

KAYAKING: TRAINING FOR YOUR EVENT

BY RICHARD CLARK



THE PAUSE POSITION



THIS IMAGE SHOWS THE EMPHASIS ON A DEEP AND STEEP PADDLE STROKE

Once you have your grade 2 certificate you should feel confident about your ability to paddle safely. You still have a lot of training miles ahead of you and you need to build on the new skills you have learnt, conditioning your body to the longer events ahead. Here are some hints that may help in the build up to these events.

1: In your normal weeks' training try and fit in a longer two hour paddle. The benefit of the two hour paddle over the shorter paddle will be that you get better muscle memory, so the new technique that you are trying to ingrain will be taken up by your body better. However, the advantage of the longer paddle doesn't continue exponentially over two hours so your best pay back for training time comes in that two hour timeframe. So if you can do one two hour session each week and maybe a couple of one hours as well you should see good improvement. Somewhere in your program you might include a couple of four to five hour paddles. Just see how you handle that time in the boat but you don't need those extra long paddle sessions regularly.

2: If your planned event has a moving water section it will be a big benefit if you can slot in some moving water, say once a week. This specific training will be of big benefit to you. In some regions, moving water won't be readily available but choppy sea or lake conditions can be used instead. Forcing yourself to paddle side on in waves is a good test but make sure you have support or are able to self rescue. You will still need to slot in some moving water paddling so for North Islanders look at some weekend trips on the Mohaka, Whanganui and Rangitikei rivers to hone your skills.

3: During one of your regular paddles try incorporating a drill session. The pause drill is a favourite of mine. So when your hand is at the maximum extension forward, at eye level in front of you, pause, straighten your fingers and hold for the time it takes to say one thousand. After the pause you spear the blade as deep as possible with an emphasis on a downward force. You are trying to get the shaft at as steep an angle as possible. This drill slows the paddle stroke down, allowing you to analyse the different parts of the technique. It also gives you the feel of letting the kayak run through the water between strokes, which you need to incorporate in your normal stroke. I start with 10 pause strokes then go to 10 normal strokes, then 20 pauses, 20 normal, laddering up to 50 strokes of each and then laddering down. This drill will take a good 20 minutes to complete. It will feel quite awkward at first but gets easier with practice. It will encourage a deep paddle stroke with good core rotation.

4: Some form of resistance training is also

beneficial in your kayak program. This can be achieved by paddling upstream against a current or by wrapping a bungy around your kayak hull to create resistance. You can paddle for half of your session with the resistance and the other half without; it will help to build your strength. Don't use this technique if you have any form of kayak injury as it will only aggravate the injury.

5: Any time you get to paddle moving water don't always just barrel the rapids. Take some time practising your skills, diving in the top of an eddy then doing a nice rail turn out; you need to work on these skills. If you can find a river feature that creates a wave in a safe place, turn in below the wave then paddle back up and try surfing on the wave. You will be surprised how easy this is and how much fun it is. Staying on the wave requires good rail control and paddle strokes but the biggest plus is the confidence you will gain from pushing your limits. Features on the river that were just plain scary will become play spots.

6: With all the long endurance paddles you are doing as part of your training some shorter high intensity paddles will be beneficial to keep your speed up. If you can find some seven to 10km kayak races that you can compete in regularly there's nothing like a bit of competition to get your heart rate up. If there is nothing local, set up your own time trial course and race the clock to improve your times and put yourself under pressure.

7: For those building up to the Coast to Coast in February, a trip on the Waimak will be great for your preparation. There are several operators offering guided training trips and there is the Waimak Classic Kayak Race in December. The only problem for North Islanders is the cost of a trip and the chance that because of weather you might travel down and still not get to paddle the river. If you decide not to venture south, the Rangitikei River Race in January is a great option. This 50 km grade 2 race starts just South of Taihape. The river does vary with flow, it is generally a great test of your skills and endurance. If you cope well in this race you can be confident heading south to the Waimak.

So with the weather improving and more opportunities to train, your paddling skill should be improving all the time. ●

RICHARD'S BACKGROUND

Richard has competed in ten Coast to Coast races and numerous other multisport, cycling and kayaking events. He also runs the Boatshed Kayaks and has been training grade 2 kayakers for nine years. He is the organiser of the Maungatautari Mission and the Cambridge to Hamilton Kayak Race. Don't hesitate to contact Richard on theboatshed@xtra.co.nz with any questions.