

Rafting

Stadium Raft Racing Award

Award Description

This award is designed to introduce you to the raft racing specific skills which create an enjoyable and safe experience on artificial white water courses.

Extended Award Description

Your Stadium Raft Racing Award will give you the ability to enjoy raft training and racing on an artificial white water course. You will develop your raft movement control, pace and stroke technique to effectively apply in a team environment, as well as explore the factors which create a safe experience on the water. You will understand the correct use and set up of equipment and, through experience, expand your knowledge of official race rules and race tactics. Your award should be seen as a sound basis for independently building the experience and expertise associated with River Raft Racing Award holders.

Award Content

1. Location

When heading to the water we should have an understanding of our rafting location and how we will access it. Some factors we may consider are:

Factor: Water and weather conditions.

We may need to determine: What are the current water levels? What is the weather forecast for the time we are on the water? How might the wind speed and direction affect us?

Factor: Venue Rules and Restrictions



We may need to know: Are there any specific rules or restrictions for this venue? Who else will be on the water? What is the etiquette around fellow water users? Where are we allowed to access the water?

Factor: Access

We may need to know: Best lifting techniques and if any aids are available to help get the raft on and off the water. How can we work as a team to get safely in and out of the boat?

Factor: White water

We may need to know: What is the grade of the white water course we are paddling? Important features and parts of the course to be aware of? What support might we need?

2. **Getting Ready**

Before getting to the water we must choose suitable kit and equipment and have the correct knowledge to use it. Key points we may consider are:

What will we wear?

What are the clothing options available to us as rafters? How might external factors affect which clothing we choose? Are we confident in the use of our chosen personal safety equipment?

What will we use?

What are the different equipment options available and why might we choose one over the other? How do we use our equipment? What do we do if there is a problem with it?

Have a think about what additional equipment might be useful to have access to on the bank.

How else can we prepare?

What muscles will we be using and how can we warm them up before going on the water? What warm up techniques can we use when we get on the water?

Why is it important that we do this? What equipment might we need to aid our



warm up? Do individual people in the group have different warm up needs and how can they be met? What can we do mentally, as individuals and as a group, to prepare for our time on the water?

3. Working as a Team

Being part of a team brings additional considerations into play. We must be able to stay safe as individuals as well as having the ability to assist our team mates. An understanding of how each team member influences the overall performance of the raft is important.

Consideration: The team makeup

What we might observe: What is the size and demographics of the team? How might this affect when we train?

Consideration: Team Positioning

We may need to determine: How best to use the positioning of individuals to balance the raft? How can we use body positioning to balance the raft? How do people's experience levels affect where they are most effective? How does the raft look in the water?

4. At the Course

Before we paddle on white water we need to be confident in our ability to deal with the complications it may bring; both as individuals and as a team. Key skills we would need are:

Skill: Safety and rescue

We may need to know: How we can save ourselves and others from the water? What dangers might be associated with helping to save others? How do we perform a flip and re-flip drill as a team or individual? What equipment would we need for this exercise? Who will take control of the raft in event of a flip? How do we throw and receive a throwline? What are the risks associated with throwlines? How do we deal with the raft getting pinned against something?

Skill: Swimming the course



We may need to know: What are defensive and aggressive swim techniques?

When would we choose to use each of these? How can we maintain the defensive position when floating down the course? How would we time our breathing when swimming through features? What techniques can we use to make it easier to swim to the side? How do we know when it is safe to do this?

5. **White Water Rafting Skills**

When rafting we should be in control. Key skills to achieve that control include us staying relaxed, understanding the effect of moving water on our raft and knowing how to use pacing and steering effectively.

Skill: Choosing a line

We may need to know: What is the best line down the course? How might course features affect our journey? How do these features affect the flow of the water? How and when should we change our decision on the line we have chosen?

Skill: Pacing and timing

We may need to know: Where and when would we change our pacing and timing on the course? Why would we do this? Should there be a difference in our timing depending on our position in the raft? When should strokes change to negotiate features effectively?

Skill: Steering and strokes

We may need to know: What is the most effective steering technique on different parts of the course? How does a good stroke feel and what is the benefit of each stroke? What is the most effective steering technique for each discipline and pace? Which strokes and techniques can we use to correct a spin? What factors affect our ability to keep travel going when moving across stream? How can we spot features and use them to help us change direction? What skills can we use to help avoid impact or flips?



6. Raft Racing: Rules, Techniques and Tactics

Rules for raft racing are set by the International Rafting Federation. We should gain an understanding of the specific rules, techniques and tactics for each discipline to do well in competition. The ideal way to gain this is through experience on the water.

Racing Rules

We may need to know: What are the rules for each discipline? What is the scoring system? What is the start procedure? What actions can be penalised? How does the protest procedure work?

Techniques and Tactics

Discipline: Sprint

How will we use specific strokes and pace to our best advantage? How will we decide our quickest line? Where on the course can we gain extra time and how?

Discipline: Head to Head

We may need to know: How can we get or stay ahead of the other team? How can we prepare for impact with another team? How might we use tactical positioning on the course? How can we use eddies in our tactics? What overtaking manoeuvres might we use?

Discipline: Slalom

Width, angle and drive are key principles when approaching gates.

We may need to know: How does the width and angle of a gate affect how we approach it? What techniques can we use to negotiate gates? How can we use key markers on and off the course to assist our tactics? What can we do as a team to plan to deliver a good run? How will the team communicate during the race? How can we use our positioning, as a team, in the raft most effectively? What can we take from our first run to improve our second?

Discipline: Downriver



We may need to know: How can we get the raft to the water and enter and exit the water without losing time? How best can we defend our position on the course and flat water? Where are the best places to overtake and why? Why might we choose not to take a quicker line? Where can we gain time on the course?

7. After the Rafting Session

Every rafting session is an opportunity for learning and improving. We can create a positive impact on our future experiences by performing a good post-rafting assessment.

Discuss the experience: As we are working as a team, it is good to discuss how each individual feels the session has gone. What could we have done differently? What went well? Were other teams on the water; can we learn from them? How did our choice of equipment and team position affect the experience?

Consider what we will take away: We could also think about things from a personal perspective. What skills would we like to focus on next time? How do we feel our contribution affected the overall team performance?

8. Future Development

Each rafting session further expands our skills and knowledge, creating a more enjoyable experience on the water. With no two experiences ever the same, we never stop learning.

Our strength and skill in the raft can be improved by working on general health and fitness away from the raft. The right nutrition can benefit our performance, and knowledge about a good diet is important. Advice can be sought from coaches and nutritionists to help us with this.

When we reach a certain point in this, it may be worth considering moving onto the River Raft Racing Award.