

We train to get faster, that seems obvious. However how we train effects how we perform. For instance, lots of 2hour, low intensity paddling makes you very good at 2hour low intensity paddling but does not make you good at going fast for short periods. Most clubs use a working persons model, i.e. 45minutes of work within the hour. Full time athletes can spend many hours training, but they don't have to go to school or work during the day. This doesn't mean you cannot compete with them; it means your program is very high intensity and each effort and session count. British canoe clubs have had both Sprint and Marathon world champions using this kind of system.

We train to reinforce behaviours and movements, ours is a technical sport which is why you can see small children beating big strong adults – technique and boat skills first, physicality second.

Once you have your skills (which you must keep working on especially as you grow) you can work on your physical strengths. In a simplified way training is used to break muscle tissue in minute tears and allow them to repair thicker and stronger, repeating the process allows bigger and stronger muscles. A range of activities allows you to build a complete system.

Training allows the body to better cope with the activity i.e. improves your oxygen uptake (heart and lungs – cardiovascular) to carry more oxygen to the working muscles and to recover more quickly from this effort. Continually repeating the process allows you to get “fitter” and “faster”. However, we all have different body types and react in different ways to different sessions, you must train your strong **and** weak areas as well as your mental capacity. Don't just do the sessions you're “good” at.

Also, you must respect your body, especially during growth stages. You are going to get tired but with proper nutrition and proper rest you should get faster, all three aspects are just as important – you can't get fast without sleep and eating junk food.

Respect the process – You don't continually get faster at a flat rate. You'll experience periods of sudden improvements, periods of no gain and occasionally getting slower. This is normal. Everybody experiences this to a greater or lesser extent, and it follows a natural rhythm. Enjoy the good days, endure the not so good days. Learn to understand that as a Junior racing in ages, that they are just birthdates and not comparing like for like. You might be under16 racing someone with the physical body of a twenty-year-old. It all evens out eventually. However if you are continually getting slower check with your coach, are you over training, losing weight, ill or unhappy?

**Speed work:** is about improving your speed not winning the effort, therefore DON'T speed up before the go - you must also slow back down before the next “go”. You are practising accelerating your boat – it's hard – a rolling start or speeding up at “5 to go” isn't what these sessions are about. Don't worry about winning the effort and learn to go fast. You must practice keeping the paddle in the water and not hitting the water, or only pulling half

a blade. Your rate should only increase as a response to the boat going faster, and not because you are stabbing or short stroking. You should be able to get to your maximum speed in approximately 10+ strokes. You need to practice this, is it ten or eight or fifteen? Are you getting better at it? What works for you at the start with regards paddle buried or half submerged? Straight arm or slightly bent? Also, what works for you now might need changing as you get bigger/stronger and faster.

**Lactic tolerance sessions:** The idea is to suffer! To get your body in the window of working in oxygen deprivation, therefore you cannot do one effort on, one off, or one effort every set and achieve the stated aims. The idea is that you will get slower and slower and your arms turn to rock and your legs to jelly, only then can your body (and most importantly your brain) learn better to cope or process/recover quicker.

**Endurance work:** The idea is to go as fast as you can for the set distance (increasing your cardiovascular fitness), NOT to race the start, slow down and burn the end. You can take leads and wash hang to keep the speed/effort high but not just to cruise and burn off to win. These are good opportunities to go head to head off the washes, try different race pace, counting your strokes against the watch so you can know your paddle rate at a given speed and be able to transfer to a regatta course.

**Group wash hanging:** Depending on your situation don't always take the easy wash. You will not always be the fastest person in the race (even if you are the eventual winner), practice being in the 5<sup>th</sup>, find rolling waves at the back, if you are clearly the fastest go around the outside of bends, climb waves efficiently and make sure you are relaxing more than those around you – compare your paddle rate to theirs and slow it down, slow your breathing too. If you are the weaker member of the group don't just stop when you are coming off the group, look for the next rolling hill, come wide of the group and see if you can get back.

**Chase races:** These are essential to practice chasing down groups after a portage/turn etc. Learn how to move around the waves and not just over them, learn how to run down a wave either gaining speed or conserving energy, feel what it's like on the side wash of someone catching others and see how easy or hard it gets as they go downhill whilst you are not. Learn to move in and out on the wash, when to cross over, how the washes interact with the bank, shallows and other obstacles, learn to read the signs, the light and dark of the waves. DO NOT just paddle up the middle of the river in flat water to win.

**Crew Boats (Mixed):** If you can learn to run a mixed K2, it definitely improves your K1 also. They can be uncomfortable; the other paddler might not do what you want, but they are brilliant at teaching both paddlers how best to run that particular boat. The washes are bigger, they can be harder to move around a group and it's all good experience.

**Weights:** Being stronger doesn't make you faster, being able to transfer that strength into your paddling might! Try to replicate as much as possible your overall paddle movements and the muscles used and don't concentrate on one set of muscles, you are a whole system not one muscle. For instance, why would you bench press with a different width grip to

your paddles? Don't forget or neglect your stabilisers! Use free weights over a machine – most importantly be safe!

**Rest:** The idea of training is to push yourself to your limits (and over) and recover and repeat. If you don't try hard, you'll only improve slowly to a limited amount. However, rest and recovery are the parts which allows the improvements. You must train to your physical limit, eat well, remain hydrated and sleep properly. Especially in the crucial teenage years when you experience maximum growth but also have to balance training with school.

**Mental training:** Most people's bodies are limited by their head. You must train the brain as much as the body. The brain automatically stops you from going too hard, you have to train it to know it's ok to do this which means repeatedly trying very hard. Positive thoughts and mindset can aid improvements (a happy athlete tends to be a faster athlete), however, do not lie to yourself, be honest and critical about your performance, not yourself as a person.

Practice makes permanent (not perfect), practice giving up in training makes it easier to repeat in a race. Practice winning and the same applies. If you know you are weak in the head find ways to change your mindset. Winning in K2, or just ask for help.

Learn to relive the day's session/race, ask yourself what went well, what went wrong and what would you do differently next time? You must learn to recall what was going on so that you learn to concentrate in the moment.

**Goal setting:** You should have an aim, it might be short term or long term, but you need to aim towards something, discuss with your coach how to get there, build a plan (it'll change) and check your progress against your targets, even if you don't write it down sharing it means you take responsibility and ownership and moves you one small step closer.

**Enjoy yourself:** What is your motivation? Find out what it is you enjoy and keep checking you are enjoying it, there are going to be days you hate but they should be easily outweighed by the good days, if they aren't, you need to change something.

Below is part of a successful racing club's summer schedule **but** what the numbers don't tell you is how each individual athlete tackled those efforts and the effect it had on the training group. For instance, the 1000m efforts can be tackled multiple ways by different athletes within the same session, some might be hanging on for dear life, some might be even pacing, some might be practising their 500m race and floating the next 500m or the group might be content to take turns. Programs never show you the whole story and the competition within the system, varied sessions allow different athletes to shine at given moments and helps build club cohesion and also stretch the dominant paddler(s) as does a handicap system where everyone has equal chance of doing well. So plenty of other clubs would have a differing program with different thought process so look at each program and see what works for your environment with your athletes, or another way of seeing it is which programme improved the most athletes rather than which made the single fastest?

Then choose your starting point from there, allow the system to bed in and with time you'll have a body of evidence against marker points to see if it's working.

20-10 handicap

**Monday PM:** Short efforts – short rest speed work/lactic tolerance – individual

**Tuesday PM:** Race night -15m effort, 2x7m efforts, 3x5m effort – group races

**Wednesday PM:** Mixed K2- 3m races with short efforts/short rest -group wash hanging

**Thursday PM:** 3m Time trail – 3m individual efforts or 2,3,4, minute efforts can be group

**Friday PM:** Technique/boat skills

**Saturday AM:** 1000m efforts – group races, chase races/boat skills & tactics, 2, 3, 4- & 5-minute races.

**Saturday PM:** Mixed K2 -1m on, 1m off races rest -group wash hanging

**Sunday:** 10k@10am – Long paddle or race.

0-10 handicap – as above plus

**Monday AM:** Rest or gym body weights/weights, slider, depending on Sunday

**Wednesday AM:** Gym: body weights/weights, slider (Ivan session)

**Friday AM:** Technique/boat skills Gym: body weights/weights, slide

**KAYTECH**  
PADDLE SPORTS COACHING