kayaker able to teach open canoe skills and not vis versa. The opposite would make more sense as most open canoe persons started in kayaks, whereas many kayakers see open canoe persons as almost sub human. In truth the two disciplines are too different to assume an ability in one infers an ability in the other.

On turning to "Terms of Reference for Coaching Awards" Instructor, we see that 1 star in the other discipline can be awarded only if personal

experience has been gained in that craft - very sensible except of course that the canoe instructor cannot instruct kayak. It would seem an idea to remove the little crosses completely and say an instructor can instruct the other discipline at the level below, provided the entry requirements are held. eg Instructor open canoe with kayak 2 star and canoeing safety test can instruct kayaks within the terms of reference of Supervisor award.

It would be interesting to know the origin of the little crosses. Some people have been known to call me a cynic but I cannot help thinking of all those activity centres with Coleman open canoes and wondering how many of the instructors use the BCU's little crosses to say, "Yes I am an Instructor/Senior Instructor in kayak, but that + includes the use of canoes operating within the same terms of reference". JOHN SHERWEN, Ulveston.

(PS I have excluded open cockpit kayaks from my observation because I have no experience of these craft)

D of C Comments: The Canoe Instructor who is not also a Kayak Instructor will not necessarily have been in a kayak, as there is no requirement for the use of kayaks to be included in the Canoe Instructor training course. The separate progression is there for those who do not wish to have to paddle kayaks.

The Kayak Instructor training course on the other hand should, if the syllabus is being followed correctly, have included the use of canoes. The intention is that the closed cockpit kayak awards are, to all intents and purposes, 'generic' awards, but that there are separate progressions for canoeists, and for those kayakists who do not wish to get into closed cockpit kayaks, and undergo a 'baptismal' experience. Long before the Canoe awards were introduced, kayak instructors and SIs were able to involve canoes. In fact, the current terms of reference restrict kayak based instructors far more than hitherto.

The Canoe Instructor may test for 1 Star Kayak if he or she has sufficient experience in that craft.

The holding of the Canoeing Safety Test in the alternative discipline should be sufficient to allow the holder to teach in those craft on very sheltered water.

It was never intended that Kayak Senior Instructors should automatically be qualified to operate canoes on grade II water. Their use should be restricted to Sheltered Water. This mistake in the matrix has not been pointed out previously, but please see the terms of reference on the schedule of codes which was circulated with the last edition of CoDe.

Dear CoDe,

I read with interest the article in February's CoDe about teaching people with special needs. The article focused on people with a hearing impairment, a group of people that I work with regularly. The article missed out some points that I believe are important and I would like to make them here.

The first thing to find out when working with deaf people is their preferred means of communication. Most deaf people rely on a mixture of some or all of the following:

- 1 Residual hearing. This will usually disappear when they take off their hearing aids to go afloat.
- 2 Lip-reading. The deaf person must be fairly close and you must be facing each other. You must articulate clearly and the light must be comfortable for the lip-reader.
- 3 Sign language. This is a rich and powerful language, just as expressive as English. Like any language, however, it takes a long time to build up fluency.

Often a group will have several signers and several oral people, so you must try to make all channels of communication available to the group. Let the deaf people themselves guide you. They will know what they need much better than you. The group will also often have a hearing person with them who can translate for you. It may feel a little awkward at first, but make full use of them. Watch how they describe things as you can pick up sign language vocabulary which will be useful later on.

As deaf people can do everything a hearing person can but hear, they should enjoy a similar session to that which you would give to a hearing group of the same age and level of experience. You may have to adapt some of your teaching techniques but you should play the same games and run through the same skills in the same progression.

It is usually helpful to communicate as much as possible before you get on the water. The students can keep their hearing aids on until just before you go afloat, making it easier to get everything you want across. You will need to show the students a highly visible signal for the group to raft up. I use a paddle held vertically. There is nothing more frustrating than watching someone paddle off into the distance while you shout at them in vain to come back.

When you are rafted up, communication should be fairly easy. Make sure the sun is behind the deaf people. If you are using someone to translate, they should be beside you, in easy view of the students. Or if you want to talk to a student individually, come alongside facing towards them. It is hard lip-reading from a distance and hard signing while keeping the boat straight.

Try and learn as much sign language as you can. It is easy, and only polite, to learn how to sign things like "please" and "hello". As you begin to pick up sign language, you can begin to use signs and signing principles to talk about canoeing strokes. Some of the things that are quite hard to explain in English, like how to do a sweep stroke properly, are relatively easy in sign language.

When you get used to it, teaching canoeing to a deaf group is not very different to teaching a hearing group. Much worse is driving a minibus with a deaf person sitting next to you. It is rude not to chat but if they are lip-readers, you find yourself turning your head towards them instead of watching the road. If they are signers, you keep on taking your hands off the wheel to sign to them. Worse still, if they use both lip patterns and sign, you swerve all over the road without even knowing about it. (Insurance companies please note - I am exaggerating hugely).

Despite (perhaps because of) the need to use different communication strategies, working with deaf people can be very rewarding. Talking in our native language is so natural that it is easy to forget what we are doing as we talk. Using a completely new type of language makes us think again about what it is to communicate. And if you learn some sign language and teach it to your friends, you will sometimes find it very useful. However loud a river is, you can say "lets stop in 5 minutes for a drink of tea" or "that stopper would be dangerous to play in" and understand each other perfectly. Perhaps, in the future, signing will become the universal language of all canoeists.

MARK DAVIDSON, Derbyshire

SITUATIONS VACANT - RANK/STS ADVENTURE EUROPE

Instructors are required for the following activities in our Adventure Europe Programme

Activity: Sailing, Windsurfing, Canoeing, Climbing, Canyoning, Mountain Biking.

The Season will be from May - End August (Detailed dates at interview stage)

If you are interested in applying and are the age 18 or over, then send a written letter of interest, stating clearly the activities you are qualified in, and your address, to:

Jeff Bidgood, Sport & Adventure, Controller, Rank/STS, Castle Mill, Lower Kings Road, Berkhamsted, Herts HP42AP

Do not send a CV or phone for an application form:

Once your letter has been received at the above address, you will be sent a job description, application form and a brochure.

NB: If you are applying for an instructor position, you must hold a nationally recognised qualification and if asked to interview, you will be asked to produce the original document of qualification.

BCU INSTRUCTORS WANTED

Weekend work May-September, Bridgnorth area.

Phone Severn Valley Canoes - 0746 780073.

TRAINEE INSTRUCTOR IN LAND KAYAK AND OPEN CANOE

Non residential course at Avon County Council's Avonquay Resource Centre, Bristol, From the evening of Friday 26 May to late Sunday 28 May. £67. Telephone Jean on 0117 (Bristol) 9298460

CANOEING SAFETY AND RESCUE TEST

Canoeing Safety and Rescue Test Examiners Workshop. Simon Fairless will lead a practical discussion on the documentation, administration, procedure and standards associated with these tests on Sunday 21 May 1995. LSE's and Senior Instructors or Instructors interested in these tests are welcome to Saltford on the Bristol Avon near Bath, from 10.30am

Cost £5 to Avon Coaching Panel funds

Contact: Richard Scullard, 1 Poplar Avenue, Stoke Bishop, Bristol. BS9 2BE Tel: 0117 9683842

DEVELOPING PSYCHOLOGICAL RISK AWARENESS AND SOUND JUDGEMENT IN DECISION MAKING, WHILST CANOEING

by ALAN WILLIAMS

SUMMARY

Physical risk in canoeing is well known; however technical and safety skills combined with grading systems and knowledge are used to combat the physical challenges. Frequently, less attention is focused on the psychology and perception of the paddler, particularly the paddler's perception of risk.

I believe that truly competent performance is a product not only of technical and safety skills, but also of sound judgement and decision making.

This paper puts forward some suggestions and ideas about the material which could be integrated more overtly into the coaching process, to help to underpin the paddler's perception and understanding of risk and develop judgement in decision making.

INTRODUCTION

Kayaking in all of its forms is a tremendously diverse sport which provides very special freedoms, freedoms which must be handled and managed responsibly if the process of 'education' rather than 'legislation' is to continue. Canoeing can be a challenging and exciting activity which carries with it a degree of risk and objective danger. Provided that we as canoeists have a responsible attitude and take care to minimise the risks involved by good practice and sound judgement, there is no reason why we should not continue to extend our experience and face new challenges.

Over the past ten years or so, there has been a quiet sort of revolution in canoeing in general, which has dramatically reduced the time between the attainment of technical competence and exposure to more seriously challenging environments, be they on whitewater rivers or around the coast.

Once upon a time there was an apprenticeship, a gradual acquisition of experience and equipment gained from the leadership of more experienced paddlers. Gradually the apprentice would gain experience and be exposed to more serious situations involving a greater degree of commitment and eventually lead others. Equipment was fragile and rivers and the sea were treated with a healthy respect. As well as gaining technical competence, the paddler would develop strong values and sound judgement in decision making.

Now I am not trying to paint a 'rosy' picture of the past at the expense of the present; I do believe that many of today's paddlers are technically competent and have sound judgement, but - and there is a but - safer kayaks with big decks and keyhole cockpits have reduced the risks of entrapments. The quality of personal protective clothing from drysuits to full face helmets and an array of off-the-shelf safety equipment have done much to apparently protect the paddler from the environment.

Well illustrated books and videos of techniques and expeditions serve to inspire paddlers in the comfort of their living rooms without the need for the judgement, planning or emotion involved in the real thing.

Safe artificial white water sites have also done much to improve technical competence at the expense of paddling in the real world.

I am not at all cynical - it is marvellous that the technical learning curve has been accelerated, but I am concerned that a similar acceleration hasn't taken place in the application of sound judgement and decision making. To put it another way, there is a real risk that the new generation of canoeists might be becoming 'desensitised' to the risks of our sport and they might not always be equipped to make appropriate decisions about their own competence or of those whom they choose to lead.

For a canoe coach, risk analysis and management should be and usually is an integral part of the coaching process, which underpins the coach's philosophy of providing enjoyment and learning opportunities in a safe but challenging environment. The coach is constantly filtering information and evaluating the interaction between environment, performers, activity, equipment and the coach's own experience and expertise.

Our model coach will be managing and minimising the possible consequences of objective risk by continual 'what if...' or 'worst case' scenarios and will be using sound judgement based upon experience and leadership, to protect and care for those being coached.

It is not by chance that competent coaches who have worked at their craft have few unforeseen mishaps and that those problems which

do occur are dealt with quickly, with a minimum of fuss, whereas less competent coaches attract their fair share of epics and seem to make a lot of fuss about it. Even the most competent coach can still be faced with a serious life-threatening situation and sometimes, no matter how able we are, a freak accident or tragedy may occur. Competence will minimise the possibility of most coaches having to deal with such situations.

Coaches and instructors are trained to teach technical skills, group leadership and safety management. These skills are then passed on to those being taught. One of the real problems facing coaches is that they are trying to do themselves out of a job! In other words, they are preparing those they teach for 'self-sufficiency'!

Self-sufficiency means that those we coach will go off and put their skills to the test on whitewater rivers or around the coastland - bluntly, we won't be there to support them.

Hard skill training is not much of a problem. Practice, practice, practice, practice and most performers will acquire technical and rescue skills. However it is difficult to accelerate the acquisition of sound judgement and risk awareness. Therefore the coach or instructor needs to think about how to coach and develop risk analysis and awareness as an integral part of the coaching process.

A short session focusing upon some perception and psychological risk analysis and awareness models, reinforced during practical sessions, would serve to 'sow' the soft skills we want to 'cultivate' in competent performance.

As Ray Rowe said in his book *Whitewater Canoeing*, ignoring the danger doesn't make it go away'. I would go one step further and say that being ignorant of danger can be life-threatening.

People used to talk about being 'switched on' or use a variety of phrases to identify someone who isn't 'switched on'. A simple model can identify a range of states of mind and attitudes whilst paddling

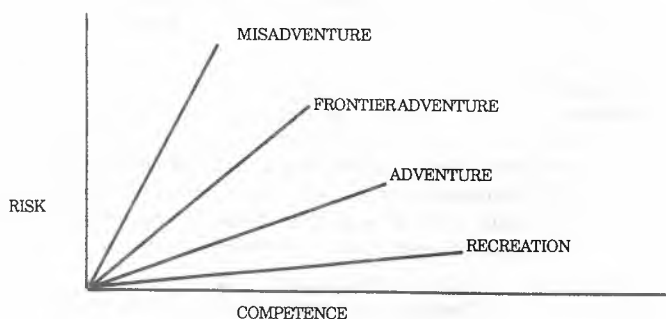
	CONSCIOUS	UNCONSCIOUS
COMPETENT	SWITCHED ON	NOT SWITCHED ON BUT POSSIBLY BRILLIANT
INCOMPETENT	BRIGHT IF NOT BRILLIANT	SWITCHED OFF (POSSIBLY ALIVE)

What we have got to do is to get paddlers into a conscious awareness, so that they are aware of their current level of competence

RIVER GRADINGS AND MIND GRADINGS

We have a variety of technical grading systems for rivers which help the paddler to match their competence to the level of difficulty faced. We also have 'reputation' - that is the reputation a rapid, tide race or fall has amongst the paddling world.

There are three mind models that can help with getting it right. Mortlock in Adventure Education developed the following mind grading model.



Most paddlers will be able to draw parallels with this model and of course we should not forget that one person's recreation could be another's misadventure on the same rapid on the same day.

Another mind grading model measures competence and risk through the paddler's perception

RISK	COMPETENCE		
	YOU ARE BETTER THAN YOU THINK YOU ARE	YOU KNOW YOUR OWN ABILITY	YOU THINK YOU ARE BETTER THAN YOU ARE
	EASIER THAN YOU THOUGHT TIMID	OVERAWED	EXAGGERATED
	JUDGED RISK CORRECTLY INSECURE	ASTUTE	ASSURED
RISK	MORE DIFFICULT THAN YOU THOUGHT NAIVE (POSSIBLY SWITCHED OFF)	BOLD	FEARLESS ARROGANT (MIGHT NOT SURVIVE)

This particular model is quite useful in that the labels (and that is all they are) help to conjure up images and of course we all want to have an astute or bold mind grade, don't we?

The third mind grading system comes from Nealy's book 'Kayak' where a clever, not to say humorous mind grading is offered - 'Zombie Factor'.

ZOMBIE FACTOR ONE

'If you think you're going to die, you probably will'.

ZOMBIE FACTOR TWO

'The time spent staring at a nasty hole is directly proportional to the time you'll spend getting thrashed in it'.

ZOMBIE FACTOR THREE

'If you can't spit you should consider carrying round that nasty rapid'.

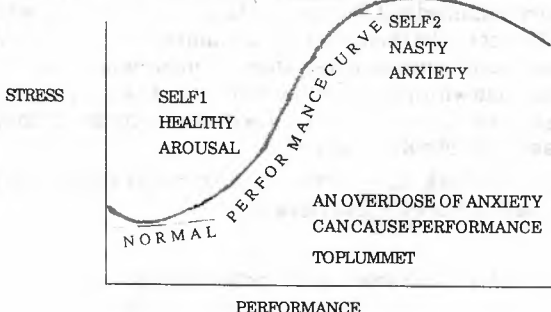
Nealy suggests that you can keep Zombie Factor at bay if you can answer 'yes' to the following questions.

- 1 Is there a clean line of descent?
- 2 Can you make the chosen line?
- 3 Will I arrive at the bottom upright and intact?
- 4 Is the bottom hole deep so I don't get pinned?
- 5 Once in the hole will I get out for Christmas?
- 6 Can someone rescue me?
- 7 Could I swim it?
- 8 Am I physically and mentally capable of running it?

Nealy's model of mild risk awareness combined with looking at the particular rapid, headland or surf landing, goes some way to making the effective link between objective danger and its inherent risk and the subjective risks inside our heads.

CATASTROPHE AND MENTAL SCARRING

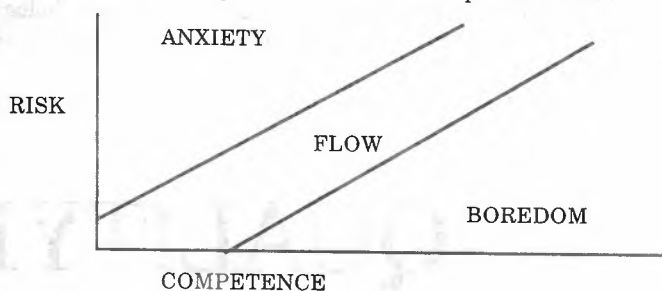
One of my greatest concerns in adventure activities is to protect the paddler from negative potentially 'damaging to the mind experiences', where anxiety and fear can destroy otherwise competent performance. A well known and simple model can be used to illustrate this unwanted outcome.



It is important for all paddlers to be 'aroused' during the activity. However, arousal if overdone can quickly become anxiety. An otherwise competent paddler can have his confidence gnawed away allowing doubts to creep in to the point where, if the symptoms and signs are not recognised, the paddler's performance plummets. This can also be seen as 'Self 1 and Self 2'. 'Self 1' being competent aroused performance and 'Self 2' being a horned beast sitting on our shoulder and whispering unsettling messages.

Mental 'scarring' can have a considerable effect upon future performance. In order to protect against scarring, the paddler needs to have a coping strategy. Do they 'fight' or is it flight (run away). Some people will talk it through - 'post traumatic rationalisation' and some people will get straight back in and do it again. The really important aspect of rationalising the outcome of the activity is to get the paddler to divorce or separate the 'emotion' from the 'activity'. It makes it so much easier to analyse what went wrong and how to improve the performance for the future.

For most paddlers the challenge is to keep the level of activity within acceptable physical and psychological limits. Another very useful model which can help here is the risk - competence model.



The message here is whatever the paddler's technical competence, the aim is to remain within the diagonal 'flow' band. Care should be taken at the upper limits of flow, to ensure that levels of anxiety do not either affect levels of competence or ability to analyse and manage the risk.

LEAVE IT FOR ANOTHER DAY

One of the greatest signs of strength which a competent paddler can display, is the ability to leave it for another day. It doesn't matter whether the paddler is new to the sport, or at the 'cutting edge' of what is possible. The ability to say 'no' is precious and requires a degree of humility.

The up and coming paddler would do well to take his lead from contemporary paddlers who have all at some point said 'no'.

Paul Caffyn approaching the SW Cape of Stewart Island off South Island New Zealand...

Faced with an awesome spine-chilling sight (lumpy sea), he thought the situation was marginal and turned back because he felt the risk wasn't worth it. From 'Dark Side of the Wave'.

Marcus Bailie on his Alsek Expedition faced with 'Turnback Canyon' in enormous flood, recounted

'separately and collectively we compared what we saw with the rivers that we knew'

'one by one we made our decision not to run the canyon'

'We trudged back to our bitterly disappointed, each of us reflecting silently on our separate decision, reasoning, justifying, composing the phrases of our self-explanation'.

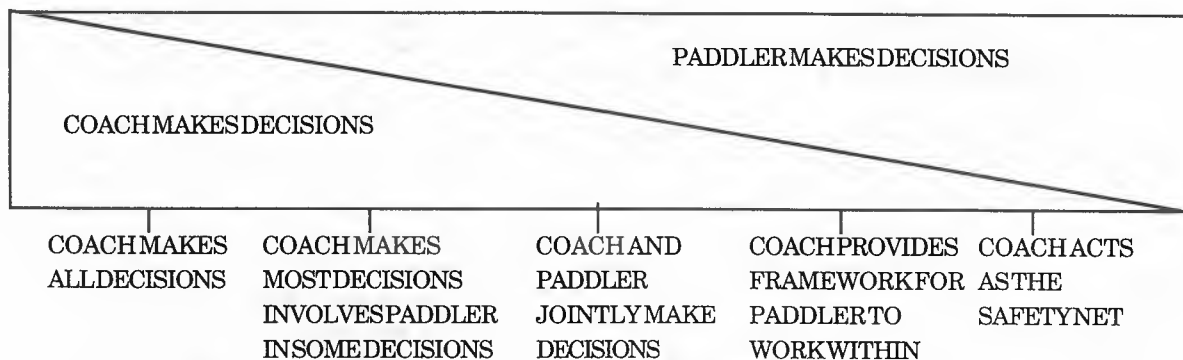
From *Alsek - River of Ice. Raging Rivers, Stormy Seas* Storry, Bailie and Foster.

It is difficult for the coach to prepare the paddler for such decisions; however, involving the paddler in the 'decision making process' can help to underpin his confidence.

A simple model adapted from the Industrial Society can help to illustrate how we might gradually increase the paddler's decision making and responsibility.

Thus beginners would have most decisions made for them, whilst advanced paddlers would increasingly be taking responsibility for their own actions.

DECISION
MAKING



CONCLUSION

Most paddlers when being coached are looking to improve their technical competence. However, it is abundantly clear to most recreational coaches that the coaching process extends beyond technical skills and includes processes such as the psychology of learning and to an extent, the paddler's perception of risk and how to deal with it.

I believe that some paddlers become de-sensitised to or are

ignorant of risk and that affects their judgement and decision making.

I have attempted to provide the coach with a variety of models and examples which can be used not simply in a theoretical sense, but practically, whilst coaching paddlers.

This additional input should serve to raise paddlers' awareness of risk, their perception of risk and the processes they must go through in deciding whether they are going to paddle that next rapid or not.

QUALITY FEEDBACK

by RAY GOODWIN

Feedback should be **positive, specific and honest**. Too often it is either negative, dishonest or generalised. So here we go:

Being negative generally has a bad effect, people 'close down' and often dismiss the learning they have got from a situation. Remember that all physical action is giving the brain information. So let us consider the sweepstroke. You have asked the group to: 1, have a straight arm; 2, take the blade in an arc just below the surface; 3, follow the blade with their heads. You concentrate on 'John'; his arm bends about halfway through the stroke. Starting with a negative slows the process. What John requires is awareness of what he is doing and how you wish him to modify it. 'John. Two good points; the paddle is travelling in a half circle and you are following it around with your head. Good. Now let's look at the arm on that side. At the moment you have a straight arm until the halfway point then it bends. Watch me do the stroke as you are doing it'. At this point you give a quick demo effectively playing the part of a video. 'That's what you did. What I want you to do is keep the arm straight throughout the stroke'.

In this case the feedback has been specific and positive.

Three key points

By limiting yourself to three key teaching points it becomes easy to give information to the group; you just concentrate on those points. That is what you have asked them to do, that is what they need feedback on. It is very important to get around all members of a group, so you glance around. Sarah is doing the task well but someone else is going to need some help. So quickly let Sarah know how she is doing. 'Well done Sarah. Good straight arm nice arc and you are rotating the body to follow the blade. Brilliant'. Again the praise is specific and enables the person to concentrate on what they are doing right. Merely to say 'Well done' does not help anywhere near as much.

It is very easy to shout 'Well done' at a student who has just crashed and bumbled their way down a rapid with a lousy breakout to finish. They know that they have not paddled well. Your cheerful positive attitude has just been devalued in the eyes of the student, you have, in their eyes, become dishonest. It would not be diplomatic to say that was lousy, but a more considered response than 'Well done' is necessary.

Perhaps You did not look relaxed on that at all. We need to do some work on easy water and in particular breaking out'. You, the instructor, have noted what happened and you are going to help.

More complex skills

A more complex skill such as bow rudders demand an even more sensitive approach. Say that the students have already done the stroke on flat water and we are now working on a break in current. The three points that we have decided to work on are: 1, the blade clearly in the current (Quality water) and not in the eddy or even near the eddy line; 2, the blade is at right angles to the pull of the current so as to anchor it in the water (therefore the angle of the blade with the boat will vary throughout the manoeuvre); 3, pre-rotating the head and torso to the new direction to create a more powerful and dynamic turn. To work on all three at the start would be a disaster, so we build up the skill in layers. Working on point 1 only to start with. The student's own internal feedback is critical at this level, only they know what it feels like. Provide them with feedback on where the blade entered the water. 'Sarah your blade was still a little close to the eddy line. Try it further out'. John. Your blade was in the right place, well out into the current. How did it feel? Not only does this approach provide you with valuable information about what is going on but it speeds up the student's awareness of their own paddling. Again the feedback is specific to the task. I asked them to get the blade into the current, that is what I give them information on.

Consider the eskimo roll in kayaking. Our beginner has just completed their first ever unaided roll. It is so tempting to provide them with feedback. Try not to. Get them to sit quietly and run through the roll in their mind. Then do another and another. It is amazing how much the roll will smooth out with no interference from the instructor. The brain is receiving its own internal feedback, indeed 'interfering prematurely' can cause a successful roll to disappear.

Giving quality feedback enhances the learning process. Remember, it should be **Positive, Specific and Honest**.

Ray Goodwin is a BCU Coach and is proprietor of Ray Goodwin Coaching

Teaching Vertical Kayaking

by KEVIN DANFORTH

With the emergence of competition Rodeo and 'playboating' now a term in common usage to describe what we all used to call showing off, there is a demand-led need to be able to teach the more flamboyant boat manoeuvres.

In the days where a good ender ('pop-out' in old-speak) would place you in the final of a rodeo, and an intentional-looking pirouette would ensure a top three placing, it was enough to aspire to get the boat vertical. Nowadays it is common for novice (!) paddlers to approach their coach and SI with the demand 'teach me to do that'. It is, like it or not, a basic move in the modern playboater's repertoire. Every teacher of white-water has a good range of tools to deal with horizontal: most outcomes are predictable.

One of the difficulties of teaching vertical kayaking is the time any attempted move will take: at best it lasts less than a second, and there is usually a longish pause while the paddler sorts themselves out for a second try (usually after a roll). After several tries, the paddler has to be very resilient to continue, especially in our British climate! In horizontal training, practice is easy and quick to repeat as the paddler is back in the 'start' position quite quickly.

There are several ways to teach this set of vertical skills: this is not the only way.

Start Requirements

A good ender spot or small regular surf wave: the run out afterwards should also be friendly, and straightforward to roll in.

A short playboat with a good footrest and a supportive back rest

A good spraydeck

A reliable roll

A strong desire to succeed, and happy with immersion

Beginnings

The paddler has to understand the effect of body movement and how it influences the kayak. Practice on flat water by paddling forward and dipping the bow by leaning forward and driving down on the footrest with the feet. It helps if this action can be done quickly and positively, perhaps on cue. It also helps if the boat can be trimmed with a stern rudder just before the 'dip' is initiated.

Low volume designs (slalom or squirt) help here. The action may not be too impressive but the feel of dipping the bow is an important bit of knowledge to have.

The simulator

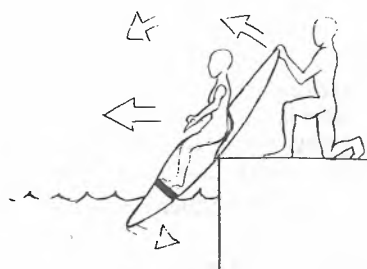


DIAGRAM 1

A good building block here is the trick of lifting the stern of the kayak to let the paddler feel the new situation of the vertical kayak. This should be in a controlled situation and done slowly, so that the paddler's body is able to deal with the information coming through the boat. If the kayak can be held so that the paddler is able to feel the bow go down, assist the 'dip' and then stand upon the footrest and balance the boat for even an nanosecond, then hours of dubious repetition in the river can be saved.

The above training should take place in a warm swimming pool, or summer lake and should be repeated until the paddler is familiar with not only the sequence, but the feel. This is a good opportunity to coach body position, and awareness of 'what happens next?'. Inevitably the next part of the sequence is a roll, and there is no reason why this should be rehearsed in sequence at this time. It is also a good time to re-reinforce reaction rolls (rolls without set-up) and think about the options (LEFT/RIGHT, FORWARD/REVERSE ROLLS).

To emphasise the importance of the BODY and what happens below decks, suggest the whole routine without paddles. For many it will be as easy, if not easier!

CAUTION: Ageing coach types... watch your back. Think carefully about lifting and use the legs with the back straight. You are the one at physical risk in this exercise.

The next step for the paddler is to get a feel for the kayak reacting to a bow force. In the pool fill a kayak 2/3 full of water and put the deck on as usual. Now try paddling forward and setting up the 'bow dip'.... the weight of water in the boat should help the bow go down (and stay down) and the paddler continues with the sequence, standing on the footrest and having a disgraceful amount of vertical time. It doesn't quite work like this on the river, but this is a great building block for later skills.

Now the kayak is vertical and the position familiar, the paddler is ready for the 'real thing'.

How does it work?

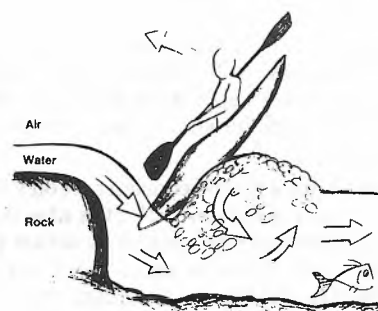


DIAGRAM 2

Pressure on the bow trips up the kayak. It really is this simple in theory, although in practice the current doing the tripping is often doing other things as well (example: Looping Pool at Holme Pierrepont)

The only real difference with a playhole or surf wave is that the paddler is reacting to an external force on the kayak bow...oh, and it all happens a lot more quickly.

The time spent learning what a good position feels like

(vertical and in control) will now be seen to be valuable. Compare this with the hit and miss "go in the hole and lean forward approach" which normally results in a messy, off-vertical capsizes. The major benefit for the paddler and coach is that feedback is more precise. Often the paddler will be able to tell the coach which was a good move, based on feel and awareness, rather than asking "what was that like?"

This situation now allows coaching to home in on the important variables, now that the "vertical position" is well learned.

The variables are:

Angle of approach

Speed of approach

Accuracy of entry point

Timing of dip

Amount of body/weight used to initiate dip.

Timing of weight transition from backside to footrest

These are relatively simple things to pin down with objective feedback based on observation: faster, slower, quicker, stand up earlier, further left, further right etc.

Another useful tool here for the river paddler is an upstream marker, either a rock, tree, throwbag on the bank, a water feature (a wave peak, or even a line of bubbles!) This will help the paddler 'spot' where they are on the water with greater precision.

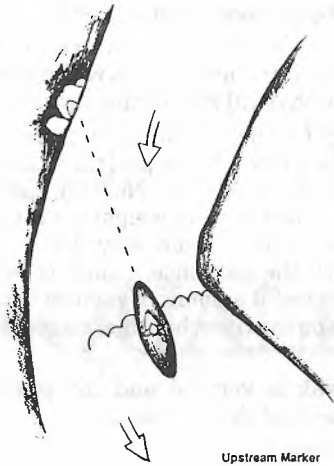


DIAGRAM 3

It is vitally important for the paddler to be able to repeat consistently, the 'move', in the same place, the same way. All ender spots have a 'sweet spot' where the ender is easier than anywhere else: the paddler should have the ability to hit this 9 times out of 10.

Early training sessions should concentrate on this consistency as "perfect practice makes perfect". It is also important that the move is produced in a pro-active way rather than reactive. Although there will always be an element of reaction to the energy in the water, the trick is to control the ender.

Make it happen, rather than have it happen to you.

To recap:

The basic vertical kayak move consists of the following:

Entry (crossing the eddy line, or moving the bow into the dip zone)

Access (Dipping and Tripping the bow)

Transition (shifting weight from seat to footrest)

Stand (Balancing the boat on the bow)

In other words EATS. Access and transition happen really close together....anticipate!

The next part of the sequence has several options, as well as immersion and roll!:

ender: pop out

loop: straight over

Pirouette: 180, 360, 720

Any combination including cartwheels and linked (transition) moves from bow to stern and back again!!

These may sound clever but they all start from the basic controlled ender.

After the kayak can be stood up predictably, the paddler can now progress to more impressive stunts.

Useful Coach tools

Notepad: for scoring percentages of good attempts and useful for drawing diagrams of where the boat goes and what the water is doing.

Video Camera: instant feedback. They believe it when they see it!

The Pirouette

This can also be learned on flat water or in the pool. The kayak is stood up and then driven around in a spin on the bow. The drive can be initiated in several ways, but the two most simple (and controllable) methods are:

Body Torque

The body is twisted from the waist, and the kayak driven by the knee (left spin, right knee), and the head turns to look in the direction of the spin. Surprisingly, the head is the most important factor here as it leads the rest.... good training for this can be done off the water on a trampoline. Ignore the strange reactions and take your paddle with you! Common advice to the aspiring paddler is "stand up and look around the corner"

Cross Deck Paddle

This comes fairly naturally. It is common to trim up the kayak with a stern stroke on the access phase, which leaves the front blade in a good position to dip into the water downstream and initiate the spin. This may be a little too testosterone-based for some, and caution is recommended. Injuries are possible: good mobility and good warm up are essential, which strengthens the case for pool training. The swamped boat exercise is especially useful here.

Most paddlers who start the spin with a cross deck paddle use it as an accelerator for more body torque, or extra speed on the spin, which will develop into 360 plus pirouettes. The big high scoring 720's happen when the paddler has both a powerful cross deck stroke, and good body action. The water can help here too in that a 'sweet spot' will help, particularly on a confused eddy line after the hole. Remember that as soon as the kayak goes vertical you are more often than not already moving off downstream (example Bitches).

Good pirouettes can vary in style, with the body upright or dynamically setting up a lower, more aggressive spin whilst the boat is on the way up to vertical. Look at good paddlers and spot the key 'flags' What is the head doing?, where is the access point?, how important is the paddle?

Practice both sides wherever possible and avoid over training one side to the detriment of the other. Nottingham based paddlers are outstanding at left hand pirouettes because that is the obvious exit from the looping pool!!

In summary

The key bit of training here is teaching the paddler to be aware of what the body is doing at all parts of the move. If they are not sure, find ways of jointly discovering what is going on, and most importantly what is going on inside the boat.

Ask questions like "How much pressure is on the soles of your feet? and when?"

When you know what it is and what it looks like, then you can produce it.

Kevin Danforth

PS Is there any significance that "playboat" is recognised by my PC's spell checker as "Playboy"....I think we should be told...