

Club coaching Plan

We need a more shared understanding of why we do what we do, and what the aim is.

Club systems work. Elmbridge proved this, as recently did Longridge, Chelmsford, Nottingham and again with Jon Simmons in Ireland. What has been lost in some quarters is an understanding from coaches and athletes of the “**Why**” and the “**How**”, so whilst the marathon racing system is essentially the same the outcome is not.

Younger people (see Gen Z explanation) are used to being educated with lots of examples and criteria worked out, self-guided learning has been lost (in the main) and people do not expect to have to work it out for themselves, coaches are expected to know everything. We as coaches, have to build that understanding & teaching/learning environment to enable their learning and therefore enjoyment and ultimately success.

Dedicated outcome sessions vs long club paddles – Some clubs already have set training regimes and successful plans, and some do what the fastest person does (even if they’re not very fast and just go paddling for a set time/distance - nothing wrong with any of that depending on what you want to achieve).

To do well you need to do all aspects of racing: speed work, power endurance, speed endurance, lactic sessions, aerobic sessions, head to head, races to places, chase races as well as just go until you blow. You need to get a structured and methodical approach where you can accurately measure gains. **Not all the time** but definitely most of the time, to build experience and confidence to lead up to races & major competitions – We are **definitely not** talking specialisation at a young age but more exposure to what top end racing can be in all its various forms.

As a country we are good at getting a handful of Junior athletes to be very good (and even fewer seniors), we now need to become good at retaining more paddlers who don’t “*make it*” to provide a learning ladder for the next upcoming set.

Whilst rebuilding the “*I’m wearing a GB vest I’m going to win*” mentality, we must engage with those who haven’t “*made it*” to still build a pool of racers and a greater social scene for young paddlers. This makes it easier to turn up, day in and day out.

- Communicate with current athletes, write & plan/club/athlete agreement.
- Up skill coaches – define coaching roles. Support entry coaches far more.
- Welcome external ideas & actively investigate why other clubs are doing some things better.
- NGB/MRC to promote current success with schools, Primary and Secondary.
- Promote the clubs (Sport) better.
- Run training days with other like-minded clubs.
- Be open to change, don’t throw the baby out, but accept that change could be a good thing!

Club Curriculum

Every paddler should have some fundamental skills as they progress. This is not an exhaustive must have list, and some paddlers will progress due to size/strength before they have acquired all the skills to move “up” a group. However, we should aim for all our paddlers to have these skills.

Therefore, it is the **coaches’** responsibility to enable their learners/athletes to learn these skills, they need to have a framework of training to show/teach the paddlers these skills. You also **MUST** correct bad practise and be able to recognise why things are going wrong.

Beginners group. Your athlete must be able to:

Enjoy the experience: Be able to swim with boat & paddles in light clothing prerequisite –

- Get in & out of a kayak un-aided in the **correct** way.
- Paddle a kayak sitting up – no laying down, legs together.
- Paddle forwards and backwards correctly (to a stop).
- Paddle and steer at the same time.
- Enter the landing stage without hitting/missing or it.
- Not crash into each other.
- Follow instructions from their coach
- Be able to put the boat in the water safely
- Choose the correct paddles and know if they are upside down
- Steer confidently in the direction planned and take avoiding action of others/obstacles
- Asses the conditions to wear the appropriate clothing

Intermediate group. As above plus

Your athlete must be able to:

- Turn up in plenty of time!
- Recognise and set up their boat, including having their own wingnut and toggle.
- Be able to safely carry it to the water’s edge
- Be able to empty a boat out if capsized and get back in from a bank/beach etc.
- Hold their boat in a line with other paddlers/Never be down
- Steer a straight course without crashing or causing others to crash
- Understand and act upon the difference between Up and Down stream
- Be able to cope with washes, both stability and steering wise
- Have experience wash hanging
- Be able to count strokes
- Be able to accelerate their boat from standstill
- Learn to try hard/work until it hurts
- Experience crew boats:

- Be able to move own seat - keep in time.

20 + handicap group. As above plus: do it independently

Your athlete must be able to:

- Be aware of and execute warm up routines
- Understand paddling technique and how-to self-check for errors
- Ask questions of their coach to progress their learning
- move around a wash-hanging group without crashing/falling off
- understand and execute racing turns
- demonstrate the ability to cross a moving river/when to cross etc.
- Race tactics
- be able to count strokes within a minute to gauge effort
- Build mental strength and emotional resilience
- The ability to focus and plan ahead
- Eat, sleep, train and organise themselves to maximise outcomes.

10 + handicap group. As above plus do it consistently and to a higher standard

Your athlete must be able to:

- Understand and execute nutrition and hydration
- Understand your own strengths & weaknesses & build upon & mitigate against these
- Try flat out each session more than once, and for the whole effort
- Try race plans and tactics – race faster boats (give them a go – wash hang etc.)
- Survive being the slowest in the group
- Practise dominating the group
- Practise winning the hard and easy way
- Go head to head with a faster competitor
- Give upcoming athletes your help
- Build your mental strength by making your life harder/start behind/on the outside/taking the worse wash etc.

0-10 handicap group. As above plus do it constantly and to a higher standard

Your athlete must be able to: articulate what they want to achieve - train hard – be honest with themselves about their performance and progression.

The coach must explain/educate and give opportunities for the following

Speed work: is about improving your speed not winning the effort, therefore DON'T speed up before the go - you must 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. Stop trying to win and learn to go fast. You must practice keeping

the paddle in the water and not hitting the water or pulling half a blade. Your rate should increase as a response to the boat going faster, and not because you are stabbing or short stroking.

Lactic tolerance sessions: The idea is to suffer! To get your body in the window of working in oxygen deprivation, therefore you can not 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 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 5th, find rolling waves at the back, 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. 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.

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! Only do exercises that are going to benefit your paddling.

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 must balance training with school exams.

Mental training: Most peoples bodies are limited by their head. You must train the brain as much as the body, positive thoughts and mindset aid improvements. However, do not lie to yourself, be honest and critical about your performance, not you 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.

KAYTECH
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