

Lee Pooley 00:00:13

Hi everyone, and welcome to the British Canoeing Awarding Body Coaching Podcast for everyone that listens usually, my names Lee Pooley. I'm the Director of Coaching and Qualifications and tonight, we are joined by a whole host from the Surf Kayak Technical Group. So thanks very much for joining us tonight. And if you can, for the listeners, let's do a round robin and introduce yourselves please.

Chris Heaney 00:00:36

Hi Lee. My name's Chris Heaney and I work up in Scotland for University of Highlands and Island's Perth and I've been surfing for 40 years and as you say, part of the Tech Group and the Scottish Surf Committee.

Tracy Sherrington 00:00:46

Hi, I'm Tracy Sherrington. I also live in Scotland. I was a senior lecturer in outdoor coaching. I've been kayak surfing and absolutely love it since I was in my twenties and I have been coaching and assessing and training and ever since so that's like 30 odd years.

Claire Eatock 00:01:08

Hi Lee, I'm Claire. I'm the opposite end of the country. I was up near Tracy who got me into surf kayaking, but I've decided better to do it in warmer waters with turquoise blue sea down here in Cornwall.

Chris Heaney 00:1:23

All right, stop rubbing it in.

Tracy Sherrington 00:01:26

Lucky girl.

Lee Pooley 00:01:27

And have we got Ian tonight?

Ian Sherrington 00:01:28

Hi yes, Hi Lee. My name's Ian Sherrington. I work up in Scotland, also live in Aviemore and I work at a place called Glenmore Lodge, which is the Scottish National Outdoor Training Centre. I've worked across a number, a lot of different outdoor activities and love that love coaching and leading in that space. I've been surf kayaking for a lot of years as well and enjoy competing paddling for myself and helping people learn to do it as well.

Lee Pooley 00:01:53

Brilliant, so I'd imagine everyone that's listing in on the call, we've got a whole raft of experience that's joined the podcast and what we are going to dig into and hopefully no one's surprised of it, we are actually gonna dig into surf kayaking and in particular, the focus of this particular podcast is around catching a wave. The whole emphasis of these podcasts, this particular year, is all around the technical and tactical aspects and also an element of coaching as well. So I wondered as a group, what are your tricks, what are your processes, what is your script for introducing novices to be able to catch a wave. What sort of things are going through your mind and how would you set up that type of programme?

Chris Heaney 00:02:38

So I think it's really important, right at the start, to understand what surfing is Lee. Invariably whether it's somebody that's done a bit of surfing in a kayak or a sit on top or whether they're established paddler's but brand new to the environment and to have that fundamental appreciation of what it is they're doing, what's the relationship between them, the craft, and the environment they're in. It really helps illuminate everything else going forwards and one of the things that I invariably get them to be aware of is the nature of Surfing. Fundamentally, we are sliding down waves.

It's as much a gravity sport as it is a water sport and I'll always make those paddlers aware of it. Back in the 70s, there was a group of indigenous surfers from the North Shore Oahu who formalized, as surfing was becoming increasingly popular, they formalized this group of indigenous surfers into a club and the club was called or it translated as the club, the slide, the wave. Or the wave, slide and club. And by getting people to understand that ultimately surfing is controlled and choreographed falling down waves getting back to the top, to do it All again, I think kind of sets in

people's mind what it is this they're trying to achieve and the ultimately, that's what surfing is. It's about harnessing that power, that energy of the wave that's throwing you forwards. They're using it to carve a line down the face of the wave. Get back up to the top and do it all again because it's amazing.

Lee Pooley 00:03:58

That's a lovely sort of view of what surfing is, but how would a novice, your description of that then could be quite intimidating or frightening couldn't it?

Tracy Sherrington 00:04:05

Yeah, initially, some people are in complete awe of what's going on at the surf because it comes across initially as so dynamic. There's so much going on and I think that's how the coach relates to the groups or to the individual as easing in them in, bit by bit, introducing them to all the different aspects. But in an order, so you're trying to introduce in to a new environment, trying to introduce them in safely, trying to introduce them in in a manor where they are going to feel as if they've got some control over what they're doing. And also introduce them to the fact that there's other water users, there's procedures and systems set up, and it's all very progressive, drip fed. Lots of fun, lots of enjoyment, lot and lots of doing and trying. And there's all sorts of, we're always saying, we're all on beaches together, a lot, uno be it at competitions or coaching, and we're looking at how we introduce these things, either by drawing pictures on the beach, watching everyone, playing games, having a go, we've got all sorts of things that we use to get people to go through the motions and maybe relate it to things they can already do. And then we've got little building blocks, we drip feed and add little bits on at a time to eventually, they're doing this wonderful, dynamic sliding on the wave that Chris is speaking about. Claire.

Claire Eatock 00:05:28

I was thinking Lee that we just need to be realistic. I spent a lot of time when the wave was catching me. I wasn't catching the wave but that doesn't mean that I didn't have the most immense amount of joy and it didn't matter what I was on. I could be swimming and trying to catch a wave with my body on a bodyboard on a sit on top. It's taken me a long time to progress to a surf kayak. So I think wherever you are at whatever stage, the great thing is you're only going to be washed one way and it's

gonna be on to the sand, and exfoliation. It's a cheap way of getting your skin look brilliant.

Tracy Sherrington 00:06:03

We've had great fun on a lilo actually, having surfing competitions in Gran Canaria. All the other people on holidays on lilos, and it's just the same principle. It was such fun and it's been great.

Lee Pooley 00:06:14

And Claire. Can I just sort of dig into that a little bit? You talked about a wave was catching me or I could then catch a wave. Could you sort of give some context for the listeners on that one?

Claire Eatock 00:06:23

Yeah. I think what Tracy said about progression is that when you're surfing, regardless how good you are, sometimes you can get to the stage where a wave will still catch you rather than you catching the wave. So we're always going to be caught out one way or another. The difference I think is when you get to a level where you can think I am deciding, I am making the decision, I'm making a decision about the power, about the speed, the direction. That's kind of when you're in a bit more control of catching the wave rather than the wave catches you. It takes you where it wants to go. You might not be able to control your craft very well. And that's where it's really handy to get hot tips from the people you're with from some really good coaches or even from something like this podcast.

Lee Pooley 00:07:08

Tracy you talked about building blocks. What would those building blocks be? So in your, you've probably got a whole bag of tricks and you were just sort of alluding to them anyway. What are those building blocks and does one feed into another?

Tracy Sherrington 00:07:19

Yeah, and you would take every single person as a unique person who's coming to the beach with a whole load of skills that they already possess. Even if they've never been in the surf. They might be accomplished sea kayakers or white water paddlers

and you're taking what they already understand, their spatial awareness, their understanding of edge, trim and angles and you're putting it into an order which helps them to feel like what Claire was saying, to feel in control. And that's the thing I think, if you're already an accomplished paddler from another discipline, and your transferring into Surf, you are good and skilful at what you can already do, but you are going into what seems like an alien environment to start with.

So there's little things that we do to introduce people, little drills that we do, we call it the safe position and show your bum to the beach, so that you're understanding when to edge, what to do with your body how to be safe and not possibly put your shoulders at risk or put other water users at risk. And we'll do all of these practices on dry land first of all, so that people get the feel they go through the motions with their body. They do it in a really safe environment. We'll split them up into buddies and one will set on the boat, on a little hump on the beach and you get them to practice how it feels to like put their boat on the edge and how to make themselves a sustainable base to support on the wave. And then everybody has a shot on the sand and then we go out into the white water and the surf, so we don't just like send people like away you go, it's all very controlled. They're in the white water. Maybe knee deep initially and their buddy is with them and they're holding them and they're helping them. The wave is coming. Okay, get ready, get ready, edge and lean yourself into the wave, use your paddle for support, and at that point, the coach is watching, making sure they've got their elbows up, making sure they're not exposing their shoulder to the unsure side. You're kind of progressively teaching them a whole host a new languages, new body positions, all sorts of things, that's just such a mix that it totally ignites everybody and it's so much fun. That initially people can be like quite apprehensive because it is so dynamic and it's never still and it's never flat, there's always stuff going on and it's just how to give people those tools to feel in control and then they'll start to progress as soon as they start relaxing into it.

Lee Pooley 00:09:45

And as experienced coaches, introducing novices, are we, are we wanting the most perfect conditions? Or could we learn in lots of different in terms of what the sea and the surf is doing at that time.

Claire Eatock 00:09:56

If you waited for perfect conditions, you wouldn't necessarily be surfing in the UK, would you?

Tracy Sherrington 00:10:10

No, no.

Claire Eatock 00:10:01

You could learn stuff in whatever condition you have. Whether it's knee-deep mush, whether it's windy, whether it's onshore, offshore, there's always stuff you can learn.

Lee Pooley 00:010:10

So we've got some building blocks. Yeah, we all can relate to how exhilarating it is catching a wave and almost getting carried away with the enjoyment. You'll see from others catching waves as well. So once people start to get to understand a little bit about, being able to maybe catch a smaller wave or operate in those environments. What sort of progressive exercises do you have for paddler's to both develop skill and confidence?

Chris Heaney 00:10:38

Okay, I think the next step on the journey Lee really involves understanding some basic principles because as you've alluded it is a really dynamic environment. Understanding how safety is managed in the surf environment, is gonna be the first one. So everybody is speaking a common language and understands the expectations. So everything from risk assessment, understanding what the wind's doing what the tides doing how the shape of the beach that you're on is likely to impact the tide as it comes in or as it goes out and how that will impact the waves and what affect Longshore drift might have, where the rips might be appearing, in the near future and the not so near future, the duration of the tide.

Understanding signals. So that people can be called back to the beach, at a more leisurely pace or in an emergency and then it's about creating opportunities for playing as Tracy suggested before. Depending upon what the individuals are bringing to us in terms of skills and experience. It's about creating activities that

challenge them, stretch them and give them an enjoyable experience, as well as develop their surfing skills. So we might start off on the beach, the beach offers us a great big drawing board effectively, so we can do images in the sand, representing waves, we can do three-dimensional things using sand to create lumps that represent waves or rips, to help with that understanding before we take anything into the surf. And going back to the point you made earlier, I think surfing really is, it's a natural playground. And good coaches tend to do that with quite gentle progressions, that create loads of opportunity for those safe enjoyable learning terms that we hear of in the coach education curriculums. so the Learners always have a positive experience.

Tracy Sherrington 00:12:23

I think at that stage, where people are beginning to, they may be still in the white water. But a bit further out. They're starting to understand, as Chris was saying, about their environment much more but they can keep their position on a transit. They're looking into the beach to get signals, back from the coach and these signals are normally pre-agreed, your signalling back about maybe more edge or from your body further forwards or be more diagonal and so we pre organize all these things before people go out and it might be you've got six people go out and they've got slightly different signals because they're all working on slightly different things. But these are things that you find out quickly, if somebody's not looking at you in the beach, they're not going to progress because their scope of sight is too far into their own boat. They need to be able to get their head up and get awareness of where they are in position on the wave and where they are in relation to the beach and whether they're moving along the wave and whether they're coming straight in.

So there's all sorts of things that we would do to progress people on from this stage. We've got all sorts of different little exercises that you would maybe sit up again. As Chris was saying, draw it all on the beach and explain to people okay, if we've got a big clock face in front of us, we don't want you to go straight in at 12 o'clock. We want you to try and gradually progress round the numbers in the clock face and see how that affects your boat on the wave. And does that make you run further along the wave or how does that impact you and so that's just an example of one wee

challenge, but we've got so many tricks. So people just have to come surfing and see and learn.

And I think quite often Lee, particularly working with those that maybe aren't solid rollers, perhaps it's their first time in a kayak in a surf environment. It can become quite a demoralizing experience if the duration of the surf session is spent dragging a swamped kayak, up and down the beach and rather than spending time doing the fun stuff. It just becomes arduous, particularly with those learners in the formative stages, we spend a lot of time, developing confidence understanding how you can rescue yourself or rescue a buddy, all of the work, all of the play, it's not work, it's play or all of that playing activity. It is generally carried out in water that's kind of knee depth, perhaps mid thigh depth at best. So we'll spend time on the beach, running through drills that enable the paddler to right themselves if they do cap size, rather than having to take spray decks off. Or as I said, we work reciprocally so that they'll have a buddy that'll be on hand to make sure that they're safe and looked after. Once they're able to do that. we'll move them into that shallow water with a coach perhaps out there as well, representing an outside marker, so they don't go any deeper than the coach. The coach has control over that and keeps people in that safe operating area. Then we start introducing games.

We're not talking about any technique, it's just about games. Stuff like getting people working in pairs, a partner who's not in the kayak, waiting in the water next to their buddy, they perhaps run for five strides, and the paddlers job is to then get to them, give them a high five and the partner runs off another five strides. All of the time, they're doing direction changes without even thinking about the paddler is working in that environment, their receiving waves hitting them from a variety of directions and all of a sudden, they're just quite unconsciously, becoming comfortable and confident even being in that space.

Lee Pooley 00:016:01

And Chris, you talk about you know, being comfortable in that space. And we've already heard around the different types of boats, is this something we obviously know the surf kayaks, do perform slightly differently to other crafts. And what's people's thoughts around, the types of craft that you may use as an introductory

session. And at what point do you start progressing them into close cockpit and then into a surf kayak. What's people's thoughts?

Claire Eatock 00:16:26

I think when first I started, I started in a general purpose boat and then it was all about how comfortable I was. And I think that's what all good coaches, don't they, they assess how comfortable the person is in their boat and how much they can progress and then when they get to a stage where they're comfortable, happy, confident, ready to go from say catching a wave rather than a wave catching them, trying to get down the number of strokes it takes to catch a wave, trying to know that they've got a good direction on the wave, then you might introduce either different techniques or different craft. Because one of the things we don't talk about enough, I think, is that surf kayaks, professional ones, are expensive. It's not the kind of thing that you're just going to go out and buy. I mean the cheapest plastic ones are still four or five hundred quid. So it's really handy if you can get yourself along to a club or any of the surf competitions and everybody in the surf community is really nice and have a go. And certainly don't commit to buying anything until you've had a go in a number of different crafts, from a number of different providers because they're all different and they all perform differently and your paddling style suits different kinds of boats. You can catch a cracking wave on a sit on top as well as high performance surf boat

I think Ian has got some really, I've seen Ian in so many different boats and he's the one who first explained to me about what a surf boat is, what a rail is, what the hull needs to look like and stuff. So be good to hear what he might have to say on that one.

Ian Sherrington 00:18:00

Thank you Claire. You make me feel older. And I would agree with everything you've said actually, that I think personal comfort is one of the things that we would always say. Because if you feel tippy in a boat, if you feel threatened in a boat, if you're just uncomfortable in it, you're not gonna be playing, you're not gonna be learning and it doesn't mean that you will be limited immediately by the boat. Some of the more high performance boats, you really have to work quite hard to be able to use them or

possibly even if you're not careful, you might come into them too early and there'll be a hindrance because you're so worried about balancing the boat and staying upright that you don't put your body outside the boat, which is what you need to do to sort of, to carve an edge. But the other thing I would say though, is that it's the idea of it being very individualized. So what we trying to do here is sort of suggest one pathway, whereas in fact if you've got people that freestyle kayakers, possibly slalom paddler's, there's people that are highly skilled in their own environment. And of course, they can come to the surf and have some real advantages there, very very early on. But I think we'd all sort of say, with our the experience we have, then we have a few thoughts around allowing them to play with a bit of guidance. encouraging them to do that. In the way that is safe for them and safe for others because we've been there, I've been there as a river paddler that first went into surf. I love being thrown around you couldn't throw me upside down and pull me around too many times. Yeah. I just loved it and I was like a dog with a stick but eventually, I realized, well actually I'm doing really well as being tumbled straight into the beach, having a great day here that probably went on for about three years I think and then at some stage I thought I'm gonna talk to somebody and get this thing to go sideways a bit and start to perform. So finding that safe environment and then starting to use, even those boats I've just described, you can use those in a different way. You can use those to carve an edge and move along a waves in a sort of more diagonal line and pump up and down, like we've all seen lots of pictures of board surfers doing. They won't be as efficient at doing that, as some of the more performancy surf kayaks, either with very sharp edges or rails as they get referred to or fins underneath to help them grip into the wave. They won't be as efficient to doing that, but you can get performance out of those boats by trying other things. Find a safe environment if you're a sort of a revhead in a freestyle boat, get it out your system and then learn to use the boats. I think that's what I would say. But that's the individualization of it. You'll have other people that really just want to be very stable, want to looked after, want to be very progressive and starting on a very stable sit on top as Claire sort of suggested there, I think that's a great option as well.

Lee Pooley 00:020:50

Just listening to you there Ian, you just describe many paddler's that there's other conditions that are not available. So they go to the surf or they go to the sea and

they visit but they actually don't get any better because they just get thrashed around and I'm actually thinking about myself here but with some coaching at that point that you actually start to get some coaching then you really do start to perform. Don't you and you start to work with the wave rather than just get pummelled. Because one of the things that I think's really sort of important, for probably, from an aspect, of people to understand from a coaching point of view and also participant is actually surfing can be quite physically demanding and draining can't it? So, what are your thoughts and processes around, can someone book someone for a day of coaching and survive physically for a whole day. What your thoughts around that and how would you break that up? And how would you ensure that people are hopefully maintaining a reasonable physical fitness to be able to enjoy the coaching session, enjoy the surf.

Tracy Sherrington 00:21:54

For us I think surf is one of the disciplines that you can, I've had people who are injured and on crutches come along, stand on the beach and bring a chair and they sit on the beach and they learn loads without ever getting on the water because you're there, you can coach such an amazing dynamic thing from the bank and you can wade into the water and be standing, knee deep, thigh deep and having conversations with people as they surf past you. It's so adaptable and we find that a lot, with running a lot of the women stuff, is people are so apprehensive about coming out, they're not fit, they can't roll, they're not this, they're not that, they feel the cold and it's like, we're in big jackets on the beach. We take big bags down the beach with us, we take chairs with us, and you can join in and paddle as much as you want but we do spend a lot of time off the water, you know as both Chris and Claire of alluded to, looking at exercises, drawing pictures and everybody learns in different ways and at different speeds and some people will just want to get straight in there and get thrown about and other people will stay back on the beach and they will run you ragged we questions for 20 minutes or people, you show them videos, we've got so many tricks in our bag that I would say out of all the different things that we all coach and we all coach skiing and all sorts of different things, that is so inclusive compared to some of the other disciplines. Because what Ian was seeing and what Claire was saying about the different crafts. I started off in a dancer, everybody comes in all sorts of plastic and as long as they're comfortable initially, I'm

sure that any of us would be able to get anyone hooked on it. And once people are comfortable and they want more, certainly in Scotland, we've got a fleet of very friendly long boats, that are specially really suited to people say if they're sea kayakers. They can come in and straight away it feels a wee bit more familiar with them, rather than putting them in some short very edgy boat with fins in. And that helps accelerate their learning from one craft into another craft because it's a crafted fair that looks after them. So there's just so many options in the surf discipline.

Chris Heaney 00:24:11

I'll build on that Lee and I'd say that surfing really does embody the principle of challenge by choice. Whether that's people engaging within their own confidence boundaries, their physical fitness boundaries, just they're willingness to be in amongst it and as Tracy said there, if you're not out there practicing skills and drills or playing games with partners. You'll can be stood on the beach, drinking hot chocolate and having conversations and just soaking all that good stuff up through osmosis almost. It's just a really person-centred way of developing your paddling. And as a kid growing up, it was surfing, really underpinned all of my you know, I do a bit of open boat paddling, I do some paddleboard, white water and surf these days, it just gives you such a strong foundation.

Claire Eatock 00:25:02

And on a practical note, it's one of the quickest paddlesports because your not, it's not like sea kayaking where you're going on a journey, you can do a half day or a full day. It's not like a river where you go from a to b potentially, and you have to sort out shuttles, like you can literally rock up, look at the surf, think actually it's not a day for going out back, it's a day for playing in the white water, or I've got a 20 minute slot before I have to go home and pick up the kids or I'm meeting my friends for a walk on the beach later. But I reckon I could get in half an hour before I need to get my dry robe on and the hot chocolate. It can do everything from short, sharp, to slightly longer but it is physically demanding regardless of what you're trying to do. So I always think of it like when you see a board surfer out there, they're not out there for more than two hours, generally. Like the hardcore guys can do a half day, etc., but when you're coaching surfing and somebody's booked in for a half day or a full day, you know that you're going to do a lot of beach work. You're gonna do a lot of getting

their brains working, their bodies working that doesn't necessarily involve getting cold and wet, but as a hobby, it is quick it is easy. You can do it in any craft as long as you keep yourself safe and you keep the people around you safe. So you don't go barrelling into them because you haven't a clue what you doing, which I've got to hold my hand up and say I've done, more than once. Always be ready with an apology, always be ready with a smile, always know your boundaries when you start off, but it is so accessible.

Lee Pooley 00:26:33

So, what we're just hearing right throughout this podcast, it's an extremely accessible discipline within paddlesport, which is fantastic. One of the things you that you just said there Claire is about safe. What advice would you give to someone that is, gonna drop down to the beach to have a paddle, maybe not with a coach. But what sort of things would you be advising because a lot of it is around playing about, exploring isn't it? So, yeah, what's the group sort of suggestions about keeping yourself safe?

Claire Eatock 00:26:59

I'll start us off then I'll pass on the guys with different experience in different places. Ideally you know your beach, so you know what state of tide you are, you know where the rips are, you know the safe places to go. I'm thinking if we all give a couple of comments each you'll probably get quite a lot. I'm gonna pass straight over to Chris now. What else would we look Chris?

Chris Heaney 00:27:18

If you're fortunate enough to live and to Surf on beaches that are regularly lifeguarded, go and speak to whoever's staffing the beach that day. Find out where it's safe for you to go, find out where somebody will keep an eye on your perhaps even. Get engaged with your local club. Most of our coastal based clubs will either have active Surfers or have connections with the respective surf committee. Whether that's north of the boarder, south of the border, over in Wales. There's also facilitated activity, various clinics going on, there's calendars of sessions going on all around the country. So there's loads of opportunity for people to link in with other people who are safe and do know what they're doing. Because the other practical aspect is

that if you do go surfing, in a place where you don't have that knowledge and understanding, ultimately it can't go very wrong. So it's about ensuring you have a robust framework in place to make sure that you're surfing safely for yourself and the people around you.

Tracy Sherrington 00:28:19

Yeah, absolutely Chris. I completely agree with both of you. There's so much stuff on the internet now as well that you can look up about surf etiquette, you can look up about certain safety because there is all sorts of guidelines that are based on safety for all water users about how we would conduct ourselves in the surf and especially now that it's so busy. I mean we used to go surfing places in Scotland and the majority of time we'd only see seals and otters, we would not see another sole. Where now, it's an array of water users, all shapes and sizes and you can very rarely go to water now and there's nobody in it and being able to conduct yourself in a friendly safe way so that you're not endangering yourself or anybody else is definitely the way forward for everyone. And it keeps everybody happy as well because we can actually be pretty threatening to other water users in a kayak. Charging towards them, if you're bouncing towards them out of control, you can thump into them. There's all sorts of things that we're probably more guilty of than other water users. So it's really good to, as the other guy said, reach out to things that are already being organized and people who already have the knowledge and arm yourself with some good knowledge to join in.

Ian Sherrington 00:29:36

If I can add one little exercise, that I think as coaches we would probably do every time we take a group somewhere. We would hold back from getting straight on the water. Even if an area. You probably arrive and before you get the boats off the roof or off the trailer, before you get changed, unless it was exactly what you're expecting and that's with a lot of experience you stand and watch it for 10 minutes. If somebody's watched a few videos online as well and learn about things that Chris was talking about earlier as well, rips, movements, movements along the shore, potential rock hazards that might be just under the water or might get exposed later, so might get covered later if the tide comes in and then be a threat because you've lost them.

And anything like that. If you've got a bit of knowledge like that then it's very old school, but get a bit of paper out, get a sheet of paper out and map the beach, map the hazards, map the dangerous stuff and then importantly, map the good stuff, Map where you'd want to be and where you think would be a fun place to be and a safe place to be. It's funny because sometimes you'll see, there might be a surf school there and sometimes you'll see they'll probably already have that sussed so that'll give you some indication of where you might be on another day if it's too crowded. Sometimes there'll be some Surfers out but they might be very experienced. They might be looking for a very exciting way. You might not want that because that might just end up you swimming. But it could also be that everybody's surfing as near as the car park they can because they can't be bothered to walk down the beach. That's pretty common actually, so if you can get a little bit of a plan view, you climbing up a sand dune, or whether you're, just for five minutes or whether you just stand on a road and sort of looking sideways onto a bay. If you watch for 10 minutes and say I'm just gonna map the hazards and try and think where I'd like to be, where I'll get my nice session today, it nearly always work for a while. It'll change over time with the tide of course, but if as Claire says, you probably not gonna be out there that long so keep sharp when you're out there but take a little bit of time. Because you might just sort of say, you know what, I'm gonna jump back in the car drive around the corner and look at that other bay because this is actually looking bigger than I thought when I first got here it was tiny, now I've seen a big set come through. I do not want to be out there when that set comes through. So 10 minutes should take in all of that.

Lee Pooley 00:31:49

Yeah, it's a you great advice and one of the bits that I wanted to you get your thoughts on is all of you are highly experienced coaches and been coaching surf for a long time. So, in a group session, how do you structure practice for people that can surf, need a bit of coaching? How do you structure that practice? And how do you create feedback opportunities in such a dynamic environment? And I'm going to go to Ian first.

Ian Sherrington 00:32:15

Okay, so there's a few parts to that. You very early on, when you're sort of with people, you'll describe zones within the surf. So it might be areas there might be we talk about the broken water. We talk about paddle out and then the paddling area and might be out the back as well. So out the back is a place beyond all the breaking waves. That can actually be a good place for more advanced paddlers to gather up and have a chat about what they're seeing in the waves or what they're trying to achieve.

So in terms of trying to manage people, then you can sometimes buddy them up or you can, as people become more talented, so long as they've got etiquette and by that, I mean, they're not going to all fight to go on the same wave. They're going to give each of the space. They're going to take turns and they're going to be able to read the environment well enough to do that. Once they can do that, you really can watch several people paddling at the same time and have signals to call them to you. Sometimes we'll stand on the beach, because as a coach you can really see pretty effectively from the beach. It's probably most of the time that's the easiest place to watch from.

And you'll just have a wave of a paddle, point at somebody, and your group knows they coming in. You train them actually, you make them every time they do a wave. They have to look to the coach first, because otherwise they get too excited and just whiz back out for another go. So you tend to do that. And then you might give them one thing to work on. And you might give them, you might have a bit of a rating scale that you can even sort of one thumbs up, two thumbs up, jumping up and down like a maddie. All of those are positive things by the way. You might be able to give them sort of an indication of when you think they've had success.

But sometimes you can operate from the water as well. Because actually it's quite nice to have, in all of that, in what sometimes seems a bit chaotic. It's quite nice for them to see a visual image. Of course it is. You might have done that explanation and now you try to show them where to sit, where to take off, how to run the wave. And then you can, as a coach, you can tell from the back of the wave actually a lot of the time. You don't have to be always looking from the front. You can tell how successful they've been. Or you can ask them the right questions. You say did you manage to do this? Did you manage to get your boat down to, in that diagonal run

that you just did. Did you manage to drop the boat down at the bottom the wave and get back to the top. Funnily enough, that's an easy one. If you sit down back, you see their head going up and now.

But you can imagine, as a coach, you develop ways that you've got indicators for their success and also very targeted questions that you just say. This is going to be easy. I'm just going to sit here and every time they come around. Okay how did you do on a scale of 1 to 10 there? Yep. I saw some of that but then I saw two on that wave and you said there was four. Okay, we'll need to watch a bit more. Yeah, you can gain that, you can develop that conversation very easily. And there's only really two places where you can usually talk and it's out the back or on the beach.

Occasionally if you got a nice reef break or something like that. There's a very very localized, which we have one. I won't say where it is because I'll be strung up by loads of surfers. We have one in Scotland that use occasionally and if you sit up to the side of that, you can see all of that and people just paddle circuits and you just give them feedback. That will be an ideal day.

Lee Pooley 00:35:33

Yeah. anyone else got thoughts on structured practice and creating, feedback opportunities.

Chris Heaney 00:35:36

I mean Ian has given us loads there. Another one might be the use of video in chunks of time or numbers of waves. But as a coach to be able to sit yourself on a harbour wall or on a pier or wherever and have that camera in a position that looks under the wave, agree with the surfer what it is they're going to work on for the next six waves. They go out, they're not time pressured. They're gonna go and work on that stuff and then you can come back and review. What the performance looked like relative to what was agreed before they went out and they're just seeing all of that information. They getting such an accurate understanding of what they're doing and using coaching apps that allow you to freeze frame to annotate imagery, all feeds into that understanding and then they go out and do it all again. And particularly when we're working with developing surfers that understand a peak or the peak, where they need to be and the things they need to be doing. It becomes really really

person-centred. If they go away, they do this stuff and then they come back and they collaborate with you on that feedback loop. You know, Ian alluded to the places where you can do that in Scotland. There's places all over the country and

Ian Sherrington 00:36:47

If I could cut back in Chris, just briefly, I think your dead right, I think, I mean video feedback is so useful in Surf. Unless you've got the perfect day, even pretty well developed paddlers will not achieve, will not be able to try everything even, every wave, they'll be desperate to try and do a particular move and get some feedback on it, but they'll not be able to do that every wave. They'll just not be in the right place on the wave or generate the right amount of power. So being able to video a session and then for them to watch that five, ten times at their leisure. But possibly with some other video or some diagrammatic of pointers to try and achieve certain things. I always found that there was one of those things, whether it was myself and another mates trying to develop our skill. The really, the most powerful days were when you got off the water slightly frustrated, you went away and watched the video and by the next session, the next afternoon or the next morning, you came back with such a powerful image in your head in determination to achieve something that you actually stood more chance of making the difference. I think early on, those feedback loops, that are quite quick and immediate and on the water, great for early development. Further down the line, I think you need time to review all of that and come to conclusions. But actually have the tool to make the difference as well. Now that takes a bit of time to sort of picture what that tool might be or feel what that tool might be.

Tracy Sherrington 00:38:13

Yeah. I was with a guy who's in the Scottish surf squad and he's now a fantastic surfer, but we were very similar as in, very very visual brain all over the place, all the time and I was trying to get him to calm down because it was so much going on and he's, pretty messy. And I had a notepad with me and I was just drawing a sequence of what it was doing just in a single squiggle flowing line. And he came in and he showed me what he wanted to do by a squiggle that was much more up and down and much, had much the steeper curves in it. And I said right well let's make that into a tune. And we turned into wee wee wee buff. And he went right yes! And I could

hear him out in the waves and he nailed it and I was so chuffed for him. It was brilliant. And so like we did, you can just give them words and it's just information. It's too much but give them a noise or something they relate to and it just explodes and it's brilliant.

Claire Eatock 00:39:19

I was going to be slightly controversial and say I think surfing is one of our paddlesports where you can be coach independent. Like you can go with your mates. And you can all say what you want to work on and all it takes and it doesn't have to be with another paddler, it can be a partner who doesn't paddle. It can be a friend who stands on the beach and watches you. Because you're often close enough in that somebody can say, if you can walk into the water and say right I'm trying to get the song that Tracy's just given us I'm trying to get that in the movement. Can bet your bottom dollar that somebody who doesn't surf could interpret that for you on the beach. And also by having somebody on the beach who's a non-paddler or just a mate, it means that you're not going to go out the back. You're not going to put yourself in danger. You're going to be coming back in for feedback. So you're actually can be coach independent. Because you can't, when you're trying to coach a group surfing it's hard to keep your eyes on more than six people. It just really is, whether you're on the beach or on the water. The experienced guys here in this room can do a lot of that. But for your average coach, who's maybe coaching multiple disciplines, then it's one of the sports where you can get people giving feedback to each other and they can do it really really effectively because you can feel it as well as see it. And we've got brilliant phones, nearly all the phones that are standard that everybody has in their pocket have got a really good chance of taking a clip of somebody on the beach, loads them are now waterproof. So you can have somebody on the beach and just showing you what you've done. So it's really versatile, isn't it?

Lee Pooley 00:40:54

I can just imagine that these discussions going on for ages of different ideas and giving people some thoughts on it. But we've come to that point that I'm gonna set you a bit of a challenge if that's alright. Before we sign off this podcast, I'm going to

give you a challenge. And this is for everyone is very short, why should someone take up the surf kayaking?

Claire Eatock 00:41:14

It's the most fun you can have in three seconds.

Lee Pooley 00:41:18

There you go, Claire's started it.

Tracy Sherrington 00:41:22

Just the speed and the flow is just so awesome. And your face will hurt with smiling.

Chris Heaney 00:41:27

I'm going to quote the kid behind the counter in the diner in Point Break 'It'll change your life, man'.

Ian Sherrington 00:41:36

I think we have a winner there. I was gonna say it probably has changed my life. That's a fair point Chris, in that it's something that you can do, you can get into when you're a bit younger and it can be an absolute sort of exhausting day out and a thrill. But I'm still doing it and I know you can't see me on the podcast and if you could I'd probably look about 21, but really I'm not and I can still do it and I'm still loving it. So I can't see a negative. I can't see a negative. It's just an amazing sport.

Claire Eatock 00:42:05

And what Ian's not saying is that he's still a champion. We have got people in the sport. We've got a guy called Gary who won the British Champs at the age of 17 and he won his section again two years ago at the age of, I'm not going to say, but pretty similar to Ian maybe. It's just phenomenal.

Ian Sherrington 00:42:24

Exactly the same.

Claire Eatock 00:42:25

It's just phenomenal. Everybody can learn from everybody else. It doesn't matter your age.

Ian Sherrington 00:42:31

I would say thought, if Gary was prepared to give up now. That would give me a better chance now, that'll be amazing.

Claire Eatock 00:42:36

Yeah, not a hope Ian.

Lee Pooley 00:42:40

I think anyone that's listening in, is absolutely, for me, this is just been a really contagious podcast of how enthused you are with the sport and want to see, not what, you want to see people will enjoy it, you want people to progress, but also how much it has changed you and, in terms of you. And in terms of it feels to me that surfing is your life which is lovely to hear. I really appreciate all your time that you've just given to this podcast. I do hope that we're able to get back together and do a part two because there sounds like there's so much more to explore. So thanks very much for your time and speak to you soon. Take care.

Ian Sherrington 00:43:20

Thank you guys.

Tracey Sherrington 00:43:21

Thank you.

Claire Eatock 00:43:22

Thank you. Bye bye.