

CoDe

the magazine of the BCU Coaching Service
No 63 - June 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.

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THE BILL

This has nothing to do with Sergeant Cryer ! It is a progress report on the Bill to regulate providers of potentially hazardous pursuits for young people, officially the 'Activities Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Bill'.

Readers will be aware that this Bill has arisen out of the 'Lyme Bay' tragedy, and was put forward as a private member's Bill by Mr David Jamieson, MP for Plymouth.

The Bill, which is an 'enabling act' has had its second reading and is likely to be passed in July. The Health and Safety Executive is currently conducting a consultation process and preparing for comment the regulations which will define the activities and the circumstances over which the Bill has jurisdiction. These should be ready also in July.

The definition for centres which will come within the scope of the Bill, will most likely relate to 'providers "in business" with the public' (up to the age of 17 years) and it should specifically exclude clubs where a regular (for 1 year) membership subscription is paid. Schools also will be exempt.

The particular activities to be identified are those where there is a singular risk of death or disability, where the competence of the leaders is crucial, where the activity is vulnerable to changes in the environment, and where there is a significant risk of safety to a group. At present the activities identified are canoeing, caving, climbing, mountaineering, sailing and ski-ing.

The H&SE have confirmed that the governing body qualifications and codes of conduct will be paramount with regard to the setting of recommendations and regulations.

H&SE themselves do not want to be the monitoring body, but it has been determined that there should be only one licencing authority, independent of government and centres.

John Driscoll, until recently RYA National Coach for dinghy sailing, is currently acting as a consultant and is liaising with the governing bodies and others involved in refining the codes of conduct and qualifications recommendations which the Activity Centres Accreditation Committee produced, for incorporation into the regulations.

The BCU has been active in supporting the need for the Bill, in determining the recommendations for the conduct

of canoeing, and for seeking to ensure that the scope of the Bill does not have an adverse affect on canoe clubs or young performers who may be offered training facilities at Centres. The Earl of Mar and Kellie, who is a member of the SCA and an Instructor, was very helpful during the debate in the House of Lords in the latter respect.

GOOD NEWS

Kevin Danforth has been appointed National Coaching Development Officer for an initial term of one year. Kevin is particularly well known in white water and rodeo circles, and has a wide experience, from slalom and D-W to sea touring. Among his exploits is a crossing of the North Sea in a double with Franco Ferrero in 27 hours.

For the past four years Kevin has been editor of *Focus* and has also been responsible for information, press and publications.

His appointment takes effect from 1 June. The first three months will be spent in taking over the bulk of the routine work so that a thorough appraisal can be made of the serious backlog of major and other projects, which have accrued over the years due to the shortage of staff. Once that exercise is complete, and the systems in place to enable a more efficient service to be maintained into the future, Kevin will give priority to the provision of resource material, and to developmental projects which will improve the Union's financial position.

APOLOGIES

The last issue of CoDe unfortunately ran into last-minute technical problems. These were related to incompatibility between two computers and resulted in a rather strange, difficult to read, type configuration. Technology moves on at an ever increasing pace, but unfortunately not all of us humans are able to keep up !

Hopefully the difficulty has now been resolved, and this edition will be readable - in all respects.

The problems extended, unfortunately, to the Star Tests promotion stuffer. It is currently valid, but regrettably the Directory of Tests and Awards is still out of print, and will not be repeated in its entirety until the all the revisions are agreed and in place. This is all planned for January 1996.

NATIONAL COACHING COMMITTEE - NEWS

The following decisions of the National Coaching Committee, not reported on elsewhere, are highlighted for the information of members. A full copy of the minutes is being circulated to LCOs and Approved Centres. If you are not included and wish to receive a copy please send a sae to the BCU office.

Training and assessment of foreign nationals. It is not possible to insure other than UK residents for third party insurance indemnity (UK residents are covered world-wide, including members of HM forces). It is also not possible to monitor effectively a 'BCU scheme' in other countries. It was resolved therefore that an 'equivalence' certificate should be issued to foreign nationals who undertake BCU awards in their own country, where it is appropriate for BCU examiners to offer them.

Setting of questions for Senior Instructor assessment. It was agreed that questions asked should be answerable from the Canoeing Handbook or be based on very widely available general knowledge.

Canoeing in Swimming Pools. Publication of the revised leaflet was noted, together with the fact that application had been made to Sports Council and the H&SE for a more definite acceptance of its recommendations as being the guidelines applicable to the use of canoes in swimming pools.

Lifting recommendations. The work of Steve Devlin in surveying the incidence of back injuries and researching the possible liability of the BCU with regard to the European Directive on lifting, was welcomed, and Steve thanked for his good work. A small working party was established to pursue the recommendations with Steve and to determine how to institute a training regime for lifting within the awards structure.

Bell Boat Helm. The outstanding success of the programme to develop the use of the Bell Boat among junior school children in the Evesham Valley area was noted, and a syllabus agreed for the awarding of a 'Bell Boat Helm' certificate to the teachers involved, to satisfy the immediate need.

Coaching Service Report. Following the coaching audit and consequent appointment of a coaching development officer, NCC agreed that there was a level of misunderstanding abroad within the BCU as to the role and responsibilities of the Coaching Service. It was therefore agreed that a comprehensive report should be produced and submitted to Council.

Pools Tests. Mike McClure, RCO for Northern Ireland, reported that the piloting of the 'pools tests' was proceeding well, and that they were being well received. (Sae to the BCU office for a copy).

COACHES CIRCULATED

All current BCU Coaches (Recreation) and Aspirant Coaches have been circulated with a letter and enquiry form, besides other information. The intention is to set up a database of interest and willingness to assist. If you are a Coach or Aspirant Coach in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland and have not received this circular, please inform the BCU office.

EXAMINERS CIRCULATED

All current grade I and II examiners are currently being circulated with information to bring them up to date and to spell out the new requirements for obtaining EII status. If you are a grade I or II examiner and have not received this circular by the END OF JUNE please inform the BCU.

ADVANCED AWARD HOLDERS PLEASE REGISTER

During a period of rationalisation it was decided to stop including the advanced proficiency test as an award on the list of coaching qualifications shown on membership cards. With the coming changes to the awards scheme, it has again become desirable to include them. If you hold an Advanced

Award (AIK AIS AICN) and it is not shown among your coaching qualifications codes, please send a photocopy of the certificate - or the Log Book entry if that has gone missing - to the BCU office.

BECOMING A GRADE 3 EXAMINER

Some members have queried the process for becoming a grade 3 examiner. The system is as follows:

- 1 Obtain the relevant advanced award
- 2 Become a BCU grade I or II examiner
- 3 Become a BCU Coach
- 4 Assist existing grade III examiners with Advanced Proficiency courses until recommended (using the Proficiency Test entry form). Approval is subject to RCO endorsement.

CONGRATULATIONS

Kevin Mansell, long serving Regional Coaching Organiser for the Channel Islands, stood for election to Council in March, and came 'top of the poll'. Kevin is a well respected, experienced and active sea canoeist and coach. He led an expedition to Spitzbergen a few years ago.

Kevin's election has unfortunately meant that he has had to resign the post he has fulfilled so well and for so long, as RCO, and we are currently seeking a replacement.

Award of Merit

Graham Wardle, another well known figure from the world of white water coaching, but with a wide experience and interest in the sport, was presented with the BCU's Award of Merit - as agreed by the BCU Council - at the conference of coaches in February.

Graham's services to coaching have embraced a range of involvements, from being RCO for the East Midlands for a number of years, to taking on the organising of conferences, representing the BCU at international white water safety conferences, staging courses at all levels, producing resource material, and assisting on numerous working parties.

RAINBOW TESTS LAUNCHED

The Rainbow Badge Scheme was given its official launch in Edinburgh on Wednesday 15 May. A range of 7 tests, one for each colour of the rainbow, cover the range of skills designed for performance by younger children - particularly in the 7-12 age group. A progression card, allowing for a particular skill at a particular level to be marked up whenever the performance is achieved, enables the candidate to collect the marks and then apply for the appropriate badge.

The awards are not intended to feed into Star Tests or the Coaching Awards.

HAVE FUN, HAVE A CARE

INFORMATION FOR RIVER CANOEISTS

The National Rivers Authority, with the full endorsement of the British Canoe Union and the Welsh Canoe Association, will this Summer be launching a substantial campaign to raise awareness of the river environment to novice river canoeists in the age range 15-25 years. Enclosed in this edition of "CoDe" you will find a copy of the leaflet and poster that the NRA are distributing.

The leaflet and poster both raise key messages about: the river environment, access, other river users and health and safety tips. The leaflet also has a detachable information credit card. This card gives information on 24 hour telephone lines that will be beneficial for all canoeists.

Please contact your local NRA Office for a supply of leaflets and posters and help to distribute these important messages to canoeists that you are instructing.

Uist Outdoor Centre

Instructors required for multi-activity centre in Outer Hebrides. Kayaking/climbing/hillwalking.

Details : Uist Outdoor Centre, Lochmaddy, North Uist. Telephone 01876 5000480

Dear CoDe

Dear CoDe,

I read, with interest, Peter Griffiths' article in CoDe 61 on Open Canoe Paddles. I have, for many years, been a silent reader of CoDe, but something that he wrote prompted me to respond.

A prominent Open Canoe Coach informed me some years ago that, to steer with a cranked paddle, I had to switch. My protest fell on deaf ears. Peter has put that comment in writing. This protest may be noticed.

My partner and I purchased a pair of 15" touring paddles which we used in a Victoria 16, a design which has little directional stability. We found that the J stroke was effortless and efficient. David Train agrees. Since deciding to write this letter I noticed, in the canoeing handbook (1989): "It is more efficient and steering is made easier, as the paddle more naturally flows into the J stroke, ..." The comparative inefficiency of a straight paddle was soon noticed when switching back, to avoid damage to the expensive new paddle in shallow water.

I have also paddled solo, but the Victoria is directionally too unstable (I now use a 7° paddle with this boat), but it works superbly with the Bobcat and Interlude, both of which I have paddled over long distances.

Any stroke which uses the drive face can be performed, so manoeuvrability is better when paddling solo. For backwards paddling use the first half of the Compound back stroke combined with the Cross-deck backwater stroke. If you have this flexibility, then a Cross deck sculling draw instead of a pry should be easy.

The efficiency of these paddles is noticed in the force required to pull them. Being neither strong nor fit, I have increased their aspect ratio by trimming the edges of the blades.

The often quoted, but less frequently followed advice is, "keep your mind as open as you boat". Try it!

LES STEWART Burton-on-Trent

Dear CoDe,

Some questions have occurred in and around my SI training and assessment.

When coaching one and two star I through my training have been told not to fail candidates, but to show the positive points. This should encourage the person to hone their skills on the weak points.

Why then, when at a failed SI assessment, do the examiners just write 'fail' on the qualification sheet. This is no encouragement to the next reader on the next assessment.

Would it be possible to place the C3 assessment graph in the back so it shows the good points and bad. This will also show at what level the candidate failed on and on what. It will also give a clearer picture of the skills already achieved by the candidate, therefore highlighting the progression or degression.

We were informally talking about failing awards, and a subject came up of the standard of demonstrations for personal skills. I was subject to a similar assessment where I was asked to demonstrate an Indian stroke, pitch stroke, knifed J - all of the advanced nature. I have a reasonable knowledge of all these strokes and did my best to show them. The accompanying SI said that they were minimal standard and would have to improve. The discussion in the pub carried on to state that an SI is only a basic qualification and the attainment of the advanced proficiency strokes should only have a minimal effect on the personal skills. So may I ask you at what level of perfection does an SI need to pass a personal skill assessment for an SI pass.

I asked the same question to two well qualified SIs, who both have differing opinions - one similar as above, the second the complete opposite. He, when asked for the reason why he gave those strokes for personal skills, answered the question that, 'It gives a better picture of the candidate

to ask him/her something that is a level or two higher to see what the person's skill will be like'.

With this outlook he will assess the candidate for SI. I feel that to ask for a perfect demonstration of advanced skill only needs to be for Advanced Prof, and an 'adequate' demonstration for SI.

This problem of over-critical assessment has happened to more than myself. I asked a local SI (Open Canoe) to teach me those skills again, and found that he had altogether a team of six people with the same problem.

PAUL SCARBOROUGH

Dear CoDe

Thank you for printing my letter re contacting other black canoeists. The response I have received has been very encouraging for myself as a TSI. I even had a response from as far away as America.

I must say, I was quite taken aback by Tony Galvin's letter. I do expect far more awareness from SIs. and I'm just relieved that white male SIs who encourage me do understand my position as a black woman, as they would with other people in a minority.

Gaining strength and enlightenment from positive role models can only be very positive for trainees like myself, and young people taking up our wonderful sport! Thanks CoDe for your editorial comment. This support keeps the way open for any people in a minority.

MS J EFFIONG, Manchester

Dear CoDe,

Revisions to the Star Tests

I refer to CoDe No 60 (Dec 94) reporting the proposed changes to the star tests. My comments relate to Inland Kayak but may be relevant to other disciplines. I was not able to write earlier because much of this became clear following the recent publication of the 5* syllabus.

I congratulate the working party on the work they have done. However I have concerns in two areas.

Examining

In future, you must hold 5* to be able to test 4* (the old proficiency). However, there is a very big jump in skills from 4* to 5*. A current E1 may be at the old 4* standard and quite capable of assessing proficiency - they may not have the desire or ability to sit the Advanced. Yet such people are a vital source of introducing people to grade II whitewater. Under the proposed system, new SIs will find it much harder to reach this level, and many will not bother. Thus there are likely to be fewer candidates for 4* in future - this is not what we want.

We must avoid this perhaps by allowing level 3 coach to assess 4* after a short period of experience (as for an E1 just now).

Is it essential that a trainer of level 3 coaches holds 5*? Especially at this level, much more important than skills, is the ability to put across the material - ie to coach. For example, the best swimming coach I had was an ex internationalist who taught me the butterfly, and yet could not swim the stroke himself!

Progression

In terms of flatwater skills, the proficiency was somewhere between 2* and 3*. The new 4* is now beyond 3*. There are advantages in having proficiency where it was, because that is a good place to introduce river skills. Indeed we should teach the 4* skills earlier, for example if the 3* journeying is to be on whitewater. Such candidates will want to achieve moving water skills but perhaps do not aspire to 3*. It was useful for them to achieve proficiency, and for river leaders to know that they had achieved it.

There is now too big a jump from 4* to 5*. Previously 4* was a stepping stone. Although few people sat it, it can be a useful yardstick - at 4* but not quite 5*. I also wonder whether you have unintentionally made 5* more difficult than at present. Currently the test is of leadership on grade III whereas the new test refers to grade III/IV water, and examiners will tend to test it at the upper level in practice. A possible solution is to offer 5* at different water grade levels.

BRUCE MACDONALD, Edinburgh

TESTS AND AWARDS REVIEW AND S/NVQ UPDATE

Tests. The revised syllabus for the closed cockpit kayak progression are now ready for final agreement, while the canoe tests working party is due to meet shortly in an endeavour to finally resolve some areas of contention.

As announced in the last issue of CoDe, the 5 Star syllabus for sea and inland were accepted for immediate implementation. At the present time they are still called Advanced Proficiency, however, and course organisers have been issued with guidance notes concerning the interpretation of the syllabus, and catering for those who have been trained according to the previous requirements.

Qualifications. The main criticism had centred around nomenclature, and the anomaly created by introducing the level 4 qualification (Advanced Senior Instructor) only able to assess for 4 Star (Proficiency) - but remembering that existing rights will not be removed. This has still to be resolved, while for the re-naming of the awards as Level 1 Coach, Level 2 Coach, and so forth, it was agreed that the logicity of this system, allied to the fact that all sports qualifications would eventually follow the same pattern, was the over-riding consideration. However, the alternative titles could remain alongside the levels, in brackets: eg BCU Level 2 Coach (Instructor Inland Kayak).

Implementation date and implications. It is still anticipated that everything will be in place by January 1996. There will be a series of forums in the autumn and next spring for grade II examiners in order to bring them up to date with the revisions and procedures. This is regardless of whether or not the assessors concerned are involved with S/NVQs.

Progress with S/NVQs. The first tranche of potential assessors have been trained for the Vocational assessor award (units D32, 33) and are currently preparing their portfolios for the internal verifier (Nigel Timmins). A second course has run in Scotland, but because of the logistics of monitoring all the assessors involved, plus the fact that initially there are bound to be 'teething problems' which need ironing out, it has become obvious that we have to keep the numbers in check and move forward at a pace that can be properly serviced. The plan to immediately follow on with further Vocational assessor award training, and involving those with D32/33 from other sports or branches of industry, has had to be modified. There will be no further courses until the autumn, but members will be kept informed.

Nigel has prepared the paper work necessary for the assessment of level 2 NVQ (Instructor) and has started work on level 3 (Senior Instructor).

Provisional recognition for the BCU as the 'approved centre' has been sought from City and Guilds.

As the process has developed so has the full implication of the paper-work involved in the assessment procedure. There now appears to be a ground-swell of concern building up within governing bodies of sport, and a conference is to be staged by the CCPR in July to test this opinion and see whether or not it is too late to retreat from the current process of attempting to fit sports coaching and activity delivery into the framework designed for conventional industry. The aim would be for a parallel system to be designed for sports coaching, which could cater properly for the natural requirements, take into account the fact that the vast majority of sports teaching is delivered by volunteers, and understand that positive and objective assessment of a coach is not totally dependent upon there being ticks in hundreds of little boxes.

Quite apart from the outcome of this debate, the BCU will be looking very carefully at the situation at the November meeting of NCC. At present it is not easy to see how an alternative would work of having qualifications for the voluntary sector, at minimal cost and commitment compatible with the requirement to produce competent instructors, with a 'packaged' means of transfer to have the qualifications recognised as an NVQ at a later stage. Please be reassured, however, that the best interests of the volunteers will be at the forefront as the mills grind on.

BSI STANDARD FOR BOATS

The draft standard prepared by a panel of BCU/SCA/CANI and ACT members has now been officially circulated by BSI for public comment, prior to its being published as a revision of BS MA 94 parts 1 and 2. Please send sae plus £1 (4 x 25p stamps) for postage and copying to BCU office.

PPE UPDATE

EC Helmet standard. Phil Bibby represented the BCU at a recent meeting held at BSI to agree a European standard for canoeing helmets. The draft prepared by Dr Mills of Birmingham University for the 1989 conference was used as the basis and is now being prepared for public comment.

Buoyancy Aid Standard. The EC Directive on PPE becomes effective on 1 July. After that date it will be illegal for a manufacturer, or an importer, to place on the market buoyancy aids which do not conform to the requirements of the Directive. This is proved by their having been assessed by an approved test house, and they will carry the appropriate label.

Existing stocks held by retailers can continue to be sold until exhausted, and existing stocks used in Centres and supplied to employees or paying clients, may also continue to be used for their reasonable life, provided that they are of adequate design and construction.

The BCU recommendation remains that the 50N type buoyancy aid is the best style for canoeing purposes. Most buoyancy aids in current use for canoeing are made to this style, and very little will apparently change. However, the tests which are being applied are more stringent than previously, and the cover material has to be flame retardant, and so forth. The main difference is the cost of testing: £75 plus VAT per type tested for the now moribund BCU/ACT standard, several £thousands for the devices carrying the EC mark.

Currently the BCU and RYA are seeking to have the fully inherent buoyancy 50N type buoyancy aid re-classified as a 'device of simple design' which would enable manufacturers to self-certify, and so avoid the horrendous charges involved in seeking to improve a design. It would still be necessary for the manufacturer to be very sure that the buoyancy aid was sound - and he or she could end up in prison if this were found not to be the case. The concern at present is that the high testing costs will stultify development - particularly for those most at risk at the extreme white water end of the market, where the innovations of the manufacturers have served the paddlers so well.

Currently it will also be impossible for a manufacturer to produce a one-off customised device for a person with particular requirements related to their physique, or condition.

Unhappily the current signs are not good that this re-classification can be achieved.

It is interesting to note that in France a law has been passed requiring a minimum of 70N to be worn by a paddler of 60kg body weight when under paid instruction or involved in an official (FFCK) event. (No doubt the organisers of the World Championships in WWR and Slalom in August/September will do their duty by the French government and insist that their team obey their law, even when competing in the UK !)

Chest Harnesses. The International White Water Safety Conference held at Plas y Brenin last November, agreed that there was a need to establish a EC standard for the Chest Harness 'Canoeist's Cow Tail' (goodness knows how that will translate). Unfortunately the final draft was not ready in time for the recent meeting of the EC working group, but it is hoped to achieve this before the autumn. Members will be informed when it is ready for comment.

Wet suits and dry suits. Concern continues that the provisional standard for immersion suits does not address the needs of the water sports enthusiast. It now looks as if there will have to be a standard for sporting wet suits and dry suits, but this should only reflect current good practice and not impose unnecessary or artificial requirements on designers.

The importance of cooking !

by Dave Latham

INTRODUCTION

Where am I coming from ?

Canoeing is about travelling, about going on a journey.

I became interested in kayaking as a means of exploring the world about me. I would set off down a river to see the landscape in a new way. Thoughts of technique, safety, equipment and instruction were secondary to the experience of the journey. I moved on.

My interest in kayaking remains but was overshadowed by my introduction to the open canoe. The canoe allowed me to continue my journey, enabling me to explore in a different way.

From boats and rivers, lochs and mountains to how people work together. From the flora and fauna to how we impact upon them.

Canoeing has enabled me to pull many strands of interest together.

My travels have brought me into contact with a range of client groups operating in differing environments. I have begun to wonder if the skills which we teach to prospective instructors are those which they need to travel with their groups.

In the following article I would like to outline my view of what the appropriate skills are and where the emphasis should lie.

Where are we going ?

'The Wilderness canoeist by inclination and preferred habitat has chosen to specialize in the branch of canoeing which has the most to gain from the traditional approach. While our contemporaries may be specializing in the narrower focus disciplines of speed paddling, white water, solo or tandem ballet, the traveller must become a Renaissance person of the canoe. The reasons are evident in and arise from the landscape itself.'

The recreational paddler needs to have a good cross section of skills to travel. Indeed to travel any distance requires the skills of paddle, pole, portage and line.

These are the locomotive skills required. But beyond them are the skills required just to stand still, the skills required to live in the outdoors.

When leading and managing groups we lend them our skills for the duration of the journey. This set of actions requires a different selection of skills and knowledge. A curious blend of knowing how and knowing that.

I have grouped them into three areas.

Skills for travelling safely - The importance of paddling

Skills for living outdoors - The importance of cooking

Interpersonal skills - The importance of the person

SKILLS FOR TRAVELLING SAFELY

The importance of paddling

The Planning skills

Before the journey a group leader must plan. They must know where they are going. They must know where they can go. A knowledge of access and environment. They must be able to predict what the journey may entail. The rate of fall of a river, the influence of the prevailing wind, the length of a portage all require a knowledge of map and weather and the skill to interpret that knowledge.

The Locomotive skills

paddle - pole - portage - sail and line.

The group leader must have all of these skills to control their craft in the conditions to which they will take clients. On river, loch or sea.

These skills need to be at a demonstration standard for showing (for others). Not just at a performance standard (for themselves).

They need to select from their repertoire those skills that are required and show those that are relevant to the current and expected situation. They need to make a decision on what is not required.

The Safety skills

The group leader must have the practical skills to, prevent incidents (safety), resolve incidents (rescue) and recover equipment (salvage).

In addition the leader must be proficient in first aid and continuing care. They must look after the physical wellbeing of the individual members of the group.

The 'hard' Leadership skills

The task centred element of leadership.

The practical aspects of decision making and sound practice based on a knowledge of the environment that we operate in. Making the correct technical decision at the correct time based on what we see and know.

All of these skills can be held at a level appropriate to the journey undertaken. From 'very sheltered water' to 'advanced expedition'. These are the skills which we may naturally concentrate on when training.

Without these skills the journey cannot begin

SKILLS FOR LIVING OUTDOORS.

The importance of cooling.

The cooking skills

The group must eat. A menu produced. A meal provided.

What the group eat, how the group prepare it, how it is cleared up after the meal and the waste disposed of, all need to be considered.

Whether or not the group wish to cook communally on an open fire or separately on small stoves the group leader must show the way.

How do we decide if a fire is appropriate ? How valuable a resource for the local ecosystem is dead wood ? How much fuel do we need ?

Cooking becomes one of the core skills of the group leader.

A central skill which can minimise our impact on the environment if performed well or maximize our impact if performed poorly.

The skill of staying in one place

When we stop for the day the group leader must choose.

Our choice of location is an important one for the environment and our comfort.

A shingle beach, a slab of stone or soft ground ? What is the capacity of our site ? - how many people over how many days do we estimate will permanently change the nature of the site ?

What do we disturb by being where we are ?

The sanitary skills

Digging toilets - how deep in the soil and how far from the water ?

Do we carry a trowel ? Do members of the group wash in rivers and lochs or take the water away from them - and wash elsewhere ?

The group leader needs knowledge to make decisions and the skill to put them into practice.

These are the skills we give less attention to, we take them for granted and yet we need to be proficient in these skills.

Without environmental care we destroy what we seek.

Without environmental care our access does not continue.

Without training in this area the journey can not continue

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

The importance of the person

The 'Soft' skills of leadership

The group leader needs to choose and use the appropriate leadership style in differing situations and with differing groups.

They may need to be assertive and be skilled in conflict resolution.

Communication skills enable the leader to instruct, inform, negotiate, persuade and listen.

Client care skills

Attending to the clients needs both on a group and individual level - for information, for reassurance, for emotional support, for motivation.

The 'Soft' skills of safety and rescue

The listening and empathic skills which enable us to give emotional support during and after a traumatic incident. Recognising that for differing groups and individuals the threshold of need for support changes.

Review skills

Reviewing the day, reviewing the event.

We all have these skills to a greater or lesser degree, we share them because we are simply human there is no mystery to them. Training can enhance them and bring the need for them to awareness.

Often we let experience and apprenticeship do the teaching in these areas but is this enough ?

Without these skills our journey is not a success

CONCLUSION

Where next ?

I have sketched a personal view of the skills and attributes required by the leader of a group on a journey.

The skills are complementary but without the interpersonal skills the environmental skills cannot be put into effect, without the environmental skills the journey ends.

In order to be successful in pleasing clients, acting safely and minimizing our impact on the environment we need many complex skills.

'What training is required to enhance them ?' should be our next question. And the obvious adjunct - 'What training do the trainers require ?'.

I have used the word skill in a wide and general way. Of this I am aware - the higher order skills of which I speak are a varied mix of skill, concept, information, knowledge. Once they get beyond the most basic of motor movements all skills require a conceptual base.

By stating that we lend our skills to groups I am already taking a particular stance. One that treats much of the work that is done as guiding and leading rather than simple instruction.

When we guide we are concerned with leading, showing and

watching over people. The journey takes priority over the acquisition of skills.

The description of the leader, the label we use is not important, the emphasis is.

This shift of emphasis is an important one.

We are in the midst of a changing climate, the coaching scheme is now used to validate the appropriate level of qualification in a provider - client relationship. Whether this is an individually guided adult client or a group of 7-12 year olds.

We have to ask if the training we give is fitted for this.

For our Journey to take place and to be a success we need to look carefully at what we actually do and at what our clients ask of us

We need to become client centred.

We need to become environment centred.

BCU INSTRUCTORS REQUIRED TO START WORK IMMEDIATELY AT CENTRES IN NORTH WALES, FRANCE AND SPAIN

Contact Tim Boldry as soon as possible

Send CV (stating membership number and contact telephone numbers) to Acorn Venture Ltd, 137 Worcester Road, Hagley, Nr Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 ONW

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SELF EVALUATION

by Iain Abercrombie

'Coaches and Instructors at all levels must be able to analyse all aspects of their effectiveness'

The aim of this paper is to provide a simple model of self evaluation to ensure effectiveness of coaching/instruction.

The majority of those in the coaching service return home after a session with, at least, a 'gut' feeling as to how the day went.

My view is that we should give some structure to this 'in the car' reflection and review, without making it a massive paper exercise. Our overall effectiveness would benefit from the process.

WHY?

As coaches and instructors we need to know that things are working. Occasionally progress is slow for a variety of reasons, and we therefore require to evaluate our effectiveness in the learning situation.

On the positive side, when progress has been made, we must identify the elements that accelerated the process for future reference and use.

WHAT?

Through contact with a variety of coaches and instructors in both outdoor pursuits and sports and games, four general areas of concern as regards elements to be evaluated have come to the fore. They are:

Communication

Style

Coach behaviour/Methodology

Coach Effectiveness

These headings are not exhaustive but sub headings such as attitude, strengths, limitations etc are all incorporated into the general headings, keeping the following process simple.

HOW ?

How then, as self evaluating coaches/instructors, do we go about collecting information on our performance in these areas ?

The information gathering must be simple. Questions must be direct and quick to answer. Answers must mean something later and give a reference point, possibly to short term objectives set up for the group. Together they should add up to record of good practice including areas to be improved.

To this end I suggest the four general areas can be adequately investigated using seven simple questions:

1 **Communication**

a What did I want to say ?

Answer (in a perfect world): Those well prepared and thought out coaching points, describing images and direction towards sources of sensory information that should be produced during execution of the oh so clearly described and explained exercises and activities.

b What did I say ?

Answer (so often in the real world): Rushed cluttered verbal effluent containing wrong or inappropriate content, page 147 of the Handbook followed by weak praise or inappropriate message form.

We should not only focus on verbal communication: Non verbal communication - eye contact, facial expressions, gestures - all convey positive and negative, sometimes inconsistent messages.

2 **Style**

How did the group react ?

Answer: Through observation and the often forgotten skill of listening, consider how at any point the group or an individual became hostile, relaxed, more responsive, more friendly etc. Special regard to be given after major occurrences eg a swim or changes in practice activities and lesson format etc.

Special note should be taken as to the motivation of the group and the working relationship established over the course of the session.

3 **Methodology**

a What did I want to do ?

Answer: Consideration should be given to your input and content in the session, the level you aimed ti at, the objectives to be achieved and the timing and type of feedback provided.

Did you encourage the use of information from a variety of sources, senses, others etc and did you facilitate maximum participation in an enjoyable atmosphere.

At some point did you step back (or paddle back) and take an overview of the proceedings but be ready to quickly focus back in to solve/correct a fault or problem.

b What did I do ?

Answer: Did you rush the learners through progression, get drawn in, ignore individual differences, not allow practice, not give feedback or on a good day none of the above.

4 **Effectiveness**

a What did I want them to learn ?

Answer: Lesson objectives clear in your own mind ?

b What did they learn ?

Answer: Did it match question 4a or did they simply learn that a capsiz on Loch Lomond in November means an instant 'ice cream head' never to be repeated.

This last question is obviously one of the most important. The path we take to this point can be adjusted but what is actually learned, achievement of our predetermined objectives, or the majority of them gives us an indication as to the effectiveness of the overall process, even with adjustments.

Our trained observation of the learners progress, however, is not the only indication useful in assessing what the group or individual actually took from the lesson.

A discussion with students on the return journey or a short evening exercise getting the student to record and log new experiences knowledge/skills gained can be highly enlightening as an evaluation of the validity of your self evaluation.

eg:

What did the instructor say?

No doubt somebody noticed your slip of the tongue.

What did he/she want me to do?

Clear instruction?

What did I learn ?

These questions have in my own experience often provided interesting results such as spending a day on the water working through progressions and various practices of strokes only to find the learner ignores the obvious progress

made in their level of skill to indicate they learned more about the weather or the varieties of fish in the water during those moments of discussion over lunch or on the water rest periods.

CONCLUSIONS

As coaches and instructors in an outdoor environment, we work in isolation much of the time. Self evaluation, in some form, is therefore a necessary tool to ensure effectiveness of our sessions.

Even in this simple questioning format it is a skill and where possible should be practised with feedback. Self evaluation

without, from time to time, checking with other sources of evaluation can become ineffective.

Use of video, observation by more experienced or simply other instructors/coaches checklist or questions for the learners etc can verify the accuracy of our self evaluation thus ensuring our self analysis remains a true and honest reflection of the effectiveness of our coaching/instruction.

As a coach/instructor you are accountable to your learners/performers, your sport and yourself and hopefully this simple process will ensure your efforts are at all times valid, reliable and progressive.

OHP CANOEING

by Peter Griffiths

The overhead projector (OHP) has all but replaced black-board and chalk as the principal classroom aid. It is hard to imagine an outdoor centre without one. In teaching canoeing, the OHP has great, and perhaps as yet untapped, potential as a simple simulation device. With an OHP, transparencies, marker pens and a modicum of imagination, instructors can teach the more subtle and sometimes risky aspects of canoeing in perfect safety prior to working in the real medium of water, wind and wave. OHP canoeing is indoors rather than outdoors. It takes place at the pace of the learner rather than at the speed of the elements. It gives time for reflection and correction. Primarily, it allows preparation to precede application.

Especially on rivers, canoeing is a piloting skill. As with all such skills, trainees first have to acquire sufficient motor coordination to control the velocity and direction of the craft. They then have to acquire the perceptual ability to select the best route down the waterway. Finally, they must combine their repertoire of strokes and their knowledge of water behaviour to enable them to pilot the canoe safely past obstacles and hazards. Trainees are invariably taught stokework first, usually according to a predetermined sequence or progression. By their nature, motor skills like paddling are overt and visible to the instructor. However, perceptual skills like judging routes and appraising danger are covert and revealed only indirectly, for instance, by the way the trainee positions the canoe. Because of their inaccessibility, perceptual and, ultimately, perceptual-motor skills in canoeing tend to be taught less systematically than pure motor skills like drawstrokes, bow rudders and so on. The OHP, when used as a simulation device, provides an opportunity to adjust this imbalance.

Theoretically, a good simulator should promote learning in a safe and realistic artificial environment. Simulation should refine perception, understanding and foresight by active participation in a hypothetical situation and help the learner create mental models that can later be applied to real situations. While errors made by the learner during simulation are by design inconsequential, they must be open to immediate

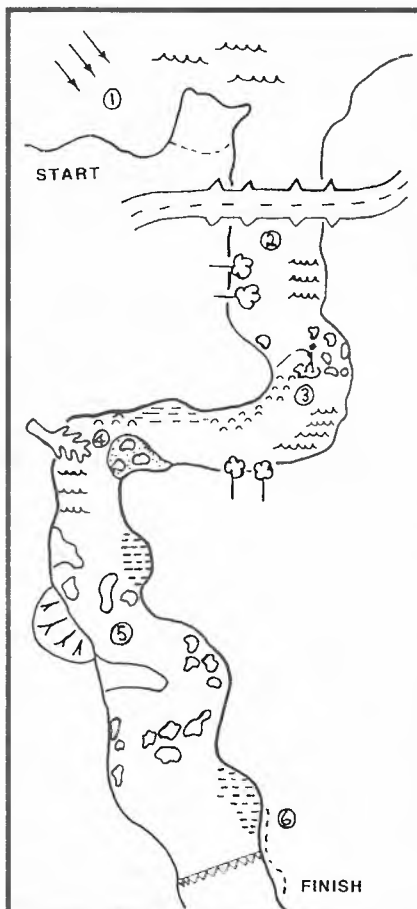
and corrective feedback. Compared with a computerised flight simulator, the OHP canoeing simulator is decidedly low technology and falls short of being dynamic in its realism.

However, it has many valuable characteristics as a teaching aid and certainly justifies itself on grounds of cost.

To convert an OHP into a simulator, a waterway image must first be drawn on the acetate sheet with spirit pens. The depiction can be of flatwater, like an island-studded lake; moving water, like an obstacle-strewn river; or a combination of the two. It can be a fantasy setting or a facsimile of an actual route. For teaching place-to-place navigation, a roll-to-roll machine with handles to advance the continuous acetate is ideal. For teaching specific techniques, like reading and running rapids, a cut-sheet machine may suffice. Meteorological and topographical features either have to be represented as conventional symbols, such as arrows showing wind direction, or stylised, such as amorphous outlines for rocks. Labels can be inserted as appropriate. Colour can assist in highlighting, say, dangerous features like weirs. All that remains is to construct a simple canoe-shape out of card or veneer with one or two holes to represent single or double paddlers. A pin-hole in the front is helpful to indicate orientation. The canoe-shape can be navigated and positioned on the pretend river by a finger or cocktail stick.

The diagram shows an example of a possible combined lake and river simulation. It is a loose amalgam of the features often found on Loch and River Tay but with some especially awkward rapids added for spice! The caption suggests problematic situations that could arise or places where special skills could be applied; the legend explains the meaning of the various air, land and water symbols. The purpose of the exercise is not just to test whether a trainee can find a route down the imaginary river, but to stop on the way,

structure perception, and discuss difficulties that might be encountered or techniques that might be employed. By so doing, arguably, the trainee will confront the real task with greater preparation, anticipation and confidence.



Caption

- 1) Beam wind 2) Ferrying 3) Fisherman
4) Lining 5) Setting 6) Portaging

Legend

- | | |
|------------|----------|
| → Wind | Rock |
| --- Path | Eddy |
| ☁ Trees | Strainer |
| ~ Waves | Cliffs |
| ~ Shallows | Weir |

ANTICIPATION

Jas Hepburn

INTRODUCTION

As instructors or prospective coaches, we have to ask ourselves when writing an essay like this - 'What is there that will be new, interesting and of value to our sport?' The answer is not an awful lot!

The many aspects of coaching, from paddle design to the soft skills of management have been thoroughly documented over previous coach courses and paddling press. With this in mind, it is therefore difficult to develop something of interest, and more importantly, of practical value. Before beginning with the details of this essay, I would like to stress that none of the ideas presented are startlingly new. However, what I think makes this essay subject different is the emphasis placed on certain aspects of coaching kayaking, particularly at beginner-improver level.

I have worked along the following lines in the past three to four years and have found it extremely useful for all standards of kayaking. As far as I can ascertain, there is little documentation of the points which I emphasise, although their basic principles are fundamental to sound kayak technique. The closest I have come to finding it in a manual is the 'Basic Strokes' section of the current *BCU Canoeing Handbook* by Ray Rowe, and Ray Rowe's own book *White Water Kayaking*. However, the matching up of the descriptive passage and the diagrams/photos do not emphasise the salient points enough.

The key points which I will emphasise on kayak control and handling can be applied and developed in other areas of the activity. To do this however, would be outwith the remit and lecture time of this essay. I have therefore selected areas of 'Breaking-in' and 'Breaking-out', which are fundamental skills to the advancement of white water kayaking, to demonstrate the approach and emphasis I take.

It is important, however, to have an overall view of the elements involved in the activity, so I have categorised them in to five key areas

- (1) *Equipment*
- (2) *Balance*
- (3) *Power/Rhythm*
- (4) *Apprehension/Arousal*
- (5) *Anticipation*

I will briefly detail with the first four aspects, and concentrate more on the area of 'Anticipation' as this is my area of emphasis.

EQUIPMENT

Equipment used must be appropriate for the job, particularly for the younger paddlers. Careful attention should be paid to the type and fit of the boats used as we need to have a direct transfer of movement from the hips to the trim of the boat. Bad habits such as leaning the boat over start as a result of badly fitting boats and can affect the paddlers progress. Put another way, you would not ski in a pair of wellies - not on icy piste anyway!

BALANCE

Balance is a key element in controlling a kayak, but does not come easily for many people. It therefore follows that any exercise which will aid this 'skill', will be of benefit. Some simple dry land drills can make the paddler aware of key points and may also aid the instructor/coach to determine if there may be problems early on. However, in order for progress to be made on moving water, we must address

the concept of 'dynamic balance', or 'balance on the move'. This is the same skill found in other activities such as skiing, skate-boarding, roller-blading or motorcycling.

When working on this idea of dynamic balance, there are two actions which are often used interchangeably - there are TILT and LEAN. When we tilt the boat, we work from the hips down in order to change the boats trim on water, ie head, nose and belly button are still in line, but are outwith the gunwales. (Centre of gravity is outwith support offered by the boat). The normal result of leaning further down the white water road, is capsize.

Tilt is obviously the preferred action that we would wish to instal in any kayaker in order for them to make good progress in white water kayaking. However, many kayakers use to lean to turn, and stay upright by using excessive amounts of power as a means of support. This may be effective, but it is certainly not efficient. If the paddle stops moving in the water, than support dies - plop!

POWER/RHYTHM

Many paddlers are guilty of equating power with speed and as a result get themselves into all kind of difficulties eg overshooting eddies, running up the bank. When working on moving water, paddlers should be made aware of the fact that the amount of power required to manoeuvre is directly proportional to the speed of water: ie beginners working on easy water need not thrash about at 100mph as this will only result in bad habits later on.

A simple analogy is the racing car on the start line. If the driver puts his foot down then the can will spin and weave out of control - kayaking is the same - power should be progressive.

APPREHENSION/AROUSAL

This area has again been well documented and I don't think there is any need to go into it in detail. Suffice to say that arousal levels increase, then so does performance. However, if the performer is over-stimulated or over aroused, then there is a dramatic drop-off in performance.

Over-arousal can manifest itself in various ways such as:

- Stiffness/rigidity*
- Lack of co-ordination during strokes*
- Unaware of the surrounding environment, ie looking at the bow of the boat when manoeuvring*
- Letting the upper body fall back when going down rapids or shying away from the current.*

It is therefore up to the coach to choose the correct learning set for the chosen skills so that the learner need only think about the work in hand. There is no good practising breakouts with improvers above 30ft waterfall - the paddler may well be over stimulated!

ANTICIPATION

The idea of anticipation is one which I emphasise a great deal in my own work, especially in key areas of kayak control such as turning, and breaking in and out. Put in its simplest form, it is getting the learner to think one or two steps ahead of what they are doing. As I will explain, in certain areas of kayaking this is easily done, and can greatly speed up the paddlers progress in controlling their boat.

These five areas are all inter-related and are all required at some stage to improve the paddlers skills. Striking a balance between them is the coach's bread and butter, but for the moment I would like to concentrate on what I call anticipation, with specific reference to turning, breaking-in and breaking-out.

Anticipation - Breaking-in/Breaking-out

Throughout all activities which require turning, rotation, spins, somersaults - call it what you will - there is one part of the body responsible initiating the action and stabilising the body at its end. That part of the body is the head.

As a simple example of this, let us look at a jump turn. At the point of jumping, the head leads the rest of the body round and halts the rotation when it reaches a point of focus at the end, be it at 90, 180 or 360 degrees. If the head does not lead, then rotation will not happen.

Since most kayaking manoeuvres are simple forms of rotation, then we can use this simple action of the head to aid progress in several areas. How can this simple action aid the kayaker?

If the paddler is properly fitted into their boat, then it gives an automatic tilt control. It negates the need for verbal descriptions of what is happening below the deck with knees, hips and buttocks. This means that they can concentrate on some other aspect of what they are trying to achieve.

The other advantage of this simple approach, is that it involves the trunk and torso, unknowingly, at a much earlier stage in controlling the kayak. The trunk has already wound itself up in anticipating the direction of the turn (looking where you want to go). Therefore, if it is wound up, then the unwinding action will supply power, which aids stability, which lessens the chance of capsize, contributing to better kayaking.

If we look at its application in breaking in and out, then we may get a better idea of its value.

Breaking-In

Firstly, there are the basic pre-requisites that a white water kayaker should know about, and know how they affect the boat. These are:

The Current

The Eddy Fence

The Eddy

From observing the points of capsize amongst many kayakers of all standards, I have come to the conclusion that there are two basic areas where this happens:

As soon as the paddler enters the current

Nearing the completion of the turn

Why does this happen?

The most obvious reason is that the paddler fails to Tilt the boat in anticipation of the change in water speed. The result is a dramatic increase of water pressure on the hull, and capsize ensues. However, even when the boat has successfully entered the current, there is still a large number of capsizes. Again, the obvious reason for this, is that tilting the boat at the start, the paddler fails to keep it on and does not apply sufficient power to stop the boat stalling in the current. As a result pressure builds up and de-stabilises the boat.

How can this be prevented?

We all know that POWER = STABILITY and if we use excessive amounts of power, then most paddlers will succeed in getting their boat round. However, to be efficient, we need to tilt the boat, and I would suggest that for most novices or improvers, we tilt the boat very early on.

Instead of talking about lifting the upstream gunwale, or pressing down on the right or left cheek - which can all be confusing - simply tell them to look where they want to go, early on. This has the effect of tilting the boat automatically as well as increasing trunk rotation, allowing the paddler to concentrate on their paddle strokes.

As with any rotation, if the head is focused on the final objective, ie down-stream, then the boat will stabilise itself at

the end of the turn. As with many new skills, the learner's attention will be focused on what is happening immediately in front of them, eg starting just over the bonnet of a car when learning to drive, or the kayaker staring at the end of the boat. This tunnel vision results in slow reaction times and very jerky manoeuvres, increasing the chances of failure. The coach can easily resolve this problem by good positioning downstream, giving a visual and auditory focus for the paddler. Once attention is attracted, ie the head is turned bringing with it the shoulders and trunk, then tilt will automatically be set. Once the kayaker gets into the habit of anticipating the turn, looking where they are going, then they can progress onto using the stored up energy in the rotated trunk, to better effect.

Breaking-Out

The same approach can be adapted for breaking-out. Obviously the other inter-relating factor may have to have been covered such as where to enter the eddy, and at what angle.

In the most basic scenario, all the paddler has to do is spot their point of entry into the eddy early on, and as they approach it, look to the top of the eddy throughout the manoeuvre. This keeps the boat titled, the trunk rotated, and the paddlers horizon raised and focused. It is worth noting that with all the standards of paddler, and the correct learning set, that this approach is done with 'eyes closed' at some time. This enables the paddler to use their kinaesthetic senses to feel what is happening, rather than trying to judge to early what might happen. It is still possible with eyes shut to look to where you want to go. It is also worth noting, that the same approach can be applied to sweep-strokes, both forward and reverse, reverse break-ins and outs, and eddy spins. It gets the beginner/improver out of the habit of watching the paddle blade which is all too common a problem - at all levels

CONCLUSION

In essence, all we as coaches are trying to do is improve and develop a paddler's level of skill in all aspects of kayaking. But what is skill? According to Barbara Knapp's definition, from her book Skill in Sport.

"Skill is the learned ability to bring about pre-determined result with the maximum amount of certainty but with the minimum outlay of energy on time on both" B Knapp - Skill in Sport

We can logically conclude that any step or technique which makes a complex activity such as white water easier, but still install sound technique, must be of value.

Personally, I firmly believe that emphasising the PRE-DETERMINED or the ANTICIPATED OUTCOME of the kayaking manoeuvres described by simply looking where you want to be or go, then we are succeeding

As I stated at the beginning, there is not a great deal in the practical world of coaching kayaking that is new and exciting. However, I feel that this simple area is one which has hardly been touched on or emphasised in the instructional literature. Although it may seem a small detail, it has worked extremely well in my own coaching. The only way in which to satisfy yourself of its worth, is to go out and try it.

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ASSESSMENT SOFT SKILLS

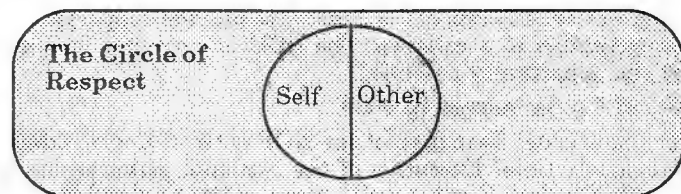
by Paul O'Sullivan

Introduction

As an Inland E2 examiner, I recently undertook my Senior Instructor (Sea) assessment. I very much enjoyed the experience, finding it a useful learning base for running my own courses. However, being on the 'other side of the fence' again has led me to think about the soft skills such as communication, feedback and inter-personal relations, involved in running assessments. What makes a good assessment? Indeed, what makes a good assessor? In this document, I will outline some of the key soft skills which I feel lead towards a good assessment experience for both candidates and examiners. After all, should we not all learn from the experience? By way of introduction, the human interaction model outlined below is one developed by Chris Agaris and adapted by two Educational Psychologists, Dave Dickinson and Gunnars Grundvalds, whom I have had the pleasure of working alongside on Outdoor Management Development courses.

Creating an Atmosphere

Most people do not enjoy being assessed and fear either not performing to their best or failing to meet the required level. As assessors we must endeavour to set our clients at ease. This is controlled by a host of factors, such as making sure that accommodation is in order and that paperwork arrives on time. However, the key factor is the relationship between us, as assessors, and our clients. The diagram below outlines a simple model of human interaction called the Circle of Respect.



It could be argued that the most beneficial interaction between two people will occur when the dividing line is through the middle of the circle. In other words, you should hold as much respect for the other person, and his/her opinions, as you do for yourself and your own personal views. It is very easy for that dividing line to be moved to one side, thus marginalising one person in the interaction. I shall demonstrate this in a canoeing assessment context.

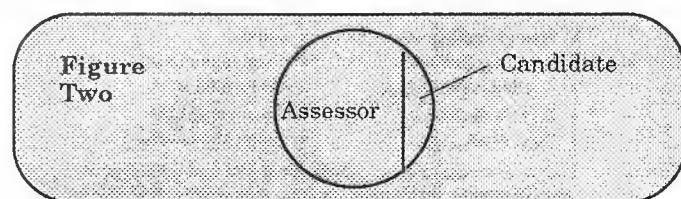


Figure Two shows a situation where the dividing line in the circle of respect has been marginalised. In this case, the assessor is marginalising the candidate. Perhaps the following basic thought values might apply:

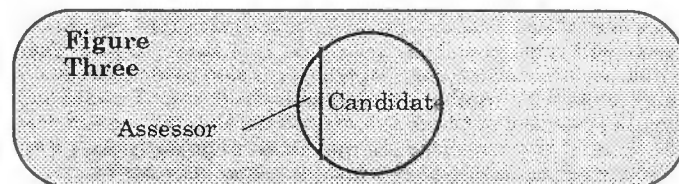
Assessor: 'Well, I'm the assessor, and I know what's right, and I'm far more experienced than the candidates.'

The same situation can occur through the candidate marginalising him or her self and thereby giving him or her selves opinions an unduly small share of respect. For example:

Candidate: 'The examiner is a far better and much more experienced paddler than me. He's bound to think my teaching is too basic.'

A further problem is that, in the Circle of Respect model, the dividing line is elastic. Thus, in the case of an assessor

marginalising a candidate and then failing that candidate, the dividing line can then shoot across the circle with the candidate then marginalising the assessor and his opinions, justifying their own failure by blaming a poorly run assessment or an unfair examiner, as shown in Figure Three.



Obviously, I am illustrating this model with somewhat extreme examples; however, this should allow us to identify some key points essential in creating fair and enjoyable conditions for assessment.

The assessment should be conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and as an open forum of learning where candidates can air their opinions for discussion and ask questions. The assessor should not feel that he has to have all the answers or even pretend that he does. After all, although it is an assessment, this should in no way exclude new learning and training from occurring; indeed this should be positively catered for.

The initial meeting and introduction between assessors and candidates is critical in setting the atmosphere for the assessment. It is vital that the format and timetable for the assessment is outlined from the outset and that it is made clear to the candidates what will be asked of them. It is critical that everything possible is done to put the candidates at ease and any questions or queries the candidates have are aired and answered.

The candidates will normally feel under enough pressure simply by virtue of being on an assessment and, as assessors, we should avoid unduly adding to this. Does the common practice of having a written paper as the first part of the assessment facilitate this?

Feedback

If we are to assess the performance of candidates, then it is essential that we provide feedback on their performance and encourage them to be self-analytical about their own performance. Feedback should not be nice or nasty, but straight, honest and relevant. We need to ascertain from the candidates how they would wish to receive feedback, not merely give it in the mode we personally prefer. For instance, I like operating where feedback is open, thus allowing the whole group to learn and contribute to the learning process, thereby operating within the open forum as discussed above. However, if the group or even particular individuals in the group do not feel happy with this and would prefer feedback to be more individual, then it is necessary for me to change my mode of operation to accommodate this.

We have all seen or experienced the situation where a candidate has been asked to perform a task at the end of which the assessors take them to one side for a few moments and then, upon their return to the group, the assessors continue to discuss the performance amongst themselves.

By visibly continuing their conversation alone, the assessors are seen to be 'playing their cards close to their chest' and the candidate may be left thinking that only now are they discussing what they truly feel about the performance. Certainly, it is essential for members of the assessment team to come together to discuss each candidate's performance, but should this not be at a later time and physically away from the candidates?

Data Collection

It is essential, as assessors, that we collect data on the performance of each candidate. When it comes to making a pass/fail decision, we need to be able to justify our decisions on specific instances and events rather than on general feelings and hunches. This applies equally to pass candidates as to those who fail. We have a duty to all candidates to inform them of why they have passed or failed, and to base this on specific instances and aspects of their performance which were above/below pass standard. We need these data in order to fill in the marks on the C3 form and, rather than telling a candidate 'we gave you 8 for your lecturette', we need to tell them in specific terms why they received that score.

De-briefs

When considering e-briefs, we are, to a very great extent, tying together what has already been said about feedback and data collection. This is the last chance on a course to provide feedback and it is probably going to be the feedback that the participants will remember best, in that it is a summation of their whole performance and provides a conclusion to the assessment process. As with feedback throughout the course, I would suggest that we find out from the candidates how they would wish the de-brief to occur - ie on an individual or group basis, rather than operating in the mode which we personally prefer.

De-briefs should be a two way process. We need to look back at the candidate's performance during the course and provide feedback on this. Additionally, we need to look forward to the future and look at where the candidate should be progressing to and set some future goals. This is equally applicable to pass candidates as to those who have failed.

De-briefing should also be in inter-active process in that the input should not all come from the assessors, but also from the candidates to allow them critically to examine their performance and provide us with feedback on how well they felt the assessment was conducted.

It is vital that we have collected and rationalised the data of the candidate's performance to allow us, firstly to reach a result, and secondly, to justify that result to the candidate. An uncredited article, 'Some Thoughts on De-briefing Candidates', in CoDe No 53 suggested that, by having the candidates outline their views on their performance, they will:

'often refer to instants and areas from the weekend which may help you build a justification of any result later during the de-briefing'.

I would suggest that, whilst obtaining feedback from candidates is vital - especially if it allows us critically to examine our performance as assessors - we should have collected all the data we require to justify to a candidate the pass/fail decision we have reached before the de-brief, and should not need this late input to allow us to provide last-minute justification for our decisions.

Conclusion

The proposals for the revised Coaching Scheme outline a one day examiners' training course, attendance at which would be necessary before gaining Assessor I status. It is thought that this might well be presented by the National Coaching Foundation as a generic course for sports coaches.

At present, with no such condition the road from Senior Instructor to E2 examiner status is one of assisting on Instructor and Senior Instructor training and assessment courses. As a generic Senior Instructor we are essentially involved in training and assessing paddling skills. As an E2, this training and assessment role is expanded to include communication, teaching, lecturette, leadership and observation skills, all of which are often classified as 'soft skills'.

I have outlined above a few of the 'soft skills' which I feel can lead towards better assessments at all levels, and which, currently are not formally covered as one progresses through the coaching scheme, but rather are assumed to develop before gaining E2 status. Consequently, I believe that the move towards a more formal examiners training course would be highly beneficial - but is one day long enough?

Bibliography and Notes

Uncredited. *Some Thoughts on De-Briefing Candidates*, (1993) CoDe No 53, BCU.

The Circle of Respect model as adapted by Dickinson and Grundvalds is to date unpublished

COMPETITION NEWS

Slalom Manual produced

The Slalom Coaching Development Committee has produced its manual to accompany Trainer and Coach courses. This 103 page publication provides comprehensive notes on all aspects of the syllabus. The cost is just £6 (including p&p) from the BCU office.

First Aid for Slalom Trainers and Coaches

The Aquatic First Aid certificate provided by the BCU Life-guards is sufficient for the holding of a Slalom coaching qualification. The course is of 1 day's duration. Please see p108 of the BCU Yearbook for a list of courses available.

Any First Aid Certificate accepted by Health and Safety is agreeable for BCU Coaching Service purposes.

Racing tests launched

The re-vamped racing tests - marathon, time trial, and 500m tests - are now available through Richard Ward. Please send sae to the BCU office for leaflet and entry forms.

Marathon Bulletin No 3

A well received bulletin for marathon coaches has been sent to all Race Trainers and above, as well as Marathon Racing clubs. If you have not received a copy and would like to do so please send a sae to the BCU office. This bulletin addresses in particular the latest teaching on 'the catch' phase of the forward stroke. The secret is to attack the water, rather than seek a clean entry for the blade!

National Coaching Foundation Changes

Sue Campbell, MBE, who has led the NCF through a remarkable period of development and expansion, has moved over to manage the Youth Sport Trust, which is developing the Top Play, Top Sport, Champion Coaching and Top Club programme. The aim of the Trust is to provide support from participation to excellence. The BCU is currently looking at the opportunity potential.

Geoff Cooke moves to NCF

The new Chief Executive of the NCF is Geoff Cooke, OBE, previously Chief Executive of the National Association of Sports Coaches. Geoff is well known as the England Rugby team manager during its recent 7 year period of outstanding success.

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