

Getting Technical ~ RACING CANOE TECHNIQUE

Forward Stroke Technique

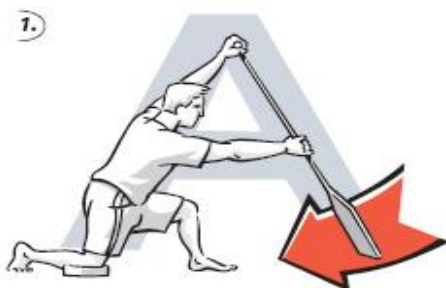
In a racing canoe, the paddler is kneeling on one knee. This position contrasts with the sitting position of the paddler in a recreational canoe. The kneeling position permits the hips to become engaged in the application of power. This is the key to the power which a racing canoe paddler can apply to the paddle.

Note:

- Emphasize the steering at this early stage. Steering will be of great benefit to the paddler as he/she continues in the sport.
- In highly skilled paddlers the steering and exiting motion is seamlessly woven together in one elegant complex motion.
- The new narrow C-1's are designed in a way that the gunnels are underneath the paddler. Using the gunnel as a fulcrum is difficult in this circumstance. Thankfully, these very narrow boats need very little steering. Small J stroke adjustments are sufficient to control the boat.

SETUP

The Setup is a very important part of the stroke that should be emphasized with your paddlers. As the paddler prepares for a stroke, he/she twists the kneeling hip forward, simultaneously twisting the torso forward at the waist and reaching forward with the lower arm. Demonstrate this position with the bottom arm straight. The hand of the top arm is in front and over the water and the elbow of the top arm is slightly bent. The arms and paddle form a distinctive 'A' shape in the setup position. The hand of the top arm is at the apex of the 'A'. The setup position permits the paddler to focus on 'eying' the catch which is the beginning of the application of power. Pausing just before the catch can be a helpful drill to emphasize the ideal setup position.



CATCH

The Catch is the beginning of the application of power. The blade of the paddle is put in the water by the top arm pushing down until the blade is fully submerged. Words such as 'lock', 'submerge' or 'sink' the blade describe the need for intensity at this phase.

Canoe Forward Stroke



DRAW

With the blade fully submerged and 'locked' in the water, pressure is applied down the shaft by the top arm while the hip and torso counter-rotate and the shoulders rise. These combined actions **Draw the paddler (and the canoe) to the paddle**. The goal is to use the large muscles of the hips, torso and shoulders to apply power. The smaller muscles of the arms are used to hold the paddle in the correct position. A straight lower arm throughout this phase ensures direct application of power to the shaft. Power is applied consistently through the Draw phase as the paddler gradually sits up.

EXIT/STEERING

As the hip reaches the paddle, the shaft is turned by the top hand so that the 'power face' is turned outward away from the boat. The top hand moves down and across in front of the paddler's body. The gunnel of the boat becomes the fulcrum as the downward pressure of the top hand and the position of the shaft against the gunnel causes the blade to push water away from the boat. The paddle is removed from the water in a smooth sideways swinging motion which does not slow the boat. The blade should not be left too long in the water. Inexperienced paddlers tend to allow the blade to drag at the back of the stroke. This is usually related to balance skills which need to be further worked on.



RECOVERY

This is the relaxation phase of the stroke. The torso should be erect. As it swings forward, the kneeling hip also rotates forward. In this way, the large muscle groups are engaged in maximizing reach. The paddler should physically look forward. The paddler should begin to mentally anticipate the Setup and Catch phases.