



10 COACHING YOUNG PEOPLE

The information contained in this chapter is a culmination of the combined efforts of the BCU Young People's Programme, Phil Hadley, Sue Hornby, Lara Tipper and the coaches, volunteers and helpers who not only contribute to keeping our sport alive by nurturing and encouraging young paddlers but also, by sharing their experience and knowledge, are constantly improving the way we all teach and coach paddlesport. This chapter is based on a resource developed to support the BCU Coaching Young Paddler workshop, it is an introduction and is by no means exhaustive; it is up to you as a coach to constantly review and improve your coaching skills, to ensure you are an inspiration to the next generation of paddlers.

INTRODUCTION

Most coaches will probably spend a large proportion of their coaching career working with children and young people. It is therefore important that coaches understand that a different approach is required when coaching young people compared to coaching adults. In the past children were almost seen as 'mini-adults' and coached as such.

Children undergo massive changes in their physiological, psychological and cognitive development. The modern coach needs to understand how to utilise these changes in order to develop the talents of young potential athletes and to maximise their own coaching skills to enable them to provide stimulating, inspira-

tional and fun sessions for young people which will whet their appetites for a future within paddlesport.

Paddlesport is a hugely diverse sport which can cater for many tastes and abilities, from paddling on a pond to tackling raging torrents, to adventure and leadership challenges, individual achievement and teamwork, to competition and Olympic success – a fairly impressive range! In order to give young people the best chance in our sport we need to give our young paddlers a broad-based introduction and encourage them to be the best they want to be, in whichever discipline they choose.

▶ LONG TERM PADDLER DEVELOPMENT

Over the years researchers have identified key factors that encourage children to become long-term participants in sport and to achieve their full potential. In recent years the work of Istvan Balyi has strongly influenced many sports both in the UK and abroad with his Long Term Athlete Development Models. In paddlesport we are working to a framework of paddler pathways that encompasses these ideas for both competitive and recreational/lifestyle paddlers. Our aim is to give children the opportunity to achieve their potential in any aspect of the sport, should they so wish.

Balyi's LTAD model promotes sport as a valuable activity which is enjoyable and contributes to a healthy lifestyle. It forms a pathway of development, coaching and training opportunities that helps participants improve skill, and achieve their potential. The BCU have adapted the work of Dr Istvan Balyi to create a paddlesport-specific model that caters for paddlers from all disciplines and with varying levels of personal goals.

At each stage within the model, specific principles and guidelines for physical, psychological, technical, tactical and ancillary development are identified. Once competencies have been achieved at one level, they form the foundation for the next level. The model takes the paddler from basic to complex skills, from general to specific, and from beginner to expert. It considers what the paddler should be doing and when, providing the best possible programme to ensure individuals come into the sport, stay in the sport and achieve performances that reflect their potential/aspirations.

A basic summary of the model is included within Chapter 1 on page 20.

One of the underlying principles behind the BCU LTPD model is that the Foundation Stages focus on developing co-ordinated control and competence (physical literacy), quality skills, and help to prepare the individual for lifelong participation in sport. This aims to set the paddler up for a successful paddlesport career, whether recreational or high performance, competitive or non-competitive.

Ideally young people should pass through the Foundation Stages before they reach puberty. Any pre-pubertal child should follow these guidelines as the

first stages are all about skill development rather than physical training.

THE FUNDAMENTAL STAGE

Paddlers would follow the guidelines of the Fundamental Stage, for about 3 years, between the ages of:

- Girls: 4 to 9 years
- Boys: 5 to 10 years

The FUNdamental Stage should be structured and fun! The emphasis is on developing basic movement literacy and fundamental movement skills in a positive and fun environment, with a focus on the ABC's:

- ✓ Balance: Control of the centre of gravity and supporting base to create stable postures and steady movements.
- ✓ Co-ordination: Spatial awareness and co-ordinated movement.
- ✓ Agility: Balanced and co-ordinated movement at speed.



1a



1b

Photos 1a-b Quality movement patterns

As paddlesport coaches, we encounter many paddlers who fall outside of these age bands and have not had the opportunity to develop such skills. We need

to be able to recognise if an individual has these skills and how we can use our sessions to further develop them. This can be achieved on the water using games that develop the feelings of sliding, gliding, floating, spinning, spatial awareness, starting, stopping and stability skills. For example, games that involve getting in and out of the boat develop balance and the ability to transfer weight from a solid medium (i.e. the bank) to a moving object (i.e. the floating boat). Warm-up games, land-based exercises, or sessions in the gym are a really good opportunity to develop the other fundamental movement skills.

The BCU LTPD Pathway document states key outcomes for each stage. If most of these have been fulfilled, the paddler can move onto the next stage with appropriate goals set to cover any gaps.

PADDLESPOORT START STAGE

Age at start of phase:

- Girls: 7 to 9 years
- Boys: 8 to 10 years

Age at end of stage:

- Girls: 8 to 10 years
- Boys: 9 to 11 years

The key focus during paddlesport sessions at this stage is to provide an enjoyable introduction to the sport that enthruses people to want more!



Photo 2 Paddlesport Start Stage

During the Paddlesport Start Stage, young people should begin to develop a range of sport specific skills. Young paddlers should be encouraged to be involved in at least three sports in order to develop diverse and transferable skills across a broad range. During this stage of development young people are particularly good at learning skills, and coaches should ensure ses-

sions are focused on high quality skill development; this can be delivered in a structured manner and through fun and games.

The key paddlesport skills that should be developed include:

- ✓ A feel for how the boat moves.
- ✓ A feel for how the paddle and the body are used to create power, turning, balance and momentum.
- ✓ The ability to choose effective and efficient skills to manoeuvre the boat around the water.
- ✓ Correct posture.

PADDLESPOORT DEVELOPMENT STAGE

Age at start of phase:

- Girls: 8 to 10 years
- Boys: 9 to 11 years

Age at end of stage:

- Girls: 11 to 13 years
- Boys: 12 to 14 years

The key focus during this stage is still high quality skill development, and FUN, but taken in more diverse environments. It is recognised that varied paddling experiences will aid sound skill development. For example, paddlers should be encouraged to participate in a wide range of paddlesport, canoe and kayak, in different environments. This needs to be taken in context of local opportunities; it is obviously restricted by availability of venues, boats and coaches. Paddlers should be encouraged to specialise in areas where they show particular talent and interest.



Photo 3 Paddlesport Development Stage

Key paddlesport skills that should be developed in varied environments include:

- ✓ Sound forward paddling technique.
- ✓ Posing - looking good!
- ✓ A feel for how the boat moves and balances.
- ✓ A feel for how the body (upper body, lower body, trunk & core) are used to assist turning, power and balance.
- ✓ A feel for how the paddle is used for power, turning and support.
- ✓ The ability to choose effective and efficient skills to manoeuvre the boat around the water.
- ✓ Correct posture.

Paddlers should move on from this stage when they start puberty. This can be monitored through measuring their growth spurt (see Chapter 2).

RECREATIONAL PADDLESPORT

This phase of the LTPD pathway aims to provide guidance to those involved in 'recreational' paddlesport. It outlines how the principles of LTPD can be practically applied to help any paddler, no matter



Photos 4a-b Recreational Stage

what their age, ability, aspirations, or specific interest. It outlines the LTPD approach to helping paddlers build on the generic Foundation Stages to maximise enjoyment and satisfaction in the time they have available for paddlesport.

This is applicable for any paddler (adolescents and adults) wishing to achieve personal goals. Activities for children should always be focused around the Foundation Stages. Reference should be made to the Performance Phase, using the guidelines as a template for goal setting, toning the guiding principles to suit individual needs and cherry picking the relevant information. For example, a paddler identifies a need to improve their strength; they can refer to the Performance Phase to establish the most effective method of doing this based on their development.

The recreational stage is designed to help:

- ✓ Non-competitive recreational paddlers, e.g.
 - Enjoy a surfing holiday
 - Paddle class 3
 - Enjoy a family canoe camping trip
- ✓ Competitive recreational paddlers, e.g.
 - Gain promotion to Slalom Division 2
 - Enter a Peak Challenge
 - Complete the DW race

PERFORMANCE PADDLESPORT

The Performance Paddlesport Stages are applicable to anyone wishing to maximise their potential. They apply equally to the competitive and non-competitive disciplines and are split into three stages:

- ✓ Train to Train - develop skills and fitness
- ✓ Train to Perform - learn how to perform under pressure
- ✓ Train to Excel - produce the goods when it matters

We are only going to look at the Train-to-Train stage here, as the next two stages (Train to Perform, Train to Excel) are applicable to adults. The details of these stages are discipline specific and the age ranges can vary considerably from one discipline to another.

► Train To Train

Age at start of phase:

- Girls: 10 to 13 years
- Boys: 11 to 14 years

Age at end of stage:

- Girls: 12 to 15 years
- Boys: 14 to 17 years

Paddlers should follow the guidelines through this stage when they are passing through puberty. It is vital that height is monitored regularly to ensure peak height velocity can be pinpointed and training set appropriately (see Chapter 2).

Paddlers in this stage would be expected to specialise and use other sports and other paddlesport disciplines to help them develop as good all-round athletes. The focus during this stage is physical development of aerobic, strength and speed based on windows of opportunity. (See Appendix 1 of the BCU Long Term Paddler Development Pathway Document). Skill development is continued along with learning the finer details of the discipline involved.



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Photo 5 Train to Train

For further information regarding the BCU Long Term Paddler Development Pathway, please refer to the Pathway Document.



SEE ALSO

- www.bcu.org.uk

for Tables of the Stages of Athlete Development

- www.worldclass-canoeing.org.uk

for Physical, Mental/Cognitive and Emotional Development

The BCU website has links to other reading material and useful websites.

SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

There has been a lot of research carried out regarding participation in sport and why young people drop out of a particular sport or activity. Research conducted by Southampton University in 1996 concluded that less than 1% of all young people who are introduced to canoeing actually take up the sport. Considering how many children take part in taster sessions through adventure holiday organisations, BCU Approved Centres, school activity days, youth clubs, scouts, guides, etc, the number of people taking up the sport is probably way below 1%.

Over the past few years there have been numerous references to the 'tick box' mentality of today's young people, trying an activity, 'ticking it off' then moving on to the next. Another important recent change is the way technology has influenced youngsters' lives; computer games, internet and mobile phones can all contribute to less interest in physical recreation.

At the Institute for Outdoor Learning National Conference in April 2003, Rod Carr opened the Conference with a rousing keynote speech of "Converting a One-off Experience into a Lifelong Passion". He outlined that Outdoor Education was competing with the 'electronic bedroom' and the 'pick & mix' culture which we had to match by giving young people excitement, lively fun, young friendly instructors and also a realisation that some do not like to be scared or out of control.



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Photo 6 Social paddling scene

There are other factors which may detract from a young person's dedication to paddling, a newfound interest in members of the opposite sex, other sports and hobbies, peer group pressure, part-time jobs, school commitments or simply becoming bored with canoeing. With girls, a lack of female coaches or other female paddlers can often contribute to 'drop out'. As a child gets older, their perceptions of leisure and their interests change. As a coach it is important that you can adapt your coaching practice to ensure your sessions are fun, challenging and stimulating enough to inspire young paddlers to keep turning up to your sessions.

You may, at times, need to adapt sessions to meet specific needs such as:

Pleasure and enjoyment, friendship and acceptance, sense of achievement, demonstrate competence and independence, improving health and fitness, changing attitudes at different stages of development.

How athletes feel about themselves (self-image) is important. If they don't feel good about themselves in a particular setting they avoid that environment – they don't come paddling again, or do not perform to their potential. You play a large role in the development of an athlete's self-image.



GOOD PRACTICE

- Know their names and use them (first names) when addressing them.
- Establish eye contact.
- Smile - often and readily.
- Give approving nods, winks, thumbs up.
- Develop a 100 ways to say "well done" (and remember to add their name)!
- Applaud effort, not just results.
- Be enthusiastic, energetic.
- Involve them in decisions.
- Let paddlers assume leadership in an appropriate situation.
- Spend time with everyone.
- Give them responsibilities.
- Remind them of their achievements.
- Treat them as you'd like to be treated when you are learning or being evaluated on some new task or skill.



Photo 7 Friendly coach



SEE ALSO

Further details can be found in Sports Science texts such as:

- Physical Education and the Study of Sport, Bob Davis, Mosby, 2000.
- Science for Exercise and Sport, Craig Williams, David James. Routledge, 2000.

Or coaching websites such as:

- www.brianmac.demon.co.uk

► PHYSICAL FACTORS AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Refer also to the section on Growth in Chapter 1.

Physical growth is a process that is associated with steady increases in height, weight and muscle mass, whilst development refers to the functional changes that occur with growth. As we are looking to coach paddlers sometimes from a very early age, it is important that we have an understanding of paediatric exercise physiology.

GROWTH SPURTS

As children develop, they experience growth spurts where parts of the body grow at differing rates, the legs tend to grow faster before puberty and the trunk grows faster in the later stages of puberty. Adolescents can have disproportionately long limbs, and can appear clumsy and have difficulty in controlling their movements. These effects can often be minimised by co-ordination and agility exercises and supportive coaching. An example of this was when young tennis hopeful, Anna Kornacova could no longer hit the ball when her arms

had grown so much. She could easily have been lost to the sport if a coach had not understood the reason and worked with her to resolve the problem.

A major growth spurt occurs at the time of puberty. Around age 8 to 13 in girls and 10 to 15 in boys, children enter puberty, which lasts from about 2 to 5 years. This growth spurt is associated with sexual development, which includes the appearance of pubic and underarm hair, the growth and development of sex organs, and in girls, the onset of menstruation.

By the time girls reach age 15 and boys reach age 16 or 17, the growth associated with puberty will have ended for most teens and they will have reached physical maturity. Physical changes to the shape of the child also take place, boys develop wider shoulders as girls develop wider hips, boys gain muscle as girls develop more fat. These changes alter biomechanics of movement, change the centre of gravity of a child, and alter strength to weight ratios. This can lead to a post-pubescent loss of performance, especially in girls, which can be very frustrating and upsetting to the young athlete. Girls who found they could beat all the boys in, for example Lightning sprints at ten years old, could well be very disappointed to find that, as the same boys mature and become stronger, she can no longer keep up. It is important for coaches to be aware and sympathetic to these changes.

Another important consideration for coaches is that not all children develop at the same rate, there can be as much as four years difference in developmental age between children of the same chronological age. This is further compounded by the way we take a specific reference point for age qualification. For example, when the BCU Young People's Programme run an event, the age is sometimes taken at 1st September to ensure school classmates are together. Children in the same event may have almost a year age gap, therefore a potential five year developmental age gap. Coaches can quantify growth spurts by measuring young athletes at regular intervals. (See Appendix 2 of the Long Term Paddler Development Pathway Document).

BONE DEVELOPMENT

Bones develop from cartilage growth plates, called epiphyseal plates, at each end of the bone shaft. These growth plates divide the calcified head of the bone (epiphysis) and the calcified shaft (diaphysis). The bone lengthens as cartilage is calcified into bone on the diaphyseal border, thus lengthening the shaft. At the same time, cartilage continues to grow on the epiphyseal border, so the epiphyseal plates retain a



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Photo 8 They are on the same session but their biological ages vary enormously.

constant width of cartilage throughout. Growth ends when the plate eventually calcifies.

Growing bones are sensitive to stress so repetitive loading should be avoided. The epiphyseal plate is susceptible to injury and therefore a fracture to the epiphyseal plate prior to full growth could be a serious injury as it could disrupt bone growth.

A more common kind of epiphyseal plate injury, and the one coaches must take care not to cause, is called epiphysitis. This is a repetitive-strain injury that occurs when excess loads are placed on the tendons that attach to the epiphysis, causing an inflammatory response. The way coaches can avoid these kinds of injuries is to make sure that the young paddlers are using the right equipment. Long heavy paddles with looms so wide the child's fingers hardly meet are very likely to cause injury over long-term paddling as well as being very uncomfortable and unwieldy.

STRENGTH AND FLEXIBILITY

Strength is dependant on muscle type and size, hence as a child grows, their muscles enlarge and they become stronger. Smaller children are generally not only weaker but disproportionately so, therefore as

a coach you cannot expect them to perform strength activities in the same way as adults or more mature children. This is especially relevant when children are helping to transport heavy boats; better to have a little army working as a team moving boats one at a time than risk injury.

As far as training goes, it is a myth that children should not participate in resistance training until they have stopped growing due to the danger of damaging the epiphyseal plates of the growing bones. The risk is only an issue if the young person is lifting exceptionally heavy weights, i.e. maximal lifts, or if they don't have enough rest between resistance sessions. (Children should undertake a maximum of three resistance sessions per week; remember some paddling sessions will be classed as resistance work).

There are far more arguments to promote the concept of young people undertaking resistance training:

- ✔ To strengthen muscles / tendons / ligaments and bones to prepare the body for the demands of paddling and to reduce the risk of injury.
- ✔ To learn correct techniques involved in lifting weights.
- ✔ To learn how to train safely with weights and develop a training concept.
- ✔ To reduce muscular imbalances developed as a result of paddling.
- ✔ We need strong sitting muscles for paddling, without which a poor posture and ineffective paddling technique can lead to back problems.
- ✔ The shoulder joint needs a strong set of balanced muscles to keep it stable.
- ✔ Resistance training can be used to develop the muscles neglected by paddling and help create a balanced muscular system. Wherever there is muscular imbalance there is a risk of injury.
- ✔ Strength training as a youngster makes the bones stronger by increasing bone density and reducing the risk of injury. This is especially good news for the girls, as high bone density can decrease the risk of osteoporosis in later life.

Paddling puts a heavy demand on the muscular system, a suitably designed strength-training programme can help develop these muscles, forming a strong base... safely. The demands on strength are far greater on the water than they will be during appropriately designed resistance-training sessions on the land.



Photo 9 Youngster strength training with coach.

Pre-pubertal children will become stronger from resistance training, by making improvements in movement efficiency, learning movement patterns and through improved muscle activation. The muscles do not increase in size because of training, but become better at doing their job.

Think low weight or no weight before puberty, with an increase in weight and decrease in reps after the growth spurt. Be aware some children may experience a strength 'lag' during the growth spurt and so may not be as strong as their physical size might suggest.



Photo 10 Youngster flexibility training (poor hamstrings).

Flexibility and stretching are very important to improve range of movement and reduce risk of injury, however because the epiphyseal areas of immature bones are prone to damage through over-stretching, it is important that the coach adapts sessions to avoid ballistic or bouncing stretches. It must also be appreciated that when the growth spurt begins, a sudden lengthening of the bones, tendons, ligaments and muscles occurs; this can cause the body to become tight, stiff and prone to injury. It is therefore important to include flexibility training into the young person's training.

(See Appendix 1 of the Long Term Paddler Development Pathway Document for details of the Strength Window of Opportunity).

THERMO-REGULATION

The body needs to maintain an optimum operating temperature to function properly; as we exercise we burn calories, producing excessive heat that is then dissipated through increased blood flow to the surface and evaporation of sweat. Children have a large surface area when compared to adults and so are not so efficient at maintaining their optimum body temperature. They overheat very quickly, sweating more and so becoming prone to dehydration and heat exhaustion. In cold conditions they lose heat quicker than an adult. These points are very relevant to us as a capsized on a hot day can take a young paddler to potentially dangerous extremes very quickly. All canoeists are aware of how much heat is lost through the head, so a child whose head is proportionately larger than an adult's is especially vulnerable and on cold days should wear some sort of insulating hat.



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Photo 11 Appropriate headgear for the conditions.

AEROBIC/ANAEROBIC CAPABILITIES

Aerobic exercise in simple terms is low intensity, prolonged activity such as marathon paddling. This is sub-maximal and if repeated often with rest periods will result in increased endurance fitness in both adults and children. Adolescents' aerobic systems are particularly trainable; aerobic work should be specifically trained from the start of the growth spurt for approximately 4 years. (See Appendix 1 of the Long Term Paddler Development Pathway Document for details of the Aerobic Window of Opportunity).

Anaerobic exercise is high intensity, short duration, bursts of activity, this utilises carbohydrates stored in the muscles without the use of oxygen. This has the side effect of producing waste products such as lactic acid, which result in fatigue. Children often do not cope well with this sort of training and a coach should use it sparingly until a child's capacity for anaerobic work has gradually increased. It is generally better



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Photo 12 Youngsters doing short sprints.

to increase a child's fitness aerobically. Pre-pubertal children should work hard in the 5-15 second range, and over 2 minutes, but avoid 15 second – 2 minute length sprints / hard work until after puberty.

INFORMATION PROCESSING

There are three stages to learning a new skill, these are:

- Cognitive phase - Identification and development of the component parts of the skill.
- Associative phase - Linking the component parts into a smooth action.
- Autonomous phase - Developing the learned skill so that it becomes automatic.

The learning of physical skills requires the relevant movements to be assembled, component by component, using feedback to shape and polish them into a smooth action. Rehearsal of the skill must be done regularly and correctly. In the first phase of learning children are concentrating very hard on the movement, hence it appears 'jerky' or unco-ordinated, and parts of the movement are missing or incorrect, such as not twisting the paddle shaft between alternate strokes resulting in one blade constantly skimming the surface and the boat spinning. Young paddlers rely heavily on coach feedback at this stage. Simple commands such as 'right', 'wide', 'low', 'twist' may be repeated until the child starts to advance into the next phase. In the associative phase, feedback can be delayed a little to allow the performer to experiment and experience the way the skill is working, however incorrect technique does need to be corrected during this phase.

PRACTICE MAKES PERMANENT NOT NECESSARILY PERFECT

In the final phase the skill can be produced time and again without much thought, allowing the performer



Fig. 1 Skill Development

to concentrate on tactics, strategies, reading the water etc. The performer should not need so much feedback now as they should be in a position to recognise their own mistakes and correct them accordingly.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The stages of skill development are outlined in Fig. 1.

► Rudimentary Skill Development

During the first two years of life children gradually develop voluntary movement control. For example, they develop the skills to crawl, walk, stand, sit, reach and grasp. By 12 months most children are walking independently and achieve a mature walking gait by 5 years of age.

► Fundamental Skill Development

Once a child has learnt to walk, a door is opened to a completely new world. Improvements in balance and co-ordination mean the hands are no longer required for support and can be used for a whole range of new skills.

The movement patterns for these skills are usually at a proficient level by the age of 6-8, but often take longer to reach a fully mature state; this is especially true of the skills that require higher levels of co-ordination, i.e. catching or hitting.



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Photo 13 Fundamental skill stage

► Specialised Movement Development

The fundamental movement skills form the foundation upon which more complex movements and combinations are subsequently formed. Through practice and instruction the fundamental movement skills are refined and developed, the basic movement patterns are integrated into more complex skills that are fundamental to many games and sports.

Within paddlesport we can categorise the generic foundation skills as in Fig. 2.

It is vital that high quality skills are developed during the childhood years, these will stay with the paddler for the rest of their life.



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Photo 14 Specialist skill development

REACTION TIME AND CO-ORDINATION

Children have slower reaction times than adults and so cannot react to situations as we would. Their co-ordination is sometimes lacking, especially during growth spurts therefore they often struggle to perform smooth and accurate motor tasks. When setting tasks the coach needs to be aware of these limitations, making the tasks fairly simple initially, with few decisions to be made by the young person, e.g. simplifying polo rules, making the pitch smaller, gradually making slalom courses more complex, and explaining the importance of lining up for the next gate.

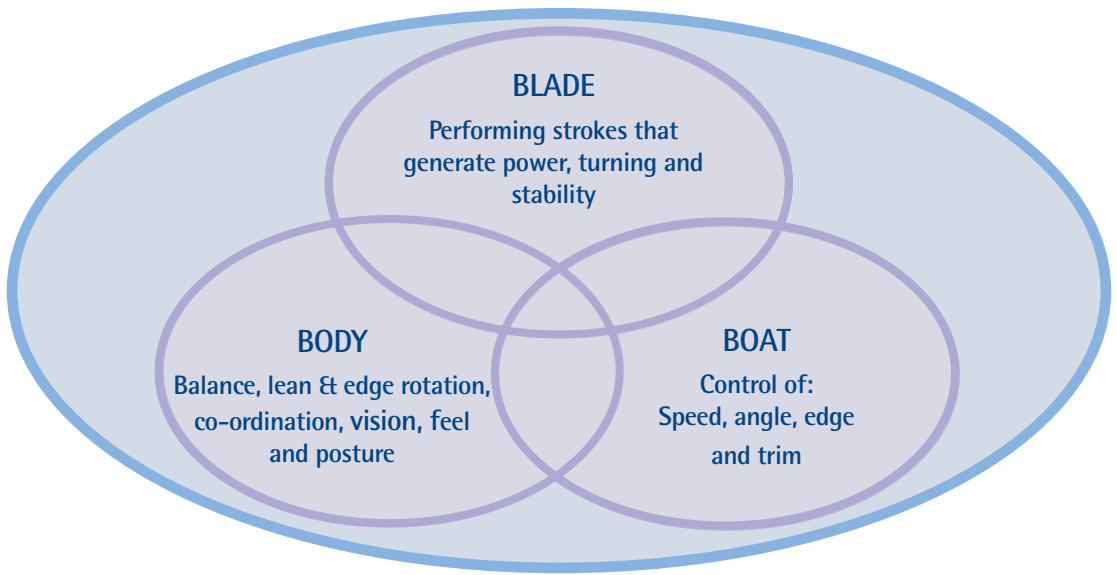


Fig. 2 Generic foundation skills in paddlesport

ADAPTING SESSIONS FOR YOUNG PADDLERS

As coaches we need to be aware of the limitations of young paddlers; with reference to the previous sections try to think about considerations you would make when coaching young paddlers. For example, one issue that has been raised on a number of occasions is high kneeling C1 and C2 paddling; the general consensus of opinion is that the young paddler should alternate paddling sides often during training. Ergos are often used to develop technique with close

feedback from the coach; this allows the paddler to concentrate purely on one element of paddling without being distracted by the boat wobbling or going off line etc.

In specific disciplines with their unique potential problems it is vital that you keep abreast of the latest research and best practices.



SEE ALSO

Further details can be found in Sports Science texts such as:

- Physical Education and the Study of Sport, Bob Davis, Mosby, 2000.
- Science for Exercise and Sport, Craig Williams, David James. Routledge, 2000.
- Motor Learning and Performance, Richard A. Schmidt, Craig A. Wrisberg, Human Kinetics Europe Ltd, 1999.
- An Introduction to Sports Physiology, Martin Farrally, Coachwise Ltd, 1995.
- Or coaching websites such as www.brianmacdemon.co.uk.



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Photo 15 Correctly sized equipment



EXTRA CONSIDERATION

Some groups of youngsters require a little more consideration:

- **Girls:** As previously mentioned, girls develop differently to boys and as a result sometimes lose proportionate strength. This, coupled with hormonal changes, can make them self-conscious around boys and so sessions may need to be adapted to take these needs into consideration. Girls often respond better to female coaches. The BCU is currently piloting a scheme called Girl Power.

- **Gifted and Talented:** As a coach you have a moral obligation to place a young athlete where they are most likely to excel. Sometimes this is difficult for a coach, to 'lose' a promising athlete to another club or coach.



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Photo 16 Talented youngster

- **Low Performers:** Some children are not quite so quick to learn as others. Slow things down, break the skills into manageable chunks, make the sessions fun and reward effort as well as results.

- **Disability Groups:** This is a complex area, but one that should not be overlooked, the BCU is keen to encourage anyone to paddle, and so runs disability awareness courses. The key issue is to see past the disability and concentrate on the paddler. Young people with learning difficulties especially gain personal self-esteem and experiences from paddling sessions. As a coach you should be able to find ways to enable anyone to paddle. See BCU Canoe and Kayak Handbook.



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Photo 17 Ethnic groups

- **Ethnic Groups:** Some religions and cultures make participation in sports difficult for some youngsters, parents sometimes discourage their children from playing certain sports. A lack of swimming ability or inbred fear of water, sometimes makes paddling seem an impossible pastime for some children. It is important to reassure both the parents and the children that the sport is safe, and discuss any misgivings either may have. Special consideration may need to be given to religious practices.



KEY POINTS

- Your sessions should be youth focussed and paddler centred, each paddler should be treated as an individual and sessions will need to be differentiated to allow everyone to benefit from coach input.

- Children are not mini-adults.
- Every child is different, some develop quicker than others, each one is an individual case.

► COACHING YOUNG PEOPLE

Coaching children can be highly rewarding. You should be having fun and the children should be having fun! This doesn't only mean splashing and falling in the water. Having fun is achieving a goal set by the coach, managing to keep the boat in a straight line, getting around a slalom course cleanly, winning a medal for the club, etc. There is tremendous satisfaction for a coach when young paddlers do well, but you must remember to keep your sessions enjoyable.

COACHING CHILDREN

You may have many years experience of coaching children or you may be a novice. Below are listed some guidelines that may be useful.



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Photo 18 Working with a group

► Response And Adaptation To Exercise

Give a correct warm-up. Young children do not need to realise it is a warm-up, it could be in the form of a game. The warm-up should be activity specific; that means that some of the warm-up should be done on the water. The best warm-ups start with some cardiovascular activity to raise body temperature and so warm up muscles and prepare not just physically but mentally. Dynamic flexibility and mobility must play a large part in the warm-up.

Finish the session with a cool-down, including gentle paddling and static stretches - this may reduce muscle and joint tightness throughout the week.

Children become warmer earlier than adults when exercising, this affects hydration. It is therefore very important that you stop your group for a short water break every 20 minutes.

Whilst the children may not be under your direct control at meal times continually stress the importance of good eating habits, you are what you eat, exercise needs fuel. The most important meal is breakfast. Don't forget it is very important to eat after exercise, preferably within twenty minutes, and consisting predominantly of carbohydrates.



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Photo 19 Water bottles lined up on the bank

Sleep is of paramount importance also, please stress this to young paddlers.

► Learning Techniques And Developing Skills

Do:

- ✓ Work within the children's limitations.
- ✓ Explain what they are trying to do clearly and simply.
- ✓ Demonstrate - suggest how they might do it.
- ✓ Instruct through visual information as well as verbal information.
- ✓ Give enough time for practice.
- ✓ Be patient and correct errors one at a time.
- ✓ Communicate slowly in simple terms, with one key factor or sub-skill/component at a time.
- ✓ Keep corrective feedback simple - no paralysis by analysis.
- ✓ Point out the important things to attend to.
- ✓ Help children evaluate their own performance through effective questioning.
- ✓ Keep practices shorter with younger children.



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Photo 20 Smiley coach

Don't:

- ✗ Expect too much too soon.
- ✗ Give them too much to think about.
- ✗ Talk in technical jargon: who are you trying to impress?
- ✗ Be critical when giving feedback: be positive.

Psycho-Social Development

Do:

- ✓ Try to achieve maximum involvement for everyone.
- ✓ Be sensitive to the adolescent who seeks independence and identity.
- ✓ Give confidence by encouraging children to try new things.
- ✓ Give everyone some success during a session.
- ✓ Pay attention to everyone, not just the 'stars'.
- ✓ Change the rules to suit.

Don't:

- ✗ Expect children to understand the activity completely.
- ✗ Put them down for trying.
- ✗ Make children specialise too early.

WHAT DO CHILDREN LIKE IN THEIR COACHES?

Young athletes have preferences about how they are treated and the sort of things they like in their coaches. In principle, it is important to treat them with respect and not as if they were objects. They like you to listen and take notice of their feelings and opinions.

A recent series of interviews with 140 young athletes in different sports gives an idea of those aspects of coaching

which young athletes think are important. The opinions that were given may change according to sex, age, and sport. These are just the general comments:

- ✓ **Knowledge** - Coaches should know their sport well and most children prefer coaches who have participated in the sport. It provides them with credibility.
- ✓ **Personality** - Children like coaches who are friendly, happy, patient, understanding and have a sense of humour.
- ✓ **Authority** - Children like coaches to be firm but fair, and while boys particularly, like to be worked hard, they don't like to be shouted at.
- ✓ **Taking personal interest** - As they get older and more able, many young athletes like coaches to take an interest in the things they do besides sport.
- ✓ **Reaction to performance** - When they do well, children like the coach to say "Well done" but they don't like them to "go over the top." (OTT) When they do poorly, they like to be given some encouragement and told what went wrong. They want to be told how to correct mistakes and not to be shouted at or ignored.
- ✓ **Encouragement** - Most children, particularly in team sports, like to have the coach shout encouragement to them when they are competing.
- ✓ **Decision making** - Few young children express a wish to have a say in the decisions which affect them; they expect coaches to coach and trust them to make the right decisions. As they get older and more experienced, they are more likely to want to be consulted. This may be the case with 13+ children.
- ✓ **Organisation** - Children like coaches to be organised and present structured coaching sessions. They also like them to take responsibility for seeing that they are in the right place at the right time.
- ✓ **Instruction and feedback** - Children do like to be shown what to do, how to do it and to have mistakes corrected. In short: teach them!



SEE ALSO

- Coaching Children in Sport: Principles and Practice, M.J. Lee, Spon Press, 1993.
- Working with Children (Introductory Study Pack) Coachwise Ltd, 1996.

BCU Coaching Young Paddler Workshop - details from BCU, e mail: youth@bcu.org.uk

► BCU YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROGRAMME

The BCU Young People's Programme aims to tackle the challenges and develop strategies to provide a comprehensive paddlesport programme that meets the needs of young people in the 21st century.

The key aims of the programme are:

- Translating taster activity into regular paddling.
- Supporting clubs and centres to develop safe, effective, child-friendly programmes and encourage better links with each other.
- Helping clubs, centres and other organisations to develop quality programmes that offer a range of paddlesport experience.
- Recruiting and training more volunteers to provide quality experiences and coaching to young people.
- Providing more opportunities for young talent to improve and progress.
- Provision of appropriate equipment for youth, locally and regionally.

The BCU Young People's Programme has developed a number of initiatives to support the above – such as the Paddlepower Scheme, Cadet Leader Award, Top Club, Diamond Slalom Award, and the Curriculum at Key Stage 2 & 3. To assist with implementation there are a number of part-time Paddlesport Development Officers (PDO) working at a local level and who can help providers who wish to develop more opportunities for youth.

Details of all BCU YPP initiatives can be found on the youth pages of www.bcu.org.uk.

PADDEPOWER

Paddlepower is an exciting scheme which has been designed to meet the needs of young people. Its colourful and youth-centred approach is aimed at the under-16 age group. It comprises of progressive levels to take the paddler to just beyond 2 Star standard.

For more information see BCU website.

CADET LEADER AWARD

The Cadet Leader Award aims to encourage and introduce young people into leadership roles within paddlesport, through a training programme based at their own club, centre or the organisation where

they paddle. Many young people have much to offer their club, bringing a variety of skills, willingness, enthusiasm, and provide a valuable role model for younger paddlers. This scheme hopes to encourage their involvement, development of skills and recognise those already helping out.

See Cadet Leader Award Syllabus on the BCU website.

CLUB DEVELOPMENT AND ACCREDITATION

Clubs play an important role for young people in paddlesport. To support clubs to develop safe, effective child friendly practices there are currently two main schemes which lead to accreditation. These are the BCU Top Club Award and Sport England Clubmark Award. Together these schemes provide a kite mark to recognize clubs across sports, agencies working in sport, local authorities, schools and for parents.

Clubmark is the new club accreditation scheme across sports which has been linked to the BCU Top Club scheme to meet the needs of our clubs and paddlesport. This means that a club can gain accreditation for both schemes at the same time.

Both schemes are based on the principle that clubs demonstrate:

- ✓ A commitment to young people.
- ✓ Provision of safe, quality activity and coaching programmes.

For clubs that have achieved the standards it gives public recognition. For clubs that wish to improve what they do it is like a blueprint/model to help and guide which areas to work on. The Top Club award is not just for clubs - BCU approved centres can work towards the award.

To enter the Top Club programme you should contact your PDO or the Young People's Programme at BCU Head Office. For further details of the Top Club Criteria see BCU website.

DIAMOND SLALOM CHALLENGE

Based on the Diamond figure formed by 4 slalom gates, it is the ideal way to test boat handling skills and to practise those strokes needed on moving water, whether taking part in a slalom or just paddling down a river. It has been designed to fit into a one-hour pool session and can be used as a goal setting and motivation tool for young paddlers and, whilst aimed at 8-12 age group, it has proved to be very popular with all age groups.



Photo 21 Diamond slalom

XSTREAM CHALLENGE

This is a great new challenge to help young people develop better moves in their boat – and have FUN! There are lots of different formats which include free-style, slalom and polo – including spins, limbos and ball work.

XStream (pronounced cross stream) can be done individually or as a team – and can be set up in a swimming pool or at your club. Each challenge is marked out by slalom poles or buoys and there is a set course to follow.

THE PERCEPTION WAVEHOPPER CHALLENGE SERIES

A fun series of events are held around the country, which are run by the BCU Youth Programme to introduce young people to Wild Water racing. The races are either over two short runs or one slightly longer run. The age categories are U12 (under 12), U14, U16 (on 1st January). It's great for learning more about rivers and developing skills... even better, it's challenging, fun and exciting!



Photo 22 Wavehopper

Wavehopper Kayaks can be provided through the community boat scheme; contact your Regional Paddlesport Development Officer for details. To find out more about the Wavehopper Kayaks, please visit the Perception website at www.perception.co.uk.

PYRANHA LIGHTNING CUP SERIES

The Lightning Cup is a series of Sprint and Marathon events, timed to run alongside some of our main National Sprint and Marathon competitions. The regattas are designed to cater for youngsters (boys & girls) under the age of 12 and who are not competing in the main event. The aim of these events is to encourage the participants to train, improve and to compete together.

To find out more about the Lightning K1, please visit the Pyranha website at: www.pyranha.com.



Photo 23 Lightning

THE BELL BOAT

The Bell Boat is a team boat for all, which has been used by every section of the community. It is 9m long and the catamaran design makes it very stable. This enables safe transportation of up to 8 adults or up to 14 children plus a helm/coach. It can be used by all ages and abilities. It truly is a boat for ALL!

The Bell Boat is ideally used as a school on water and gives those taking part a greater understanding of teamwork, individual strengths and co-operation. Above all, it's fun!

► Bell Boat Events

The BCU Young People's Programme run a series of Bell Boat events throughout the year around the country. These are fun events in which all ability levels are welcome. There is also an annual Bell Boat National Championships each year with prizes for age classes and scout/guide groups. For more details see Events, on the youth pages of www.bcu.org.uk.



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Photo 24 Bell Boats

THE BELL BOAT HELM AWARD

This award is specifically aimed at teachers and youth leaders to enable them to take children and young people on the water. A person with no previous paddling skills can qualify as a helm after a 2 day course (this includes 4 hours first aid). Courses are available through the Coaching for Teachers scheme. For more details of the Bell Boat Helm Awards, and Coaching for Teachers see the youth pages of www.bcu.org.uk.

ACCESSING BELL BOATS

There are a number of “community” Bell Boats around the country which can be accessed on agreement with the organization where they are based. For details of location and see Community Bell Boats on the youth pages of www.bcu.org.uk.

Bell Boats can be purchased new direct from the manufacturers - for full details and prices contact Main Sport on 01386 861034, Fax 01386 861008.

PADDLESPOORT AND THE CURRICULUM

► Paddlesport At Key Stage 2

Paddlesport can meet many aspects of the Key Stage 2 Curriculum and not just outdoor and adventurous activity. Aspects such as games, history, geography, science, technology and, importantly, environmental aspects can be enjoyed more through taking the classroom onto the water.

There is a BCU booklet which is full of ideas and guidance entitled *The Curriculum at Key Stage 2 and Watersports* which includes 10 resource lesson plans.

► Paddlesport At Key Stage 3

Paddlesport can meet the requirements of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3 in Outdoor & Adventurous Activities, Athletic Activities, Games.

► Paddlesport At Key Stage 4

Canoeing can be an integral part of your curriculum. The various disciplines within the sport cater for all demands made by the National Curriculum at Key Stage 4. All you need is access to canoes and the water, appropriately qualified coaches and the willingness to offer your pupils the excitement and diversity of the sport.

As with KS3, various aspects of the National Curriculum can be easily and comprehensively met. Outdoor and Adventurous Activities comes quickly and easily to mind, but other aspects, sometimes overlooked, can also be included:

Games are played in canoes up to international level - canoe polo.



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Photo 25 Youngsters playing a non-contact variant of canoe polo.

Running with your arms in linear, competitive and recreational events, the same as other linear athletic activities - marathon and sprint canoeing.

Inclusion of the activity as part of Duke of Edinburgh Awards is also popular.

GCSE Examinations are also included in the possibilities for your pupils. All examination boards have specifications including canoeing, and if contacted can advise on content and assessment procedures.

Clubs are only too happy to help with candidates wishing to use canoeing as part of their GCSE, and Paddlesport Development Officers can offer further advice and help.

PADDLESPOORT DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS (PDO)

These are professional staff (mostly part-time) whose role is to initiate and facilitate activities to promote and support the development of youth opportunities and progressions in paddlesport. They work with clubs, centres and youth organizations and run a range of workshops and events for coaches and youth.

Contact details for PDO's can be found on the BCU website.

FURTHER READING

How to Help Children Find the Champion Within Themselves, David Hemery 2005

Physical Education and the Study of Sport, Bob Davis, Mosby, 2000.

Science for Exercise and Sport, Craig Williams, David James. Routledge, 2000.

Motor Learning and Performance, Richard A. Schmidt, Craig A. Wrisberg, Human Kinetics Europe Ltd, 1999.

An Introduction to Sports Physiology, Martin Farrally, Coachwise Ltd, 1995.

Coaching Children in Sport: Principles and Practice, M.J. Lee, Spon Press, 1993.

Working with Children, (Introductory Study Pack), Coachwise Ltd, 1996.

WEBSITES:

www.bcu.org.uk

www.brianmac.demon.co.uk

www.worldclass-canoeing.org.uk

BCU YOUNG PEOPLE'S PROGRAMME

Phil Hadley, Sue Hornby and Lara Tipper

Sue Hornby enjoys paddling now just as much as when she started 35 years ago, whether it's competition or recreation, on flat water, white water or the sea! This has taken her around the world and includes winning medals at World WWR Championships, competing in 9 World Championships, taking the first GB Ladies Team to compete in the Molokai Hoe Outrigger Canoe Race and being a member of the River Fraser Kayak Expedition on the first descent in 1981. Sue has worked in personnel, coached the RYA Olympic Windsurfing Squad, manufactured throw bags and currently works for the British Canoe Union as Head of Young People's Programme.

Lara Tipper started kayaking when she was 10 years old and has been driven by the sport ever since! Under her belt she has achieved successful international slalom and freestyle results, Level 5 Coach, and has had the experience of paddling some of the best white water around the world. She now works for the BCU on the Long Term Paddler Development project and coaches white water paddling and coach education on a freelance basis.

Phil Hadley is described in Chapter 4.



Sue Hornby



Lara Tipper