

Coaching Development

CoDe

the magazine of the BCU Coaching Service

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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.

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.

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Dear Code.... *With much regret....*

Geoff Good 1937 - 1999

It is with great sadness that I have to inform you of Geoff's death. He died peacefully at home on Saturday 8th May watching television with his wife Mary-Ann. Geoff had borne his illness with the patience and good humour that has characterised his life. Whilst it has been clear for sometime that he was unlikely to make a full recovery it seems cruel that he was only able to enjoy such a short period of retirement. Our sympathies must be with his family as they come to terms with their loss.

Geoff leaves a great hole in the world of canoeing and his wisdom and common sense will be greatly missed. As Director of Coaching he worked tirelessly for the sport and coaching flourished during a period of far from ideal conditions. During this time difficult decisions had to be taken and yet nobody ever had a bad word to say about him such was his skill in managing people.

We will all have our memories of Geoff and having worked so closely with him for many years I am grateful to him for the fun and satisfaction the sport has given me. I have valued his friendship but I will remember him most, like all he came into contact with, as a lovely man.

Graham Lyon - chair of Coaching.

Dear CoDe

Re: Competence of Outdoor Centre Staff

I refer to the letter in the April '99 edition of CoDe on the subject of 'in-house validation'. The piece was strongly worded ('absolute farce', 'lack of professionalism', even more bizarre etc) but did not carry the author's identity.

It is widely accepted that whilst an NGB qualification may be a good indication of a general level of over-all competence it is often not specific enough to cover every eventuality. Thus, further induction is almost invariably required.

In fact, if well structured and conducted this induction may well be a MORE effective means of the centre manager ensuring that his or her staff have the necessary skills and judgement to do that particular job. If this in-house training has been assessed by someone competent to do so for the relevant NGB (usually a Level 3 Coach or above in the case of canoe sport) then the Licensing Authority (in keeping with the Health & Safety Executive) will accept this as being equally valid as an NGB award.

The BCU is good at assessing competence, but it does not have the monopoly. To believe so would be highly elitist.

The safeguard within 'in-house validation' is that it is not transferable. So someone deemed competent to work at one centre can not claim competence to work at another. The new manager would have to carry out that assessment.

However, observation shows that most providers find it more desirable to use NGB qualification which contains the element of local induction which they require. This solution seems to offer the best of both worlds, provided the assessment is at a nationally acceptable standard.

There is no excuse, and indeed no need, for an assessor-employer to 'down grade' an assessment so as to pass sub-standard candidates. If a candidate-employee is not sufficiently competent to look after groups at that venue they should be failed and put onto other duties. If they do not meet the nationally expected standards but are nevertheless considered competent to carry out limited responsibilities at that particular venue then they should be given a local validation which states the limitations.

It used to be that a BCU coaching award was an indication that the candidate was GOOD at that level of work. Nowadays, it tends to mean that they have the MINI-

MUM competence to do the work. Local validation is one way of allowing and instructors to gain that level of competence in an environment of limited responsibility.

Interestingly, the remainder of the responsibility rests with the centre manager, so it would be a brave (or a foolish) employer who knowingly employed incompetent staff.

Activity Licensing includes more than just 'canoe-sport' and where possible it seems appropriate to retain a level of consistency across the different activities. I am of the opinion that the building blocks of licensing are the NGB awards. However by their very nature these tend to be inflexible and some awards in some sports are not always appropriate to the needs of a specific instructor or a specific centre. I believe that 'technical advisor ratification' as describe above provides a degree of "cement between the blocks" and keeps the overall system sufficiently flexible so as not to crack.

Marcus Bailie
Head of Inspection Services for the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority and former trainer and assessor of BCU Level 5 Coaches.

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'EDGING' IN OPEN CANOES

Martin Barry

We have all heard the debate about edging and dynamically leaning in a kayak and how this affects a turn as a result of engaging the edge of the boat and offering a different profile to the water. Many modern kayaks do have some sort of edge or rail, but show me the edge on a traditional open boat, and I'll demonstrate a one hand clap...

Kayaking went through a stage of 'plastic roundedness' common in most designs about seven or eight years ago, but since then the re-introduction of kayak designs with sharp lines has led to greater boat control and awareness in white water paddlers as seen today. Not so very long ago paddlers would choose big volume kayaks similar in shape to a plastic cigar to run big, serious whitewater in places like Nepal or the States. Often the boat used is dictated by the degree of self-sufficiency required, but go there now and you see these rivers skilfully paddled in boats which make Acro 270's look high volume!

Kayaking has undergone a radical transformation over the last decade partly as a result of new and innovative designs becoming available, but mainly as a result of people thinking hard about what they are doing in and with the boat, and how they can then impart information to others to facilitate improvement. In recreational terms a great deal of quality innovative coaching is kayak driven. Later these innovations and techniques are adapted and transferred throughout the canoesport disciplines. (This is undoubtedly linked to the popularity of this craft relative to others).

One particular aspect of coaching which can hinder the progress of both student and coach is inaccurate communication, particularly with reference to boat specific terminology. From the perspective of the coach, accurate use of language can save dozens more words needing to be used to explain the initial point made. Lots of coaches work on the basis that the student benefits from anecdotes and lengthy analogy. I believe that this isn't the case:- most students want crystal clear explanations and a maximum of 3 key points to take away to work on and think about. Anymore is simply lost. From the perspective of the student the explanation of one coach may differ from that of another in terms of basic principles if the same terminology isn't adopted. More importantly, the student suffers from mental overload as a result of trying to interpret imprecise use of language. A typical example may be seen when even extremely experienced kayak coaches who are used to talking about edging and tilting then transfer to open canoe coaching and continue to work on themes of edge *despite* an open canoe being devoid of such features.

The bottom line is this:- if the person who is supposed to know what they are on about can't communicate accurately using the correct terminology, the student trying to interpret this feedback is surely going to have difficulty using such information to help them improve a technique. Sure enough, some coaching styles use little language or verbal prompting from the coach, but when the style does require it, it has to be right. Open canoeing can only go through the same type of evolution that kayaking has enjoyed if we get the coaching basis and terminology accurate and make the student learning reflect the coaches' desire to be as good as they can be.

Recently an open boat was reviewed in a popular canoesport magazine and the author described how the boat could be manoeuvred once it was 'edged' over. How can you edge an open boat if it doesn't have one? A very crucial point here is; if you asked a student to edge an open boat, how could you monitor the result and give accurate feedback if the task which is being requested is not only phrased in technically poor language but is almost impossible due to the design features of the craft?

I consider it good use of time to spend a few minutes organizing oneself so that commonly used terms are **accurate, fluent and brief**. As far as open canoeing goes, the basics of **ROCKER, TRIM, TILT** and **CARVING** (of turns) tends to cover most common teaching scenarios.

Many coaches, particularly kayak/ski surfers are familiar and accurate with **trim** (the longitudinal aspect of the boat relative to the water) which changes as the paddler moves his/her weight forwards or backwards, whereas **tilt** refers to the lateral aspect of the boat, which changes as

the paddler(s) move from one side to the other. As in kayak, a tilt means the boat eases over whilst the paddler remains in balance, as opposed to a **lean** where the boat may be eased to one side laterally, but the paddler is no longer in balance and operating within the confines of the craft in this instance.

Leans come in two main types:- those done statically (which aren't much use to anyone) and those done on the move (which are). A **static lean** usually results in the contents of the canoe being emptied, whereas a **dynamic lean** is a balancing of forces similar to that employed by a motorcyclist negotiating a bend at speed. A good day to day example of a static lean is when you see a cyclist approaching a set of traffic lights who then unfortunately is unable to get his/her feet out of the toe clips in time before gravity wins the battle of the forces.

All water going vessels have varying degrees of **rocker**, according to their intended purpose. The amount that the ends of the boat appear to lift up when it is sitting flat dictate the characteristics of straight running or ease of manoeuvrability. Sprint canoes which are destined to go as fast as possible in a straight line have no rocker, and hence almost zero turning ability, whereas whitewater playboats with extreme rocker have very little straight running ability but lots of turning potential. When attempting to design an 'all-round' boat, canoe manufacturers continually have to juggle with this 'rocker factor'.

Tilt and **carving** are very closely linked, and it is at this point where confusion can arise. If a canoe (or kayak) is paddled flat on the water (ie, with no noticeable tilt) it will naturally displace water equally all round it. If the boat is encouraged into a turn whilst still remaining flat, it will slide or skid across the water whilst still accomplishing a turn. (You'll recognize a skid because the stern of the boat overtakes the bow.)

If a turn is initiated but this time with the boat tilted, instead of slipping across the water and skidding the boat will tend to carve a turn because the water is no longer displaced equally around it. The hull will now sit deeper in the water around the pivot point (usually the paddler in a solo canoe) thus causing a number of things to happen:-

- once a turn begins a small front wave develops which has the tendency to pin the bow into an increasingly tighter turn.
- the fact that the hull sits deeper in the water on the side to which the boat has been tilted, and usually to the side which the turn has been initiated, allows it to act as a type of improvised centreboard, thereby increasing desired carving resistance and limiting undesired skid.

When a canoe or kayak is tilted it will carve a turn to either side. For example a boat tilted to the left will readily turn either left or right. In practice though, it is preferable to tilt to the inside of the turn for stability, for example whilst doing a low brace turn. The direction of the turn once a boat is tilted actually depends upon the last major influence, whether it happens to be wind, current or the last dominant stroke, but usually a purposeful stroke combined with tilt takes the boat in the chosen direction to accomplish a carved turn which holds its' line. The radius of the turn dictated in part by an increase or reduction in tilt.

Try some of these simple exercises to explore tilt and carving. (If your can't manage them in an open canoe, a kayak will do!)

1. Initiate a turn to the left with the boat tilted left.
2. Initiate a turn to the right with the boat tilted left.
3. Realise that the boat responds easily to turning forces when tilted, the direction it goes dependent upon the initiation from the last stroke.
4. Initiate a turn to the left with a left tilt, and paddle only on the left side whilst continuing in a leftwards circle.
5. The hard one... Tilt right, initiate a turn to the left and paddle on the left side only but continue in a leftwards circle.
6. Rather than aim for an extreme tilts whilst carving, concentrate instead on maintaining a steady tilt throughout the turn.

[For further information, refer to Kent Fords' video. "Drill Time" and for those who require two ends to their paddle, "The Kayakers' Playbook".]

Paddlefest 99 – The Paddlesport Event of the Year

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Following the success of the 'Paddlefest' event we announce its return in the guise of Paddlefest 99 for a third year and invite you to the paddle bash of the year. This year the event will be held over the weekend of 9th /10th October and promises to be bigger and better than ever.

Slightly earlier than its predecessors 'Paddlefest 99' will hopefully have better weather than last year and should see much more opportunity for competitive interests to be fully represented on the start list. The objective of the weekend is to bring together as many paddlers, with as wide a range of interests as possible so as to create a fun, multi-discipline event, featuring elements of competition, coaching sessions and clinics, have a go / try a boat sessions, presentations and lectures, doing your own thing, along with a car boot sale and of course a paddlefest party.

For many it will be the end of a season of paddling for others it will be the beginning of their season. For every one though, seasoned competitor, Rodeo die hard, recreational pick and mixer, novice or convert Paddlefest 99 will provide five full programmes of activity and numerous add on attractions, providing wide ranging and varied activity from which you can choose, mix and match and create your own itinerary. Come along and view, or come along and be fully involved. Come alone or come with friends or why not bring the family. Come for one day or come for both, the choice is yours. There will be lots to do who ever you are, whatever your interests. A great time is assured.

Paddlefest 99

Regions, clubs, Disciplines – If you have ideas for events, workshops, clinics etc or would wish to run an event / workshop within the event please, please let us now a.s.a.p.

For Further details, including full programme, costs and booking form please see Canoe Focus or write to / phone BCU Coaching Dept, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 5AS. Tel 0115 9818844 Fax 0115 9821797 email info@bcu.org.uk

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GUIDELINES FOR MINIMISING DISTURBANCE TO CETACEANS FROM RECREATION AT SEA

The Government is committed to protecting all species of cetaceans and to this end is a Party to the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS). The primary aim of this Agreement is to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for small cetacean (dolphin and porpoise) populations in this region.

Recreational boating and water sports are on the increase and it is likely that people participating in these activities will encounter, and want to stop and look at cetaceans. However, these encounters pose a potential threat to cetaceans unless they are conducted in such a way as to minimise disturbance. To minimise any potential disturbance from recreational activities this Department together with the Government's statutory nature conservation agencies, has produced the enclosed guidelines (in the form of a booklet with an abridged version on a pocket-sized card). The booklet is aimed specifically at local authorities and other organisations responsible for recreation in the coastal environment. The card is aimed at members of the public involved in recreational activities at sea. The guidelines are intended to complement, not override, any existing local guidelines which may reflect specific local circumstances. We hope that you and others will distribute the cards as widely as possible to ensure they reach as much of the target audience as possible.

Copies of these guidelines have also been sent to all UK coastal local authorities for distribution to local recreation organisations, tourist information centres, harbour offices, sailing clubs, marinas and other local organisations as appropriate. They have also been sent to Wildlife Links for circulation to relevant conservation organisations; to the Government's statutory nature conservation agencies in the UK; and, to relevant Government Departments. On encountering whales, dolphins or porpoises you should follow these general guidelines: Compliance with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea has priority over these guidelines at all times.

ENCOUNTERS WITH WHALES, DOLPHINS AND PORPOISES

- ★Continue slowly at no wake speed (or less than 5 knots) on your intended route until well clear.
- ★Avoid erratic movements.
- ★Avoid approaching directly, let them approach you.
- ★Refrain from chasing them.
- ★Always allow a clear escape route for them.
- ★Move away slowly if they show signs of disturbance.
- ★Avoid driving through, or between, groups.
- ★Avoid animals with young.
- ★Refrain from calling other vessels to the area.
- ★For health and safety reasons, refrain from swimming with, touching, or feeding them.

THE 5 STAR (SEA) TEST AND THE ROLE OF THE LEVEL 5 COACH (SEA)

A discussion paper by:

Rowland Woollven - L5C(Sea) E3/A5 Nigel Dennis - L4C(Sea)

E3 Sue Savage - L3C(Sea) A1

INTRODUCTION

1. The aim of the 5 Star (Sea) Test is currently laid down as 'to ensure the successful candidate has sufficient knowledge and skill to *lead others of adequate ability* on sea journeys, up to and including advanced level, with safety, in British conditions'. Also, 'when used with the relevant coaching award it shows that the candidate has sufficient expertise to coach and lead groups in *more demanding conditions*'. Lastly 'it is envisaged that the *average club member* canoeing regularly, should be able to obtain this award *within 3 years of starting to paddle*'.

2. The wording quoted above is the version arrived at after a working party addressed the perception that the 5 Star (Sea) award was a qualification only awarded posthumously and only achievable by a small group of elite paddlers! It should be noted that the wording creates an anomaly within the Star Test system by going further than any other and requiring leadership skills in addition to a test of personal skills.

3. There are, in our opinion, 3 related matters which are in need of clarification:

a. The ability of the people with whom the 5 Star (Sea) award is expected to lead (both during assessment and afterwards) and, indeed, whether the 5 Star (Sea) holder should be expected to lead groups at all.

b. The role of the Level 5 Coach (Sea) (L5C (Sea)) in coaching and leading in advanced conditions.

c. Whether the current test is 'gender-fair' or 'gender-free' and pitched at the appropriate level.

GROUP ABILITY

4. The standard of paddlers whom the 5 Star (Sea) award holder is currently expected to lead on assessment has been variously described (by different E3/A5s) as:

a. Freshly qualified 4 Star (Sea) paddlers.

b. Experienced 4 Star (Sea) paddlers with a 95% probability of rolling in intermediate to advanced conditions.

c. Peers (eg other 5 Star (Sea) aspirants).

It will be readily apparent that there is a wide disparity between the approach to be taken with the groups in each category. In many respects it would be possible to describe category 4.b as advanced paddlers, in other words people who could participate in but not lead an advanced trip. 'Peer paddling' in truly advanced conditions is a quantum leap in responsibility, and coaching/leading in such conditions must represent the highest level of award or activity to which BCU qualification seekers aspire. The judgement expected of a leader of a group of freshly qualified 4 Star (Sea) paddlers would of necessity be heavily weighted towards safety and danger avoidance. That of a member of a group of 'peer paddlers' would logically concen-

trate upon the high personal skill levels required to handle advanced conditions. (This is not to say that group leadership skills, rescue skills and boat handling skills are not required in the first instance - it is a question of level and applicability).

THE ROLE OF THE LEVEL 5 COACH (SEA)

5. If the role of the 5 Star (Sea) award holder remains 'to lead others' and that of the L4C(Sea) is to coach others in similar conditions, what then is the role of the L5C(Sea) has been through an extensive training and assessment process to enable them to develop other paddlers and empower them to progress to higher levels of performance. It seems logical, therefore, that as this is the highest award then leading and coaching advanced paddlers in advanced conditions should lie solely within the remit of holders of this award. If this is the case, then the 5 Star (Sea) paddler should perhaps not be expected to lead groups at all - merely prove their competence as a member of a group in advanced conditions. Similarly, the role of the L4C(Sea) would devolve to leading and developing category 4.b paddlers working towards 5 Star (Sea) (i.e. work at '4 Star plus' standard). This consequent separation of roles and responsibilities can be expressed as a matrix (see fig 1) This would give the L5C(Sea) a clear leadership and coaching mandate at the highest level of his/her chosen specialisation. The knock-on effect is that the current perception of a 5 Star (Sea) paddler would be shifted downwards a little. The phraseology of the first quote would therefore need changing to something along the lines of 'and skill to *undertake with others of adequate ability* sea journeys' etc.

GENDER-FAIR OR GENDER-FREE ASSESSMENT?

6. Firstly, 2 definitions:

a. Gender-fair - an assessment which takes account of the physiological differences between female and male paddlers.

b. Gender-free - an assessment which does not take account of physiological differences (eg. the same test for all).

It is clearly preferable to set an assessment that is gender-free; everyone is measured against a set yardstick and the test is the same for all. However, if, as at present, the 5 Star (Sea) test requires the candidate to operate in advanced and difficult conditions there is inherently a requirement for upper body strength. Furthermore, such strength is needed as to be in the 'powerful' bracket and therefore the inclusion of aspects of the test requiring strength (such as rescues, towing and boat handling in advanced conditions) by default cause the award to be unachievable not only by the majority of women but also by a large proportion of more slightly-built men who in both cases are otherwise excellent paddlers, capable of demonstrating high levels of seamanship. As a result, although the test is gender-free it is currently set at a level that is unattainable to 'the average club member.... within 3 years of starting to paddle.'. There is, however, no middle ground - one is either 'safe' or 'unsafe' as a

leader at sea. It therefore seems reasonable to assess the 5 Star (Sea) in accordance with the matrix proposed in paragraph 5. In other words, as a member of a group of paddlers being led in advanced conditions. This would leave the top level of performance where it ought to lie - with the L5C(Sea).

CONCLUSIONS:

7. Currently, even after the recent rewrite, the 5 Star (Sea) award remains beyond the reach of the majority of the target audience. If, however, the roles and responsibilities of coaches and leaders were redrawn, not only would a logical progression of abilities be achieved (a properly incremental star test system) but also a logical progression for the role of various levels of coach. This would clearly culminate in the L5C(Sea) being at the top of the ladder, with important and wide-ranging responsibilities for the coaching and leadership of groups in advanced conditions. The slight lowering of the standard of the current 5 Star (Sea) test would also ameliorate gender and strength issues by pitching the 'new' award at a more attainable level. It is interesting to compare the high standards of the current 5 Star (Sea) test with those of the 5 Star (Inland) test. Leadership in advanced river conditions refers to Grade 3-4 water, which is far from being the highest level of performance and is indeed well within the reach of 'the average club member.... within 3 years of starting to paddle'. Were the current standards to be read across the disciplines, a more proper comparison would be Grade 5 - which would give the majority of inland paddlers the same problems as currently faced by those aspiring to 5 Star (Sea) standards. A realignment of the 5 Star (Sea) award would therefore bring the 2 awards more in line.

RECOMMENDATION:

8. It is recommended that the sea awards be realigned in accordance with the matrix in fig 2 and therefore the new requirements of the test could be as follows:

a.4 Star (Sea) - competent paddler in F2-3 with experience on minor (benign) overfalls and races (Test not to be conducted in such conditions).

b.5 Star (Sea) - personal all-round competence as a member of a led group paddling in streams of greater than 3 kn and winds of greater than F4.

c.L3C(Sea) - as 4 Star (Sea) with additional assessment of leading groups of 'proficiency' paddlers in proficiency conditions.

d.L4C(Sea) - a combination of L3C(Sea), CPC and 5 Star (Sea), enabling the L4C(Sea) to lead and coach 'proficiency plus' paddlers in 'proficiency plus' (not advanced) conditions.

e.L5C(Sea) - a high level of personal performance [as currently expected of the 5 Star (Sea)] advanced conditions with an assessment of leadership and coaching skills in the same conditions with a group of [new style] 5 Star (Sea) paddlers.

Fig 1

Conditions (a)	Group Member (b)	Group Leader (c)	Coach Level (d)
(1) 4 Star	3 Star	L3C(Sea)	L3C(Sea)
(2) 4 Star	4 Star	L4C(Sea)	L4C(Sea)
(3) 5 Star	5 Star	L4C(Sea)	L5C(Sea)

Fig2

Sea Conditions (a)	Tide/Wind Effects (b)	GP Member (c)	Leader (d)	Coach (e)
(1) 4 Star	No tide/F2-3	3 Star	L3C(Sea)	L3C(Sea)
(2) 4 Star	2-3 kn/F4	4 Star(Sea)	L4C(Sea)	L4C(Sea)
(3) 5 Star	Ab've 3 kn/Ab've F4	5 Star(Sea)	L5C(Sea)	L5C(Sea)

MENTAL EFFORT AND PRACTICE SCHEDULING IN SKILL ACQUISITION

Too often coaches of recreational canoeing will concentrate on the breakdown of technique without considering how to maximise motor learning. One area it is possible to make a significant difference is in how practice is actually scheduled. This concerns the segments of a single coaching session in addition to a long-term programme of development.

A session/segments of a session can be changed by altering the fundamental variable: Duration (the length), 2. Intensity (the volume in a given time), 3. Frequency (how often). These are altered to suit the goals of the learners and the style of session one desires.

This is all very well, but it is also necessary to look at the nature of the practice designed around these variables. The start point, however, is defining and understanding skill itself before looking at the factors which will have a bearing on the appropriate selection process.

Defining Skill:

It is a commonly held misconception that when a stroke is addressed in practice that skill training is occurring. Often this is not true. What is happening is in fact technique training. Technique is the mechanical action of performing a complex task. Skill is the ability to consistently select, organise and execute that technique appropriately in any given paddling situation. So the flatwater technique of low brace turn is used in a skilful way when applied to eddy turns on a river.

Categories of skill:

- Discrete:** These are skills which have a distinct beginning and end. For example a sweep stroke.
- Continuous:** These have no clear beginning or end. Eg. forward paddling.
- Serial:** Are a chain of discrete skills. Eg. bow rudder (sweep, edge, rotate, blade application, power).

Types of skill:

Closed skills:

These are skills that can be performed without interference from the environment around us. As an example consider sculling on flat water or in tennis the serve.

Open skills:

These are skills for which the performance depends upon the influence of the environment. Use again the example of sculling for support, but this time in a stopper. In this instance the flow and power of the water will determine how we apply the skill. In tennis receiving the serve and how the return is struck depends upon the speed of the ball, amount of spin and angle.

Stages Learners go through

There are three stages through which learners pass while acquiring skills. There are characteristics common to each stage. Knowledge of these characteristics allows the coach to apply the appropriate practice schedule:

Cognitive Stage:

In this stage the learner will be dependant on the feedback received and verbalisation of task. The coach will be prominent in the way the session unfolds. They will make most of the decisions as to how and when practice is carried out. All the variables will be controlled by the coach. How and when a technique is applied is dictated by the coach. Paddlers will be prone to large, gross, errors because they have not yet fully developed the pattern of movement and internalised it. Corrections are made consciously rather than automatically by the paddler. A good example is the need to watch the blade as it performs a stroke rather than watching where you are going, or watching the front of your boat during a ferry glide rather than the target on the other side of the river.

The coach should concentrate on the way the technique is performed (the process) rather than the outcome (the task). Thus, it is less important that the boat stays straight during draw strokes as long as the learner is able to demonstrate the key components of the stroke. Reinforce the positive (what was done correctly) rather than feedbacking mistakes. Demonstrations are crucial for the paddler to copy.

The Associative Stage:

Errors are smaller. The actions become more effective; the results are often more successful and consistent. It frees the paddler to use more of their available capacity for concentration to make decisions as to how and when the technique should be performed. This takes some of the responsibility away from the coach for initiating the technique. Timing improves, but there is still a level of inconsistency. The paddler, however, is now able to use more specific instructions so will be more receptive to refinement in the process of performing the technique.

The Autonomous Stage:

When a paddler can perform a technique without conscious thought or being conscious of corrections, they are then operating in the autonomous stage. The patterns of movement are now well developed, fully internalised and can be retrieved from memory very efficiently. Consider the analogy of driving a car. To begin with you have to think about all the factors involved in actually manoeuvring the car; using the gears, indicating, etc. However, when you have been driving a while and all of those factors have been internalised you perform them without conscious effort. The effort is applied in addressing other drivers and road conditions. On a river it might involve decisions as to the choice of eddy rather than the selection of the technique to get into it.

As a coach it might seem that your task is complete, but refinement may still be possible even if it is small. The paddler will often be able to recognise this, but sometimes will rely on observations and input from the coach. In the autonomous stage the information coming from the learner is as important, and often more, than that from the coach. The skill level of the paddler may well be beyond that of the coach so demonstrations are less important. Practice is designed as a partnership. Often the coach is characterised more by their seeming lack of input.

Memory Model:

The short term memory (STM) is the operator of skill based activity in the brain, see fig.1, but has a limited capacity to process information. If a coach feeds too much in it may be at the expense of something crucial to performing a skill. The STM can only deal with up to seven separate pieces of information at any one time, so space is at a premium.

Information will come from the sensory memory to allow you to deal with touch, taste, smell, hearing etc so space needs to be allocated in the STM to deal with these senses, even if we are not always aware of them: How often are we aware of the noise, temperature and colour of the river in a conscious way as we paddle; yet they may be crucial in deciding our strategy. Other information will need to come from our library of information that is the long term memory (LTM). This library is where we store the shape of the action we wish to perform. Space needs to be allocated in the STM for us to be able to use that information.

If, say, two segments of STM are taken up by the sensory memory and two are taken up by information from the LTM then this only leaves a paddler with up to three pieces of information which they can reasonably deal with at any one time. As a coach you are then restricted as to your input. This may require you to break down techniques/skill to manageable levels.

Contextual Interference:

"The effect on learning of the degree of functional interference found in a practice situation when several tasks must be learned and are practised together"

(Magill and Hall 1990)

When we design practice sessions it is our aim to make the ses-

sion both as complete as possible by including as much as possible and also to maximise learning. Sport psychologists have looked at the scheduling of practice with these factors in mind and found that the greater the mental effort the greater the long term learning effect. A theory known as contextual interference.

Broadly, we have two options when scheduling practice:

- 1) **Blocked practice.** Where a skill is practised continuously over a number of set attempts. eg: A A B B C C C C.
- 2) **Random practice.** Where a number of skills are alternated in a sequence. eg: A B C A B C A B C.

Research shows that blocked practice can elicit a better short term effect, but in retention trials random practice was found to have a more lasting effect (Magill and Hall 1990). See fig.2.

Why does it work? There are two theories. Firstly it is argued that to continually access different skill shapes from the long term memory makes that process of actually accessing the information more efficient due to the memory trace becoming more distinct (Magill and Hall 1990). Alternatively, because the previously used memory is discarded in favour of the next one, it is argued that random practice results in the ability to quickly re-establish a structure for processing problem specific information (Lee and Magill 1983, 1985).

When considering which practice to use, the stage of learning a paddler is in is crucial. So too is the type of skill, open or closed. See table in fig.3.

Beginners who are in the cognitive stage of development need to develop the shape of the skill before they will gain advantage from random practice (Bortoli et al 1992). Blocked practice will enable them to groove a skill and reinforce a desired outcome while enabling them also to correct errors quickly. If one considers the mental effort required at this stage of learning it would be wrong to increase that by exposing the learner to more interference. They already have many pieces of information in their STM.

As a paddler moves from the cognitive stage to the associative stage interference can be introduced gradually. So practice may become semi-random (A A B B C C A A B B C C) and later fully random. It is worth pointing out that the stages of learning can be applied to individual skills in addition to the overall picture of learning. So just because a paddler's flat spins in a hole are in the autonomous stage does not mean that they will not have to apply much mental effort, initially, to learn to cartwheel. Therefore, when using random practice as a coach you must ensure that the range of skills to be selected are already in the repertoire of the learner (albeit perhaps in need of much refinement).

Evidence also exists to suggest that the level of learning is higher when the skills selected for random practice are related or are variations of a single skill (Herbert et al 1996). For example using a variety of techniques to perform eddy turns (bow rudder, low brace turn etc). Within a sequence of random practice it is feasible to target one area that needs addressing while everything else continues to occur. We might feel it is necessary to target the entry/exit point on the eddy-line and hence would get our paddler to consider this particularly during the sequence.

Open skills are by their nature more demanding than closed skills due to the extra interference of the environment (the interference can be contextual or task orientated). Therefore, it is necessary to introduce random practice at a later stage in open skill learning. Certainly a coach must consider the general complexity of the skill (Magill and Hall 1990). As a paddler moves into the autonomous stage of learning the interference used in random practice can be increased further. The contextual interference effect is found to suit analytical learners more. Perhaps this is because they are prone to higher bouts of mental effort anyway.

The conclusions from this article are predominantly two-fold:

Firstly, that we need to be able to recognise the definition of skill

based activity in order to design practice sessions. This will avoid rather arbitrary structuring. If coaches can identify the stage of learning a paddler is in they can then use the appropriate practice schedule which will be both learner and goal orientated.

Secondly, the way in which we structure practice can have a profound effect on the level of learning in both the short and long-term. Random practice offers the potential for much more creativity in coaching sessions as well as a more long term beneficial effect. Remember though, that repetition is the mother of all learning and is important at all stages of skill acquisition. Learners must be given enough opportunity to repeat an activity in order that repetition, and hence learning, takes place whether the practice is random or blocked. Thus, if you do use random practice, be patient, watch the practice unfold and wait to move on to something new only when such opportunity has been afforded.

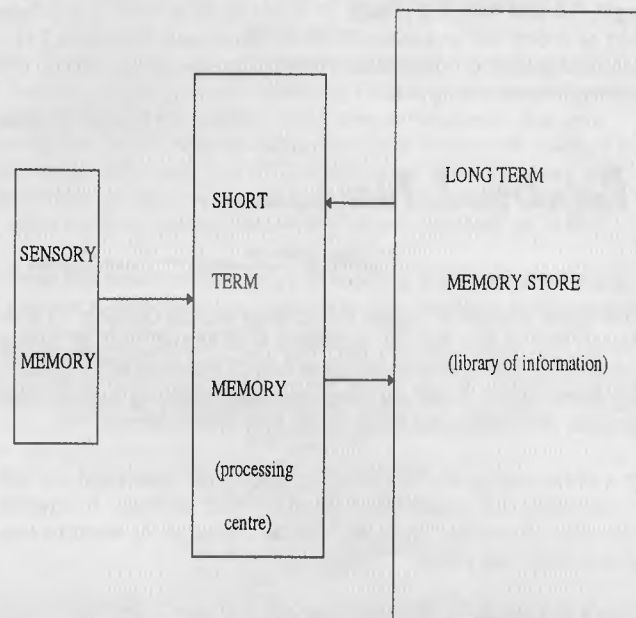


Fig. 1 Memory Model.

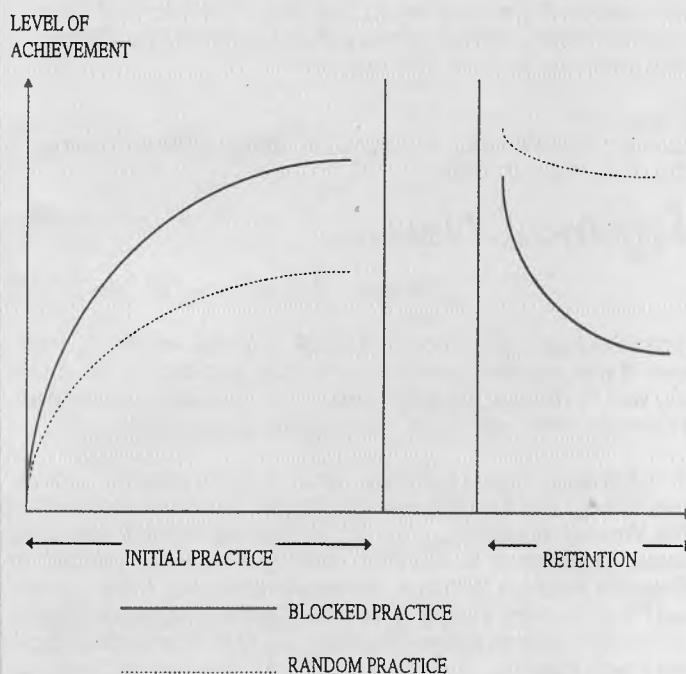


Fig. 2 Typical Effects of Contextual Interference in Random Practice

LEARNING STAGE	SKILL TYPE	PRACTICE TYPE	CONTEXT. INTERF.
COGNITIVE	Open	Blocked	low
	Closed		
ASSOCIATIVE	Open	Blocked/Semi-Random	Medium
	Closed	Random	Medium to High
AUTONOMOUS	Open	Random	High
	Closed		

Fig. 3. Structuring Practice Using Contextual Interference. Yours sincerely

References

- Bortoli, L. et al (1992).** Effects of contextual interference on learning technical sports skills. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 75,555-562.
- Goode, S and Magill, RA (1986).** Contextual interference effects in learning three badminton serves. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 57,308-314.
- Magill, RA and Hall, KG (1990).** A review of the contextual interference effect on motor skill acquisition. *Human Movement Science*, 9,241-289.
- National Coaching Foundation (1994).** Course resource pack, Understanding and Improving skill.

Ken Hughes.

Regional News.....

.....West Midlands -- Dave Crooks

The West Midlands region (coaching) will be coming on line. Watch this space for our address. It is hoped that all active coaches at any level will log on to find all relevant BCU Coaching information from running courses, staffing levels, star awards etc as well as local news and information.

In a continuing attempt to keep you better informed we will be sending out newsletters to clubs and centres. If anyone has any information they wish to be included or want to see on the web site please contact me.

Injury Prevention in Paddlesport course - 8th and 10th July 1999 Based at Upton warren - Cost £30

It is hoped to run a regional forum later in the year, giving you all a chance to be aware of BCU developments, having log books revalidated and drink coffee or tea. I hope to give more information in the next issue. It is also hoped to hold local forums where coaches of every level can meet and discuss any problems or ideas they may have.

Hang ten!

Contact: Dave Crooks, PO Box 69, Kidderminster, DY10 4YG
Tel /Fax 01562 827065.

Regional News.....

.....Wessex J. Simpson 21 April 1999

The following is the report that I took up to the last NCC. However it was not discussed since the main business of the meeting was to discuss the way forward with regards federalisation. Hopefully it will have been read and the points taken.

1. The Wessex region now has a team of seven coaches to cover this area. Hopefully this will allow better communication within the Wessex boundary. I am trying to bring together coaching areas as opposed to counties, recently a meeting was held in Swindon to which Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and North Somerset Coaches were invited. This proved more successful in terms of numbers attending than the previously held Wilts Local Coaching Panel meeting. Individual mail shots also helped. Even so the response was still only 33%.

2. The SW Newsletter produced by Veronica Westlake is an excellent means of communication if Coaches subscribe to it. But it does tend to remain in the club secretary's in-tray rather than

the information being put out to club coaches.

3. For the last year I have been encouraging all Coaches to read CoDe but this is an ongoing process.

4. Contracted Course Provider.

Wessex is running this course on Saturday 20th March 1999. At present I have eight candidates. This course has been left to the last moment, due to reports that I received from members who attended other C.C.P courses that the contract was being looked at again, and again, and again. Has this problem been solved. Have we all received the same contract.

5. Coaches still feel that they are having difficulty coming to grips with the ongoing changes and amendments. All Coaches accepted and recognised the need for current best practise, review and if needed change. Revalidation was generally recognised as happening elsewhere and is a useful tool to remain up-to-date. Concern was expressed on the amount of time needed to do courses for revalidation especially in the light of pressure from home, work, and other aspects of life that give us the quality and choice that we all need. There were many comments along the line of:

"I am not inactive in my paddling and coaching, but I am in a dormant phase. I will return to Coaching but if pressure is put on me then I will leave the BCU. I can still paddle. I will enjoy my sport again."

6. I would ask the BCU to remember that our voluntary coaches form the backbone of the grassroots of our sport. Clubs are reporting a fall in the number of Coaches actively coaching in their clubs and difficulty in recruiting paddlers into the Coaching scheme.

7. Are we putting our members off. Are they voting by becoming less active and less enthusiastic. We need our coaching members to be enthusiastic to encourage others into the sport. The door needs to be wide opened with a welcome mat, not shut and padlocked.

Further information since that report:

Graham Wardle cancelled the Contracted Course Provider meeting at the last moment. Coaches were travelling long distances and I was unable to contact them. We held a meeting to discuss the way forward. Decisions were made to write to the BCU giving our views and offering a way forward. The BCU honoured meeting the mileage expenses and have offered two evening workshops or a replacement day. These are still to happen. No further information available.

Finally I must thank everyone who has helped me in my role as RCO, those who have written letters, those who have followed procedure with course authorizations, even those who have put authorizations in late with covering notes, the SW committee, the many paddlers, coaches, LCO's, and BCU staff especially Maria. I have made great friends. Therefore it is with the deepest regret and great heart searching that the decision has been made to **resign as RCO**. Family commitments and increased pressure from work, etc mean that I am unable to give this position the time necessary to ensure that Wessex paddlers are up to date with the changes within the Coaching Scheme. I have written to the BCU giving my resignation, which will be published in the next CoDe. Up to that point I will continue in the role.

RCO Needed. The post of RCO is being reviewed.

At present you need to attend two meetings per year at BCU HQ, attend Coaching panel meetings as and when necessary, attend four meetings per year for the SW Region. Attend or nominate some to attend the necessary courses run by HQ to keep up to date.

Authorised courses and answer correspondence.

Any nominations need to be sent to the BCU with recommendation by signatures from a minimum of five active coaches. Nominations please by 11th July

I will be paddling and running courses, so I will see you on the water. Hopefully a bit more often than you have seen me over the last two years. Wishing all coaches and paddlers a wonderful year and a millennium that will see us expanding all horizons.

Thank you

Julie Simpson (Signing off as RCO)

Regional News.....

..... East Midlands - Jon Moore.

Regional members should by now have received details of the Coaching forum to be run on June 13th. You are reminded of this event and encouraged to attend as it is your opportunity to update and contribute to discussion and development. A number of LCO positions are currently vacant and the general situation as far as RCO / LCO cover for the region will be debated. A full programme of activity is planned along with a number of topical forums. If you have not yet received details of this event contact Jon Moore on 01246 233603 or contact the coaching office.

Office Matters....

Contracted Providers.

Candidates for Coaching Courses, Course Providers, Directors and tutors are all reminded that as of 1st April 1999 the Contracted Course Provider Programme came into force and as such all coach education courses being provided come under the authority of Providers who have signed an appropriate Contract. Only courses overseen by such 'Contracted Providers' will be recognised as valid. Paperwork from any other course will not be processed. Regional details of 'Contracted Providers' can be obtained from the BCU Office.

Central Registration

We again remind all candidates for Coach education courses (WCA and England) that they must register their intention to attend courses and have completed the required pre-requisites before attending training courses. C1 forms for this purpose are available from the appropriate head office (WCA/BCU). Contracted Providers in England and Wales are reminded that they should ensure that all candidates attending courses have indeed registered prior to attending. Paper work returned to the office in respect of un-registered candidates will be returned.

Coach Level 5 News and Information

Please note that all enquiries for approval to run both training and assessment courses, requests for extension to aspirant status and application to attend an assessment course should be made to the following federal CL5 Co-ordinators. (Contact the individual related to your own federal membership).

Nigel Robinson (W.C.A.)	Gordon Brown (S.C.A.)
Mike McClure (C.A.N.I.)	Bill Taylor (England)

These four coaches were nominated by the Coach Level 5 Development Panel to act as the co-ordinators for a period of one year from January 1999. Congratulations to the following coaches who have recently put themselves forward for assessment and passed.

Nick Cunliffe (Sea)	Ceri Rhys Williams (Inland)
Ray Goodwin	Stuart Woodward
Trys Morris	Jay Cooper
	Caron Geal
	Jenny Wilson

Ian Ray (Open Boat)
Claire Knifton

Ken Hughes (Specialist Open Boat)

Programmed Dates for assessment courses are as follows;

June 19/20 1999 Venue Nottingham

Nov 13/14th 1999 venue North East

Other assessments may well run on demand, please contact your national co-ordinator.

Aspirants having reached the end of their Development phase and who have not completed their action plans and have not sought to extend their period, or who have not remained active within their development phase are reminded that their aspirant status has now been removed. A refresher course or a request for an extension of the development phase will now be required to regain aspirant level 5 status.

6 Day Intensive Coach Training Courses are currently planned for:

Plas-y-Brenin 30th Oct-4th Nov 1999

Glenmore Lodge Oct 1999

Please note before attending any CL5 training course you should be a CL4, and of course centrally registered in the normal way.

Surf Symposia

17th / 18th October 1999

**4/5 Star
Clinics and Workshops
Coach 3 Training
Coach Updates**

More Details in next CoDe
For details contact
BCU Coaching Office

"Cutting Edge - Shoulder Riding

Surf-Fest"

Information for all Coaches wishing to work overseas.

Any Coach wishing to work overseas in any capacity is asked to send to the Nottingham Coaching Office for the new information leaflet on the subject. Also please remember that any course that would require authorisation at home still needs it if being run overseas. The RCO position for these courses and therefore for approval is the Director of Coaching, and clearance must be gained before any course can run, as in the normal way.

To help the considerable delay in sending and returning C1 and C2 forms to and from the states it is now possible to centrally register via the following address. You can still deal with Nottingham HQ if you wish but with a time lag! Bill is a Sea Kayaker by Birth, but still a sound bloke! and is willing to give advice and info on the North American situation.

Bill Lozano

**320 West Saugerties Road
Saugerties, New York**

12477 U.S.A.

e-mail kayaktours@AOL.COM

Tel (001) 9142462187.

FIRST AID CERTIFICATES

For Level 1 and Level 2 Coaches the First Aid Certificates must have required a minimum of 4 hours training including CPR and EAV. For Level 3 and above the requirements is for a minimum of 8 hours training including CPR and EAV. The following meet this:

St John Ambulance, Lifesaver and Lifesaver Plus
St John Ambulance First Aid at Work (4 days)
St John Ambulance Competence in First Aid
RLSS Pool Lifeguard
RLSS Beach Lifeguard
Full mountain first aid 'Uian Jones Banger Scheme' (2 days)
Paddi Medic
H & SE First Aid at Work (4 days)
H & SE First Aid in the Workplace (2 days)
Red Cross Basic First Aid
Red Cross Standard First Aid
Red Cross First Aid at Work (4 days)
St Andrews Standard First Aid
Rescue Emergency Care: Standard First Aid for the Outdoors (4 days)
Rescue Emergency Care: Emergency First Aid (3 days)
RYA Small Craft First Aid
BCU Aquatic First Aid

If your first aid certificate is not on this list please send the course syllabus/content with the certificate to show that it meets the requirements for 8 hours training including CPR and EAV.

If the certificate includes the words "Emergency Aid" or "Emergency Care" it will usually only be a 4 hour certificate as is one stating the person 'has attended' or is for 'appointed person'.

PLEASE NOTE: WE DO NOT ACCEPT RLSS 1, 2 OR 3

Dear Code cont....

Dear CoDe

Re: With Reference to the letter in CoDe, issue 86

I am of the same opinion as those expressed by the author of the letter on page 2 regarding the 'giving' of coaching awards by certain examiners.

For too often I have had the misfortune to train and assess candidates who are not up to the required standard. Most recently I was involved with a trans-national Level 2 coach training course of which the majority of candidates were not up to 3 star ability. It transpired that these candidates had been sent to a centre en masse for a one day assessment at 3 star level. None of the candidates had paddled in the last five months and in the words of one of the candidates the 3 star awards were 'given out like smarties'.

I am not suggesting that the standard should be raised but that as examiners we need to make sure that we all operate from the same base level. For example, using an up to date syllabi would be a start!

I also feel that for some Level 3 coaches a 3 star examination may not be a regular occurrence and that sometimes the 'standard' can be misinterpreted. Rather than put themselves in this often stressful situation why not work alongside an established examiner and use the exercise as a learning experience. Good practice does dictate that we should not be assessing students who we have trained?

My final thoughts are back to my recent Level 2 training. I have to accept these candidates on face value, but even though I have given a comprehensive debrief and identified areas of weakness on the C2 some of the candidates are under illusion that they can now progress onto Level 2 assessment without further experience. This is brought on by the slipshod 3 star assessment and by the knowledge that they can return to the centre for the assessment.

It does cause me concern that these could be working in the centre this summer and to be honest for some of them I wouldn't trust to carry my

paddle let alone teach my kids. My plea therefore is to examiners from 3 star upwards to act with integrity, honesty and above all in a professional manner. Stop selling these dreams because sometimes these dreams turn into nightmares.

I Scott
L.C.O South Yorkshire

Dear CoDe

In-house Assessment and Qualifications

The letter in CoDe 86 draws attention to the long-standing subject of NGB Qualifications being awarded internally to candidates who do not meet the required standards. Such practice is not in line with BCU recommendations and is to be deplored in any circumstances. The writer's criticism is, correctly, directed at the individuals concerned rather than at the qualification system itself.

The writer's coverage of in-house qualifications, however, is somewhat misleading. In the real outdoor world the wide range of activity options available, together with operating limits imposed by many outdoor establishments, creates a wider range of desirable competency standards than the 5 Levels offered by most NGB's

The BCU Awards are aimed primarily at coaching. Many outdoor workers, however, are involved entirely with fun activities and journeying in situations which require only a minimal, low level coaching input. For them, a progression of Leader Awards would be more appropriate than Coaching Awards. The Absence of relevant awards may well serve to encourage organisations to implement their own schemes.

NGB's themselves are unlikely to offer a solution, which satisfies all needs. The large number of combinations and permutations in existence would create a complex award structure which may create interpretation problems for many people. Even if a visible, practical solution were available, the cost of administration would be prohibitive.

In some circumstances, an In-house Scheme may be advantageous. In the case of an indoor climbing wall instructor for example, the 'relevant' NGB qualification is the Single Pitch Award but many aspects of SPA are simply not relevant to the climbing wall situation. On a typical SPA Training Course it is usually only possible to allocate around 11/2 hours to indoor walls. Such training may be on a wall which the candidate will never use personally.

Compare this with an in-depth, 2 day, in-house training course, by an SPA Course Provider, specific to a particular wall with its particular set of operating problems. The training would be followed by a specific indoor wall assessment at a later date with subsequent monitoring visits to check that standards were being upheld. I am aware of a least one SPA Provider who offers in-house courses on such a basis.

It is not surprising at all that AALA recognises In-house Schemes. As far as I am aware, AALA's concern is with 'staff competence'. While NGB Awards may provide a possible means of measurement, there are alternatives. Recognition of a scheme by AALA is based on adequate implementation and monitoring by an NGB Trainer/Assessor. The MLTB likewise is in favour of In-house Schemes on a similar basis where the full range of skills and knowledge of the 'relevant' NGB award is not necessary in particular circumstances.

Implied inadequacies in respect of in-house schemes should not, therefore, be directed at the principles of such schemes but at those who implement them inappropriately. I know of two reputable, large organisations offering high quality in-house Schemes providing evidence of their value for supplementing NGB Awards where they are not abused.

B L Mee

.....Your thoughts and comments on these and other issues please to Dear Code.....

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Head of Canoeing-
ARDECHE & MEDITERRANEAN
CENTRES

River leaders - ARDECHE
Kayak/Surf-Ski Instructors -
MEDITERRANEAN

Enthusiastic paddlers required for
ARDECHE and FRENCH/SPANISH
MEDITERRANEAN CENTRES
From April 1999.

Qualifications preferred but
training provided along with
the opportunity to gain NGB
qualifications.

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for further details and an
application form

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