

Lee Pooley 00:00:13

Hi, welcome everyone. My name is Lee Pooley. I'm the director of Coaching and Qualifications at British Canoeing and you're listening to the British Canoeing Awarding Body coaching podcast. As you know, we've been focusing on what's in your buoyancy aid and what's in your craft. And today we are joined by Lyndsay McPhee. So, hi Lyndsay.

Lyndsay McPhee: 00:00:33

Hi everyone.

Lee Pooley 00:00:34

So Lyndsay, first of all fantastic that you're here because you haven't done a podcast with us before so I'm really pleased that you said yes to us but what'd be great for the listeners. Can you give a bit of a background to yourself, please?

Lyndsay McPhee 00:00:45

Yeah, so I'm Lyndsay and I run my own coaching company. So I run LM Coaching and I've kind of worked in the commercial side of things for about four years now but prior to that I worked well I volunteered in my local Canoe Club because I wasn't aware that we actually got paid to do this thing.

So yeah I did lots and lots of years volunteering in the club and building up my qualifications just through that clubs setting. And four years ago. I came into it in that commercial capacity. So delivering all things from canoe, sea kayak, white water stuff just a real mix across the board. Everything from British Canoeing qualifications to basic skills courses to confidence building and kind of really targeting that market of female paddlers and female participation on the water. So yeah, that's pretty much me.

Lee Pooley 00:01:29

And where did your paddling originate from? You said about a local Club, so where did it originate?

Lyndsay McPhee 00:01:35

So probably like most people in the world it was in primary school, our end of primary school kind of trip. We went to an outdoor centre and we did rafting and canoeing and off we went and they set a few little challenges. And after that then I want to do a little bit more of this but growing up in Northern Ireland. It was quite an odd thing, people don't really do paddlesports, there wasn't a lot going on with that kind of stuff. So through lots of trial and error. I found the sea cadets but I couldn't join until I was 12. So I had to sit for two more years until I could join the cadets. And so it all kicked off in Cadets and did a couple years with them and we attended the national Regatta in London so we came across one September weekend. And off the back of that I got picked up by talent scouts so we went down the K1 race route so I became a marathon paddler.

And so that was all I knew for quite a long time, went through the first few stages of the girls for gold programme. And that finished very suddenly with two shoulder injuries. And so yeah that's where it started and then after that I took a few years out just to recover. And then the only way to come back was to be a little bit more chilled in the coaching and instructing world and that's where I then discovered there was a club at that stage.

Lee Pooley 00:02:46:

And no longer in Northern Ireland. So where are you based now?

Lyndsay McPhee 00:02:50:

So I'm now based in South Deven. I've done a little tour of the South Coast. So I started in Dorset and moved my way along the coastline and have settled quite nicely in South Devon.

Lee Pooley 00:03:00

Okay, brilliant. So Lindsay you alluded to some of your paddling, you talked about canoeing and white water and sea and today what we're interested in is your sea kayaking background because in a minute we'll explore into your buoyancy aid and into your sea kayak in a minute. But yeah, what sort of sea kayaking do you do?

Lyndsay McPhee 00:03:19

So yeah sea kayak for me is probably my favourite discipline by far and so again that originated back when I started paddling in the club, so we grew up living in the North Coast of Ireland. So it was just kind of like a lot of people I've spoken to recently. It was all that A to B long distance sea kayak stuff that everybody went in and we put our heads down and we paddling 40 - 50k every day. And that was sea kayaking for me and that's all I knew for a long time. and then it's slowly started to change where I'd kind of found that white water background and then realized we could find a similar experience on the sea through the rock hopping and exploring and doing those bits. So I started a journey around Ireland. About seven years ago now.

And I wanted to cover every single inch of Ireland which I did and that was through every Rock and every little cove along the way and that's where I really discovered that there's a whole lot more to sea kayak than Just A to B, Headland stuff. And that changed sea paddling for me and changed my approach to sea paddling and how I kind of let other people experience that as well. Yeah.

Lee Pooley 00:04:18

Lovely and obviously down in the South Coast. you've got a lovely pick of where you want to go for rock hopping and Surf and even some open crossings.

Lyndsay McPhee 00:04:27

Yes, it's beautiful coastline down in Devon. yeah, As you said there's lots of things on offer and there's the nice days and there's also the more funky days and not being too far away from the border of Cornwall as well.

You've got that even more exciting stuff just crossing down that way and loads venues lots of opportunities lots of different conditions to play in and at the minute I'm currently working my way down the Devon coast to see every single inch of the Devon coast.

Lee Pooley 00:04:55

Lovely and so let's delve into your buoyancy aid because obviously you coach, you guide, you lead on the sea what are you carrying in your buoyancy aid when you're leading?

Lyndsay McPhee 00:05:04

So my buoyancy aid kind of gets set up in different ways depending more I'm up to and I am a firm believer of not having too much kit in it because I do know how restrictive it is for getting in and out of boats but what I'll always make sure is in there as some means of calling for help.

So depending on where I am, so kind of the phone signal or the area or the boat traffic I decide which is most appropriate for that day. I'll definitely have at least one if not two pieces of communication in the buoyancy aid and then a few little bits stashed in the boat. I always carry a knife because we seem to have fisherman territory on the Devon coasts so it's a useful piece of kit. I've got my whistle because I quite like it as a means for calling for help as well. It doesn't always need to be, fancy piece of technology.

I carry a tape sling in my buoyancy aid and it's one of those things it's quite notorious for the White Water World, but I find it's a really useful piece of kit for getting people back into the boat using heel hooks and towing people to the side or retrieving boats on a kind of shorter tow that's longer than a contact tow and shorter than a long tow. So I do like my tape sling and I have actually transitioned it over from my white water kit into my sea kit. I also carry a little bit of an ouch pouch in there. So just a simple little package that I've made up of some kind of waterproof plasters and bits and pieces for easy access on the water if I need it.

Compass and the other big thing for me is snacks in my buoyancy aid. Sea Kayaking made me very quickly realize that hangryism was a thing and only when I started sea paddling I realized that it was a problem. And so I do tend to have quite a lot of snacks in my buoyancy aid to stop that becoming an issue or stop it becoming an issue for other people.

Lee Pooley 00:06:42

And what would your snack choice be?

Lyndsay McPhee 00:06:44:

So it used to be the old school classic thing in chocolate was the meaning of life but now it's things like nuts and raisins and that sort of Trail Mix stuff because we know that that's a longer lasting slower energy. And yeah, they'll occasionally be a little like chocolatey snack in there just as a feel good kind of pick up moment. And so yeah always having something like that at hand whether that's for me or whether it's for somebody else's it's good to have.

And then I'll always have a little kind of Journey plan in my buoyancy aid as well. It's just easy accessible. So wherever I'm going or whatever, I'm up to it. It's just in there as a backup plan for weather or Communications whatever's going on.

Lee Pooley 00:07:18

I've got a couple of questions really Lyndsay if you don't mind, you talk about tape what sort of length of tape are you carrying?

Lyndsay McPhee 00:07:25:

So it's a five metre tapes sling and it's got a carabiner on the end of it as well.

Lee Pooley 00:07:30:

Snap or a screw gate?

Lyndsay McPhee 00:07:32

It's got a screw gate

Lee Pooley 00:07:33

And then your journey plan, you said a bit about comms etc. what else would we find if we delved into your buoyancy? What else would be written on your journey plan?

Lyndsay McPhee 00:07:43:

So journey plan generally tends to have the details my group on there as well. So any kind of medical stuff about them or their emergency contact bits and it's also got the actual plan for the day. So where we're proposing to go to, we're getting on at such and such place and we're following the coastline round to left or right or whatever direction we're heading and then it'll have a bit sort of timings on there as well. So what time I expect to get back and then just the actual general forecast for the day so just gives it an overview and so

that if something goes wrong then we've got an idea of where we are. Somebody else knows where we're at or where we're planning to go. And yeah, I'll always kind of transfer the information from that to the Coast Guard every time I go out, I let them know and it's exactly the same details as I carry on my journey plan. If I change the plan then I'll also update them and let them know.

Lee Pooley 00:08:30

From working on the sea many years ago, the sea salt is notorious, isn't it for wrecking your kit? Are you an avid wash your kit out every day or are you less than that?

Lyndsay McPhee 00:08:41:

It depends on the kit. So we had a bit of a, I suppose it was a trial and error a number of years ago. So there was a selection of us went for the let's not bother washing kit and a selection of people went for washing their kit and actually those of us that didn't bother our kit lasted longer. That was only for some things so things like carabiners and BHS and all those things. I do rinse those dying because the sea salt definitely, kills that stuff off. I have got slightly better at washing some of the kit down as some of it's not as durable as it used to be and if it's moving transitioning from one environment to another I'd rinse it down anyway just from the environmental side of it.

Lee Pooley 00:09:16:

So you've told us what's in your buoyancy aid and that's really great. What you sort of carrying in your sea kayak and where because obviously there's quite a few compartments. There's behind your seat, there's the hatch right in front of you these days quite a lot of sea kayakers have that. So what else are you carrying and where are you carrying it in sea kayak?

Lyndsay McPhee 00:09:31:

With the stuff that I carry it really depends what I'm up to. So if I'm going on a journey where I leave without close proximity of a car park then I'll take a whole lot more than if I'm just staying in a bay or staying in that surrounding area or if I'm heading off for multiple days there will be more kit than normal. And so now a general kind of day-to-day basis and I start on the outside of the boat. I have my split paddles. So they live up the front of the boat and they're on top of the front and I carry my paddle float, which I don't use personally, but I do like to use it for other people, it'll live on the back deck of the boat alongside the pump and the pump's one of those things that it brings up that conversation every time when we're constantly pulling pumps out on the water because nobody ever attaches them to their boat.

So I do have mine attached to my boat using a bungee that's long enough for it to come around and drop into the cockpit whenever I need to use it. So yeah it's attached on the top. And I have my tow line. Either on my person or I've got a boat tow that connects onto the boat I use as well. And I'll add my short contact tow it's on the front deck lines. So yeah, that's kind of what's on top of the boat. I don't like a messy boat. So I like to keep stuff tucked in so things like maps and stuff unless I desperately need them if I don't know the area, then they'll be tucked in the boat somewhere or tucked into my buoyancy aid

And in the boat as I say it really depends where I'm going and what I'm doing, so I trim the boat depending on what the weather's doing. So whatever's happening if it's flat calm really doesn't really matter where the kit is and if it's a bigger day on the sea than I try to sort of even it out a little bit depending on where we're going on that journey. And any of the bits, I need accessible go in the very front hatch and the reason they go in the front hatch is because the back hatch on my boat is very hard to close on the water. So goes in the front hatch just so if we do have to access on the water, I know the hatch will definitely go back on again because I'm relying on somebody else to do that because I can't reach.

So yeah in the front hatch would be kind of an extra layer in there. So normally there's a big bag or a big sort of Poncho bag that could be accessed on the water if we need to, if somebody needs a spare layer and things like

first aid kits, repair kits all those important things all live in the front hatch and along with food drinks. So I always say to people: if something goes wrong, in the front hatch, you will find everything that you require.

Also in that hatch, I've got a little lone working kind of bag in there, which has got my emergency plan and if something was to go wrong with me or something is to go wrong that I needed somebody else to sort of take charge of a few bits. So that's the bag that lives in the front where it's got the first aid kit, emergency clothes, all the extra communications would live in that bag along with a plan of this is what happens if something happens to me.

Spare layers, I tend to have split between both, if it's an over layer it'll be in the front hatch if it's spare layers, that would have to land to use I put them in the back hatch. And in the back hatch I'd also carry things like group shelter if it we were going out for a big Journey they'll stay put in there.

Got a torch and a couple of little bits I just put in and then I lock all the kit in using airbags. Because it really frustrates me whenever you've got a rolly flask rolling around in your boat and it's banging from side to side. So just locks it in nicely and it also secures those hatches if you were to have a hatch come off and to say sometimes if I carry a map it will either be a little laminate one that lives in my buoyancy Aid followed by the big picture one that's normally in the boat somewhere as well.

Yeah. So the kit will move around depending what I'm up to and say if I'm only in the bay, I don't take loads and loads of kit. If I'm going on a one day journey, I'll take a little bit more, and I'm going for an exped or I'm going offshore. I'll take even more kit. And that's the days where I'll carry three or four forms of communication in the boat.

Lee Pooley 00:13:12

And then in terms of you said about your split paddles, but whereabouts do you put them do you say on the front to your boat?

Lyndsay McPhee 00:13:18:

Yes, so my split paddles live on the front so they live close enough that I can reach them by reaching forward and I like to leave the back of the boat fairly clear because if I do end up oyt of the boat and have to climb back in again that I've got a clean space to do and yeah the splits live on the front where I can drag them forwards if I need to and get them out myself.

Lee Pooley 00:13:36:

And are they different because a lot of sea kayakers have actually different sets of splits, and they alternate them. What's your thoughts? Are they the same as you paddle or are they different?

Lyndsay McPhee 00:13:50:

So mine are the same now. I used to paddle with different ones because I thought I needed bigger blades and smaller blades to do different things on Journeys and then realized that I was just happy with the paddle I have. Occasionally I will take a green split and on the days where I'm just going for a nice general stroll all along coast but generally yes exactly the same paddle as I have because if you go on any kind of expedition or any kind of multi-day trip this paddle breaks on day one and you're stuck with a cheap and nasty pair of splits or something, that's just not quite right then it's a long trip, and it's not comfortable. I have transitioned to exactly the same set of paddles because I do enjoy paddling with them.

Lee Pooley 00:14:28:

Yeah, and then you talked about your airbags as well. I mean, sea kayaks, they've got some rather large bulkheads and areas to pack kit so they must be pretty big airbags that you're using really

Lyndsay McPhee 00:14:40:

Yes, the ones my boat aren't massively big and I paddle a very low volume boat. So it doesn't take much to fill those in but they are actually just white water kayak airbags that I've had spare from another boat. And so I use one of those in the front and in the back, I actually use the paddle float that I don't generally use myself. So I use it in there if I need it and if I need to bring out then I can use it and it's always trying to use kit in the sea kayak. That's multi-purpose in that way that we could take All you can use it if somebody Say the deck or the hatch cover is gone. We could use that to fill the hatch if we need it. So it's almost a multi-purpose use of kit in the boat.

Lee Pooley: 00:15:16

I haven't, I've never paddled on the coastline in Ireland unfortunately, but being down in the southwest I know that most of my days were either launching through surf or landing in surf area like Slapton Sands and so I'd imagine having kit really hankered down is really important. Is there anything you ensure when you sort of operate in those sort of areas?

Lyndsay McPhee 00:15:43:

Just like I mentioned earlier just having a clean boat that I think whenever we come through surf that's the time that things get dislodged a little bit, people have water bottles on their Deck lines and pumps hanging here and these bits here and normally paddle floats and stuff floating around. So I always kind of saying to people if you don't need immediate access to it, put it away, so even from myself I started to put my bottle in behind the seat of the sea kayak so that I can reach it to drink when I need to but I also don't lose it to the sea and because a few of mine have gone over the years.

So it's easier to know I learn and go right we're just gonna land for a year. Let's get away that we don't actually need and it's just that prior preparation. it's rather than having to go into the surf. searching for bits, let's be sensible about how we pack our boat and how we set our boats up and it is coming away from having too much clutter on deck lines, keep a nice clean boat because it's easier to rescue for one and you lose less bits when you're out there at sea.

Lee Pooley 00:16:38:

You talked earlier when we moved from buoyancy aid to your sea kayak you talked about several tow line systems. Can we just delve into what do you use because I think you said about a short tow on the front of your boat. And then you talked about I think it was a deck mounted and a waist mounted it would be good just to get your views on those and why you have those variations.

Lyndsay McPhee 00:17:01:

Yes, it's something I've played with over the years and not being the biggest paddler in the world. I always kind of found towing quite a struggle to be honest. And so the original one I've started with everybody it was having a waist tow because that's what everybody else had and we've all had variations of different links tools and different styles. And so I've got a waist toe I still carry a waist tow but I find it was quite a lot of straining on my back when I was towing people especially in big seas.

So I then explored the deck-mounted tow on the boat and I just found it such an easier way of Towing somebody because the pressure comes through the boat itself rather than through me. And so I kind of made one of those myself so I find some bits on a beach one day some bits of rope. And actually yeah, it was kind of that sea paddling on the cheap experience of design and find some floats that belong to some fisherman I guess and all on the beach from some waste and that's how I created the boat mounted tow. I find it much easier on the body and if I know that I'm towing on a big sea, I'll use my boat mounted tow follow by just a tow extension just an extra piece of line. I also carry the little short contact tow on the front. It's not something I

use a lot of time. And again, it's something that I've made myself. There's a few options for but I've just made one myself and it's got quick release little buckle on.

But it's proven useful for landing not injured people actually landing the people who are not confident enough to land through the surf. So, yeah, it's more of a connecting people together to give that comfort for those nervous paddlers and that's where I would take all if I was working with more novice group or group maybe really was bigger surf that they hadn't been in Surf and that's how we push people in and out through the surf. Yeah, there's a variation of things that you can use in variation things that I use and I'd say it really depends where I am and what I'm up to you as to what tow lines that I take and I am very much for Salvaging stuff that you find along the way to create things out of and that's where mine's come from.

Lee Pooley 00:18:59

What I'm guessing from our conversation Lyndsay is it's not that you have a set setup, you are thinking about environment, whether it's around the rocks the surf open crossings, but you're also thinking about the people that you're paddling with as well. How much of that would actually change?

Lyndsay McPhee 00:19:22

Quite a bit actually. Quite often the people I paddle with I try and encourage them to bring a lot of their own kit. So if people have their own kit, I can obviously drop back in the amount of kit that I carry and it's something that I drive a lot is trying to get people to be as independent as they can. And if they know I'm carrying kit for them it's very easy for people to slack off and not actually bring that kit themselves. So yeah, it's very much been a try and encourage people to bring stuff and know that not everybody can afford every piece of kit but try and encourage people to carry it. It's why I hate going on paddles where everybody's got a VHF and everybody's got paddles and everybody's got extras of everything because it's almost a bit overkill, where are we going and what we're doing if you need this amount of kit and what I like people to think about is what kit, do they need for that day to keep them safe?

And if they need kit beyond what we would normally carry then they need to question why they're going out there in the first place. So it's this drive of yes, we carry all the communications and we carry stuff. But they're not there to be used just there if they need to be used and yeah, it's not planning to go out for the worst day in the world ever. It's planning within the means of what we're actually doing and if we're only going out for a little short paddle, there's no necessity to have mega amounts of group shelter and all these crazy repair kits with stuff in it because it's very unlikely we're going to use that. If we're going away from the shore or more, we're heading off in a bit of a journey, then it's being realistic to things it could happen or things you might find along the way. So yeah.

Lee Pooley 00:20:52

And then before we started the podcast we were just catching up and just talking about you've been up to etc because we haven't seen each other for a while but you were talking about sounds like you're busy, sea kayaking into November and through to February and then just thinking about is there any other additional kit that you might be thinking around now, the days are getting shorter and it's getting colder.

Lyndsay McPhee 00:21:18

Yes, it's bringing people into this time of year where you have the kit as well. So it's make sure that people are kitted up and in suitable clothing. I'll progress up to a dry suit probably rather than a two-piece with shorts and a bag that I have been running around in recently and changing the kit I actually wear and starting to add in things more like compasses and .. well I carry my compass anyway and a head torch, but it's having those more accessible than they have been over the summer time because you don't generally use them in the summer. But bring those things where they'll actually live in the little hatch just in front of my cockpit so I can access them straight away if I need to or in my buoyancy aid. But yeah more of that focus of adding things like glow sticks and stuff like that in the kit. None of us ever plans to come back in the dark, but we just never know at

this time of the year. And so yeah, it's just changing that and it's also changing the layering system as well. And so what I wear below my dry suit and having those extra layers that I can change into if I need to because yeah, no I'm gone south, I've gone a little bit softer over the last few years.

Yes. I've definitely not the same tolerance for the cold as I used to have and see I take things like hats and pogies and stuff like that for hands with gloves for my hands to wear on the shore. If we stop to have lunch then you can still keep that process of staying warm and looking after yourself and the flask started to come back as well. So always having that hot drink that I wouldn't generally carry it the rest of the year. And just those additional extras for looking at darkness looking at kind of poor weather conditions. I've been able to stay a bit warmer and drier if you can.

Lee Pooley 00:22:41:

Lyndsay, we haven't done a podcast together before and most people know that I'll ask a couple of random questions just to see what's your favourite paddling spot Etc. So now you're down in the Southwest what area would you would you say is your favourite day paddling area?

Lyndsay McPhee 00:23:02:

I think Salcombe wins me over in the sea kayak world, I've never had a bad day at Salcombe and it's one of those really stunning venues. And I remember the first day that I'd ever seen it thinking I was somewhere else in the world, sun was shining and the sea was at the most beautiful kind of colour and it's one of those places I never tire of and I'm there probably once or twice every single week and it gives me something different every time I go there and it's got options for kind of beginners or up to advanced and I like that we've got that environment for everybody all in one place all from the same car park.

But yes, it's given some people a real nice progression over the years as well. I've taken people down and it's that first experience and going oh this is quite big and you build them up and they're now paddling Salcombe very comfortably in the bigger days but yeah, it's got loads to explore. It's got a whole lot of history. It's got loads of stuff and I just think it's an incredible place and I'd say I don't tire of it and I do still look forward to paddling there.

Lee Pooley: 00:23:59

Yeah, I can definitely vouch for Salcombe. It's one of my favourite areas. especially with the bar isn't it Salcombe bar as well. And as you say you can go left or right and it's got everything there for you, hasn't it? Yeah, lovely. Yeah and What's on your Hit List in the next 12 months for your own personal paddling?

Lyndsay McPhee: 00:24:16

So I'm trying to get right the Devon Coastline. I would like to do Devon round Cornwall and up the north Devon Coastline. And so I do want to paddle a bit more for myself on the sea and see a few more venues other than the ones I use for work. I'm also taking a few groups back to Ireland next year. because I'm still trying to sell what my actual most favourite place in the whole wide world to paddle is and yeah, we're doing a couple of expeditions on the north and west coast of Ireland and to allow people from the south to go and see what I actually looks like.

I'm working on a bit of a journey, so I've done my performance coach in white water. But I'm considering going on performance coach on sea kayak and just to delve into that a little bit more from that sea side because it's definitely where I'm most focused and where I'm most kind of passionate and so yeah a little bit of a personal journey on that. There's a few things I would quite like to do for myself on that the qualification side of things but yeah, the main focus is just get out there and explore and some more areas and I'm hoping to get up to do the west coast of Scotland again, because it's been a number of years before I've done some stuff up there. So Yeah, it's just getting out there and paddling for me.

Lee Pooley 00:25:24

Yeah, it sounds a busy 12 months then.

Lyndsay McPhee: 00:25:26

Yeah, it will be.

Lee Pooley: 00:25:28

Lyndsay, thanks very much for your time much appreciated. I know how busy you are and taking time out to chat on this podcast has been fantastic. So thanks very much for your time and take care.