

Dragon Boat Canada



WELCOME!

THIS EDITION'S ARTICLES:

DRILL OF THE MONTH

This month's drill is about lower body connection. This month's drill is brought to you by:

SCOTT MURRAY

CROSS TRAINING

This month we read about the personal experience of a world class paddler and her foray into the world of Crossfit.

JULIE BEAUMONT

ATHLETE PROFILE

This month's feature is:

SHEILA KUYPER

COACHING HIGHLIGHT

In a boat of 20+ paddlers, many personalities will come together. This month, Tim provides us with his experience with leading leaders.

TIM SCHAUS

LILLY DIPPING

An assortment of cursory looks at areas of interest to the dragon boat world and their coaches. The lighter side of the newsletter.

EDITOR

Welcome to Dragon Boat Canada's First Coaching Newsletter!

The aim of this newsletter is to showcase the awesome talent we have in our coaches in Canada as well as compliment the material being taught in Dragon Boat Canada Coaching courses.

REGULAR COLUMNS

Each month, the following columns will be part of our newsletter. We are always looking for new ideas and contributions. If you have an idea for a column, or would like to contribute to the next edition, please contact us a coach@dragonboat.ca.

DRILL OF THE MONTH

We will introduce an on or off water drill that is specific to dragon boating. Coaches from across Canada will be asked to contribute a drill that they have found works particularly well for them. If you have a good one you would like to share, please let us know!

CROSS TRAINING

It is not all about the boat and the paddle! To remain competitive, or even just to keep teams interested, many coaches are looking to alternative ideas for fitness training. In this section, we will ask fitness professionals, who are also dragon boaters, to discuss alternatives for dry-land training.

ATHLETE PROFILE

And why not brag about the amazing talent in Canada. Each month we will feature a dragon boat paddler who has made contributions to the sport well beyond the podium. If you know of an athlete that should be featured, please let us know!

COACHING HIGHLIGHT

There is more to dragon boat coaching than just the technique. Team dynamics, nutrition, leadership skills, communication, team selection - to name but a few. In this section, we look to coaches from across Canada to share with you the experiences they have had - what has worked and what has not.

Dragon Boat Canada



DRILL OF THE MONTH

Lower Body Connection

This is a drill that can be used with crews of varying experience to clearly identify the importance of incorporating full body connection into the dragon boat stroke; especially lower body connection involving feet, upper legs, and hips.

The result of this drill is that the athlete should clearly understand the positive effect of full body connection on the dragon boat stroke. The drill is essentially the development of 'Lower Body Connection'. The final step in the drill progression allows the athlete to cycle through the progression.

Step 1:

All athletes are instructed to lift their feet 6 inches off the ground of the dragon boat and take the best strokes they possibly can.

Inevitably the athletes struggle to take effective strokes, maintain their balance, establish body connection to the stroke or stay in stroke with their teammates.

Step 2:

All athletes are instructed to place their feet flat on the bottom of the dragon boat and take the best strokes they possibly can, emphasizing the incorporation of foot connection.

The athletes will feel significantly improved power and coordination in their stroke and some athletes will instantly develop an understanding of lower body stroke connection they previously did not have.

Step 3:

All athletes are carefully instructed to place heels strategically on the footboard to obtain maximum connection and their thigh against the inner gunwale of the boat. Again they are asked to take the best strokes they possibly can, emphasizing heel and thigh pressure against the footboard and inner gunwale of the boat.

The athletes should feel improved power and full body connection in their dragon boat stroke and develop an understanding of the importance of proper lower body positioning.

Step 4:

All athletes are asked to complete steps 1, 2 and 3 in continuous succession with the guidance of the coach. Through this continuous execution of the drills the difference in power obtained through improved foot positioning enhances the effect of the drill.

Upon completing the drill the athletes should know where to position their body and how to utilize body connection with the boat to produce the best stroke they possibly can.



Scott Murray

Head Coach Of the Pickering Dragon Boat Club, owner of Alkame Dragon Boat Services, and part of the 2009 National Junior and 18-23 Coaching Team.



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Photography

ATHLETE PROFILE

Sheila Kuyper - PADDLING COMPLIMENTS PADDLING

In 1995 I wandered up to the Burloak Canoe Club as a master (aging athlete) and was introduced to War Canoe. Shortly thereafter I was being encouraged by Adrian Taylor to paddle mixed C2. Well, if it wasn't for Adrian's patience and my tenacity to learn to paddle C1 I'd still be swimming in 16 mile creek here in Oakville, Ontario. Little did I know that from those humble beginnings I would find a path less travelled in the world of canoe and become an advocate for the development and inclusion of women's sprint canoeing on the world stage. At the end of 1998 I had accomplished back to back success at the national level, a repeat of 8 Gold Medals at CCA. During this time I watched young female canoe athletes lose interest and get persuaded to join other sports

Who knew that there were still sports and disciplines within sports where women were not allowed to compete? Since the canoe was an integral part of our Canadian Heritage and within the sport of Canoe the C was commonly referred to as the Canadian Canoe it only seemed fitting to me that Canada would push for the development and inclusion of women's sprint canoe. In September of 1998 I found myself in Szeged Hungary at the ICF World Championships asking the world "Why Not Women?" We have come a long way in just over a decade but the Olympic Stage is still off in the distance and we are just entering the ICF's official world championships schedule this August in Poznan Poland.

From my passion to paddle single blade sports and my desire to develop women's sprint canoe I got involved in Dragon Boat. I remember watching Jim Farintosh in the late 90's taking the boys to Hong Kong and asking him when he was going to take a women's team. Blake Hara in 2000 started a women's GTA team to challenge the reigning national champions FCRC. Well, after that race off in False Creek in June of 2000 dragon boat in the GTA really took hold. I have been involved with the National Premier Women's Team Program ever since. Under the leadership of Blake, the crew swept in Philadelphia, Poznan, Shanghai, and Berlin. The Crew repeated the success most recently with Gavin Maxwell as coach in Sydney (Penrith) and stood proudly atop the podium this past August in Prague (Racice).

The future of dragon boat is strong. The blending of paddling styles, personalities, experience, leadership and youth is a delicate balance. Just like any relationship there is compromise therefore we too must focus on team goals to achieve team success. The ego must be shelved and the bigger picture must be your focus. Everyone has a role to play and sometimes it's not the role you see for yourself but it is what the coach has decided. In my humble opinion by being a part of their team you must respect, support and believe in them or go off and paddle a single boat. I am continually honoured to a part of such strong programs and paddle with and for female leaders in the sport like Kamini Jain and Julie Beaulieu.

In my mind paddling compliments paddling and through Dragon Boat and most recently Outrigger I have found a progression of single blade paddle sports that continually challenge me and all those who pick up a blade. Internationally both Dragon Boat and Outrigger have World Championship opportunities for all of their athletes. Over the years I have seen some of the countries involved in Dragon Boat and Outrigger expand their interest into women's sprint canoeing. A result I'm positive would not have happen if not my opportunities in DB and OC and the efforts of many others who took up the cause. I may have cast the first stone in asking "Why Not Women" but since then the ripples that went out from there have been truly a team effort that has strengthened the recognition for women's sprint canoe internationally.

More than a decade of Single Blade Paddling and there's still so much to learn. Thankfully I have a lifetime to learn it and share it with others. One of the greatest gifts paddling gives to the world is that it is a life sport. In paddling it's possible to have two or three generations competing at the same event and if talented enough two of those may even race together on the same team. I remember a time where paddling icon Hugh Fisher and his son Liam were competing together in Hilo Hawaii at the IVF World Sprints. The list goes on and on of reasons why paddling is great for the heart and soul but let me finish with its non-discriminating nature. Crew boats allow for novice and elite paddlers to come together and its dragon boats that have taken the corporate world by storm. As a teacher at Appleby College I thoroughly enjoy introducing our alumni, parents, students and staff to the world of dragon boat each year and then attending one of our local festivals. Burloak Canoe Club continues to offer training to dragon boat teams each fall and I am often inspired by their spirit and dedication as they seem unfazed by the cold dark days even when the season is over. Our need to be on the water is greater than our need for comfort. Competing is about your minds ability to embrace the discomfort your body feels as it becomes oxygen deprived. In conclusion I would remind you that you're never too old and the only limits you have are the ones you set for yourself – so Dream Big and believe in your dreams!

CROSSFIT FOR DRAGON BOATERS: A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE



Trends in fitness are what drive the fitness industry, sell their products (as ridiculous as some may be) and grab people's attention (quick fix anyone?). Some of those trends stick, and others fade away. One of the latest crazes to hit the industry - whether you are an advocate or a critic - is Crossfit. What is Crossfit? Once reserved for police academies, firefighters, the military, martial artists, and elite and professional athletes has now mainstreamed its way into the lives of ordinary every day people. Crossfit is designed to optimize physical competence in each of ten recognized fitness domains. They are Cardiovascular and Respiratory endurance, Stamina, Strength, Flexibility, Power, Speed, Coordination, Agility, Balance, and Accuracy. Relying mainly on functional exercises (don't expect to be doing bicep curls) Crossfit combines weight lifting and throwing, gymnastics and metabolic conditioning in an effort to enhance an individual's competency in physical tasks. If you'd like to read a more detailed description of Crossfit and the research behind it, visit this link: <http://library.crossfit.com/free/pdf/Foundations.pdf>

I accidentally discovered Crossfit last year while I watched some guy training as hard if not harder than me – as narcissistic as this may sound, most women and men don't train in the same capacity that I do, so I was interested in his workouts. He told me a little about these workouts and next thing you know we started doing some of them together. At the time I was still training competitively for paddling and in a very short time I started noticing how beneficial these workouts were to paddling. I have done many circuit training programs before, and they were no doubt hard; but paddling dragon boat distances involves very little isolation of specific muscles at specific times, and my desire to curl a dumbbell in isolation for one minute quickly became a thing of the past. The Crossfit workouts were explosive, short, intense, and used compound movements which globally mimicked dragon boating and its energy pathways, much closer than a bicep

curl ever would. Keep in mind that this is a totally subjective opinion and I have nothing against how others choose to train, this was simply more of a revelation for me, as a paddler and as a trainer.

What I love about Crossfit and how dragon boaters can benefit is that ALL dragon boaters can do it and yield results. Much of the dragon boat community is derived of recreational paddlers – teamwork, camaraderie, social events and achieving personal goals are what motivate these people to continue dragon boating for so many years. While some move on to more elite levels, many choose to remain recreational, active, and hope to improve on their fitness to some degree. As many Crossfit exercises can be done with body weight alone, it's easy to bring a group together, develop a Crossfit style workout or even an actual Crossfit workout, teach them how to push themselves to new levels, improve their metabolic conditioning and all the while keeping that recreational and social atmosphere and setting new personal goals. The more elite dragon boater can easily follow most of the workouts directly from the website or even hit a Crossfit gym. If you don't believe me, try it. I grouped together between 15 and 20 people of all fitness abilities over the last 4 weeks for outdoor Crossfit training. Regardless of their fitness level, every single one of them completed every single workout (with great pride), discovered that they could push themselves beyond what they thought they could – all the while achieving personal goals, safely and efficiently. They fell in love with Crossfit workouts – ok so maybe they loved it once the workouts were over, but there has to be a reason they keep coming back! Although I am not a Crossfit purist, I believe in its benefits and how they can contribute positively to a dragon boaters fitness and a performance during races.

Julie Beaumont

Julie was part of the 2005, 2007 and 2009 National Premier Women's Team. She is also the coach for H2O Playground – Adrenaline Women. Julie holds a Masters in Child Studies, is a CanFitPro Fitness Professional, Spinning, BOSU Balance Trainer, Boxing Fitness Institute Trainer and Level 1 Crossfit Trainer

TEAM DYNAMICS – *How many leaders are in this Dragon Boat?*

Have you seen this occurring at a festival? A team finishes their first race and they are very disappointed with their performance. The team gathers after the slow walk back to the tent from the dock. A dark cloud seems to hang over the group and the comments begin:

‘The stroke was too fast...’
‘The stroke was too slow...’
‘The boat was behind the line...’
‘We got caught backing up...’
‘Our start was awful...’
‘I was being rushed from behind...’
‘We were out of stroke in the sprint...’
‘Someone’s bringing in water...’
‘The boat isn’t balanced...’

Etc., etc., etc.

Each of these comments is made by a person who is demonstrating a leadership skill. They analyzed the race, saw a problem and made a suggestion for improvement. They expressed their opinion to improve the team. Problems arise with the timing, the audience and the need for a cohesive response to improve the team’s performance in the next race.

Most people on a dragon boat team are leaders in some aspect of their life. Many are leaders in their work lives in areas such as government, business, schools, military, health and civil service. Others, through their volunteering and family life, have become just as accustomed to assuming leadership roles – in community organizations, charities and neighbourhood groups. All are accustomed to taking charge of situations. This can be an asset or a liability to the team. One of the roles of a coach is to harness the leadership potential of the team to make it an asset.

Some things to think about as a coach:

Leaders have ideas and express opinions. How do I encourage the flow of ideas and opinions from team members while maintaining structure, order and cohesiveness? As unnerving as it may be at times – often when you are busiest – the team member sliding over with the ‘Got a minute...?’ provides a respectful means for the sharing of information. Be approachable and open to nuggets of information that can make the team stronger.

Leaders are doers. How can I make use of the many skills of people on the team? Allowing team members to take on responsibilities and organizational tasks gives you more time and energy to spend on other aspects of coaching.

Leaders fill a void. Am I as a coach providing leadership in all areas of the team? Leaders spot lack of leadership very quickly. Their natural inclination is to fill the void. Don’t leave leadership voids that are filled haphazardly. Share leadership but don’t abdicate from it.

Cultivating the leadership potential on a team is a long process. Time spent listening to team members, being open, fair, knowledgeable, confident, accessible and honest pays off in the times of stress and pressure. This picture of a team meeting taken at the World Championships in Prague exemplifies the positive result of two coaches who fostered and shaped the leadership potential of a team. The two coaches, Albert McDonald and Jim Farintosh, were



meeting with the National Senior Men’s team immediately after a disastrous sinking in the 2000m Senior Open race at the World Championships in Prague. Unlike the meeting I described at the beginning with the divergent comments, negativity and venting, this meeting was focused and cohesive. This was no accident. The meeting and race result later that afternoon reflected the coaches’ work in the months and years preceding this meeting.

Two hours later, twelve of the men and one of the women who swamped in the Open race, paddled in the Senior Mixed 2000m Championship race. The team won by over 10 seconds.

An effective dragon boat coach is a leader of leaders.

Tim Schaus

2009 Senior Women’s National Team Program Director and Coach, 2009 Senior Open National Team Athlete, Coach and

LILLY DIPPING

Steering Tips

This section will provide tips and suggestions to enhance the performance of developing steerspeople; such as: “If your crew gets caught in a lightning storm ... duck!”

Tip # 1

Use the Entire Steering Platform

- No member of the crew has greater impact on the balance of the boat than the steersperson
- The steersperson can adjust for significant side to side imbalances by standing on the right or left side of the steering platform
- The steersperson can even have some impact on bow to stern balance based upon how far forward or back he/she stands
- Try steering with bare feet next time, you'll find your 'feel' for boat balance is greatly increased (for further increased 'feel' try kneeling for a piece and you will 'really feel' how the boat moves)
- As soon as the crew pushes off the dock get everyone to sit up and lean over the gunwale, adjust your feet to ensure perfect balance, continue adjustments if necessary while the boat is at speed
- Once balance point is found, keep your feet steady and stable throughout the race so as not to disrupt boat balance during competition

Summary:

Get comfortable steering from all positions on the steering column; you may have to use many different positions on the platform in any given race



2009 Canadian Senior Open Team



Useful Web Resources

Coaching Association of Canada (CAC): <http://www.coach.ca/>

This is a great website for all sorts of coach relevant information. The site is available in both official languages.

Highlights include:

- **SNAC** - The Sport Nutrition Advisory Committee (SNAC) oversees CAC™ Sport Nutrition program. This section offers free nutrition handouts that are applicable to youth, adults, and children. There are also ones specific to heat and altitude training.
- **Training and Certification** this selection connects you to the provincial organizations that offer NCCP courses. As well, it provides all the information required to get you set up for Introduction to Sport A and B coaching courses which are required for completion of the Dragon Boat Canada Coaching Certifications.
- **Tips and Tools** this section offers the Coaching Tool Box, and the Community Resource Guide. Although the technical ones are not specific to dragon boating, many of the coaching concepts and mental training are applicable