

## 4 Star Freestyle Leader Training Notes

### Technical Syllabus

#### Part A1 – Core Elements

The following core elements are integral to the execution of the core skills. Although the paddler needs to work towards evidencing the following core elements (A1) within the core skills (A2), it is also realised that the core elements can also be developed and demonstrated in isolation. Below includes examples of how this may be done.

##### A1.1 Warm up and down

Warm-up is about the ability to prepare both body and mind for the activity to be undertaken. This may take place a number of times during the session.

Warm-down is about the ability to effectively aid muscle recovery and reduce sport-related injuries.

During training paddlers will be introduced to integrated warm-up, warm-down and stretching techniques. This should take place before, after and during breaks in freestyle sessions.

Paddlers should gain an understanding of the following key principles:

- The benefits of warming up, warming down and stretching.
- How to utilise warm-ups between breaks in activity.
- How to integrate flexibility training as part of the warm-up and warm-down process.

##### A1.2 Mental rehearsal

Mental rehearsal is about the ability to apply fundamental tools that can be used to improve and enhance learning and performance.

During training paddlers should be introduced to foundation skills in mental rehearsal that can be used to improve and enhance their learning. These skills should be introduced within the warm-up and then further developed between breaks in activities. A short session will be initially used to provide foundation tools that help the paddler when visualising simple tasks. Paddlers will progress towards rehearsing relatively simple skills using kinaesthetic imagery and words or phrases to serve as cues or triggers for desired actions or behaviours.

##### A1.3 Posture and connectivity

*Posture is about the ability to adopt a sitting position that allows a greater and more powerful range of movement. This also helps prevent sports injuries and fatigue.*

*Connectivity is about the ability to efficiently transfer the paddler's energy to and from the boat in order to perform freestyle manoeuvres.*

During training the paddler will develop the understanding that being fully connected to the boat will lead to a good transfer of energy between the paddler and the boat. Outfitting should still allow

the paddler's full range of body movement as required. Paddlers should try simple activities to experience the positive and negative effects of good and bad posture on the body's range of movement, for example the difference in ability to raise the arms when sitting in either a slumped or upright position.

#### **A1.4 Rotation and synchronicity**

*Rotation is about the ability to wind up and unwind the torso to generate rotational momentum and torque through a pivot point.*

*Synchronicity is about the ability to move the upper and lower body independently yet co-operatively to perform freestyle manoeuvres.*

During training paddlers should work on the phasing of the lower and upper body to perform smooth edge transitions thus gaining the necessary understanding of synchronicity. The main focus will be on further developing the paddler's ability to pre-empt the point the body needs to add work energy to the desired momentum, thus having to utilise their rotation to generate this. Paddlers will also explore the effects of increasing and decreasing momentum around all rotational axes.

By the end of the training course paddlers should have a fundamental understanding of the relationship between body movement and the effects this has on the boat.

#### **A1.5 Intensity and relaxation**

*Intensity is about the amount of energy being transmitted. Maximum intensity is not necessarily the optimal level for performance.*

*Relaxation is not necessarily the opposite of intensity; relaxation and intensity work together in complementary ways to bring out the best in the paddler and their performance.*

Together they are about the ability to free the body to perform in a powerful yet flowing way.

During training paddlers should explore the 'feel and force' principle. This is the ability to apply power whilst staying relaxed and not negatively impacting technique (this will include methods for how to better reflect on performance and identify if paddlers are too tight or tense). During training progressive muscle relaxation will be introduced. This involves systematically tensing and relaxing groups of muscles throughout the body. The paddler will then begin to feel the difference between tension and relaxation and will more easily be able to choose the 'relax' option when needed.

#### **A1.6 Control, balance and paddle dexterity**

*Control is about the ability to use the core muscles to control the boat's edge and trim.*

*Balance is about the ability to maintain static and dynamic stability both proactively and reactively.*

*Paddle dexterity is about the ability to adapt the use of the paddle to meet the demands of the environment whether proactively or during reactive measures.*

During training paddlers should be introduced to a range of flat water exercises to further develop their stability around the boat's various balance points, including balancing vertically on the bow and stern of the boat.

### **A1.7 Methods of position and set-up**

*Position is about the ability to manoeuvre to a pre-determined point on the feature.*

*Set-up is about the ability to set-up with the correct position and angle required to initiate the desired manoeuvre once on the feature.*

During training paddlers should learn how to effectively set-up for manoeuvres through the tactical application of the following 4 methods of positioning: dynamic edge transfers whilst in a side surf, rapid cutbacks to gain position, controlled spins to elevate the boat into position, and basic vertical manoeuvres to gain position.

### **A1.8 Methods of initiation**

*Pre-initiation is about the ability to pre-establish momentum to assist the initiation of the manoeuvre.*

During training paddlers should gain experience in adapting their flat water skills to the moving water environment. This should include how to generate pre-empted momentum without relying on the current to take the ends of the boat downstream.

### **A1.9 Methods of release/momentum**

*Release is about the ability to release the boat from the feature by an explosive combination of edge and trim.*

*Momentum is about the ability to generate the required body movements to perform the desired manoeuvre.*

During training paddlers should learn the concepts and skills behind generating release, and be able to separate the boat's hull from the wave or hole during a manoeuvre. Aerial manoeuvres are not the main focus at this level, although the ability to generate full or partial release from the water is required. The paddler should also understand how the body's shape and form affects the boat's momentum during this phase of the chosen manoeuvre.

### **A1.10 Methods of recovery**

*Recovery is about the ability to efficiently and effectively complete the manoeuvre, correcting any faults within the manoeuvre, and maintaining the feature.*

During training paddlers should develop the ability to maintain orientation and adapt their techniques to re-establish boat control during the manoeuvre recovery phase. This may be done through land-based activities and simulations.

### **A1.11 Linking ends and manoeuvres**

*Linking ends is about the ability to effectively perform multiple ends under control and balance.*

*Linking manoeuvres is about the ability to put manoeuvres together whilst ensuring technical elements of each individual manoeuvres are not lost during linking.*

During training paddlers should develop the ability to link ends (combining bow and stern initiations to effectively perform multiple ends under control and balance). Once the paddler can link ends they should move towards developing the ability to link manoeuvres. Paddlers are expected to link no more than two manoeuvres at a time; the focus being on maintaining the characteristics of individual manoeuvres.

It is not expected that paddlers will be able to perform linked ends or manoeuvres during the training course, but they should know how to go about this process and work towards their assessment.

## Part A2 – Core Skills

All the core skills that follow should be broken down into their core element phases of set-up, initiation, release/momentum and recovery for the paddler to learn and practice.

### A2.1 Rolling

The ability to back-deck roll is required at this level. However, it is appreciated that this skill may be new, or have been learnt in a swimming pool and rarely done outside. Therefore, helping paddlers transfer this skill into an open water setting is important. Paddlers are not expected to learn to roll during the initial two-day course. However, at the end of the training course, paddlers should be clear on what needs to be done to achieve a consistent roll.

Environment: Grade 3 white water.

Behaviour: Effective roll on one side and beginnings of the roll on the less preferred side.

Capability: Synchronicity, posture, connectivity.

### A2.2 Entering and exiting play features

During training paddlers should experience the following:

- Paddlers should leave training being able to cross eddy lines and fast flows to catch surf waves or holes from a variety of ways. This will include from the side and above. The importance of using waves to cross fast flows should also be highlighted.
- Paddlers should be able to exit a play feature under control and regain an appropriate safe eddy. The concept of using and reading the water with the idea of looking for 'future water' should be understood and evident.
- Paddlers should leave with a clear understanding of the varying tactics for using different types of eddies to gain access to play features whilst descending the river.

Environment: Grade 3 white water.

Behaviour: Crossing eddy lines and catching features with reasonably regular reliability.

Capability: Posture, intensity and relaxation, control, balance and paddle dexterity.

### A2.3 Cartwheels

*Cartwheels involve performing two consecutive ends in the same rotational direction, whilst retaining the feature. Both ends should be at a vertical angle of between 45° and 100°.*

During training paddlers will initially learn to flat water cartwheel. Paddlers will work towards achieving 'smart-wheels'; that is, relying on good technique (feel and force) and not pure muscle. The training will then focus on the paddler understanding the dynamics of the stopper and modifying their flat water cartwheel to respond to the demands of the specific feature. The initial goal will be on bow and stern initiations, progressing onto linking two ends and finally performing 3 linked ends.

Environment: Grade 3 white water.

Behaviour: The cartwheel should achieve an elevation of more than 450 and consist of 3 consecutive ends (the paddler should perform 3 ends on their preferred side and two on the non-preferred side).

Capability: Set-up, initiation, momentum, recovery, control, balance and paddle dexterity.

### A2.4 Split-wheels

*The split-wheel contains elements of the shuvit and involves performing two consecutive ends (above 45°) whilst changing direction (180° rotation) between each end.*

During training paddlers should develop a firm understanding of the manoeuvre and feel comfortable with its motions on flat water before practicing in a hole.

Environment: Grade 2-3 (hole)

Behaviour: Paddlers should demonstrate two consecutive ends, with a change of direction between them.

Capability: Set-up, initiation, momentum, recovery, control, balance and paddle dexterity.

### A2.5 Front loops

*The front loop is a vertical front flip initiated and finished between a horizontal angle of -20° and 20°, landing in the hole or on the wave.*

During training paddlers will be introduced to the front loop in two main steps. Firstly, land-based rehearsals. This may involve breaking down the manoeuvre into the following actions; plug (initiation), stand and reach (release), tuck and somersault (momentum), and finally unwind and push through the feet (recovery). Once the paddler has a solid model of the actions they can begin to develop the skill in a hole. The paddler must understand the dynamics of the hole and modify their front loop to respond to the demands of the feature.

Environment: Grade 3 (hole).

Behaviour: The boat should vertically flip with a lateral deviation of no more than 20°. The loop should be recovered rapidly maintaining the feature.

Capability: Set-up, initiation, momentum, recovery, control, balance and paddle dexterity.

## A2.6 Front and back surfing

During training paddlers will be introduced to the wave power band concept, to identify the best areas on the feature to surf and perform manoeuvres. The initial training will focus around performing sharp cutbacks (carving back and forth from one ferry angle to another) in the top quarter of the wave, identifying the optimum place to generate release and dynamically loading and unloading the four quarters of the boat. Once the paddlers are familiar with the wave they will begin working on back surfing and reverse cutbacks.

Environment: Grade 3 (wave/hole)

Behaviour: Paddler should be able to establish a controlled front and back surf at any point through a run, using both carving and braking stroke techniques to keep the boat out of the trough.

Capability: Position and set-up, posture, connectivity, rotation and synchronicity.

## A2.7 Blunts

*The blunt is a fundamental building block of all aerial manoeuvres and contains elements of the front or back pivot turn. The blunt involves a dynamic change from front to back surf (or vice-versa) elevating the stern or bow through an arc of 45°-60° to land in a back surf or front surf.*

During the training phase paddlers should work towards maximising weight and edge transitions to release the stern or bow. The provider will provide both land and water-based exercises to assist learning. Initially paddlers will focus on set-ups before progressing onto the initiation, release and recovery phases.

Environment: Grade 3 (wave/hole)

Behaviour: The bow/stern should snap under the paddler quickly followed by a recovery stroke to retain the feature.

Capability: Set-up, initiation, release, recovery, control, balance and paddle dexterity.

## A2.8 Competition routine

Paddlers should be shown how to create a routine by chunking moves together in two's.

During training paddlers will begin to work towards performing a 45 second run to score 4 moves; these should be in the current British Canoeing / ICF competition scoring moves. At least 2 moves should have a base score (prior to addition of any bonus) of 30 or more from the current rules.

Environment: Grade 2-3 hole/wave

Behaviour: In a 45 second ride perform 4 moves from the above skills.

Capability: All.

## Part B - Rescue Skills

The emphasis for the paddler is that they can work towards becoming an effective member of a team. This would include being able to look after themselves and others while paddling on grade 2(3) white water.

Paddlers to act as the rescuer, including taking responsibility for the rescue.

B.1 Demonstrate skilful application of appropriate boat and bank-based safety and rescue skills:

- Swimming and self-rescue
- Throwline rescue
- Rescue a capsized, swimming paddler and their equipment

These core white water safety skills are key to the successful rescues. Training should highlight the British Canoeing White Water Safety and Rescue (WWSR) Training course that is required for assessment.

Paddlers should have a range of tactics for the grade 2(3) environment and should have skills that allow them to lead a group and provide appropriate rescue cover from both boat and bank.

The British Canoeing WWSR course covers these core skills, however, it does not cover the leadership element, which will therefore be covered on this training course.

### B.2 Incident management and first aid appropriate to the environment

Paddlers need to be able to deal with first aid incidents within the moderate white water environment. Providers should focus on practical application of first aid skills including what and where to carry first aid supplies.

### B.3 Effective team leader

Paddlers need to be able to be an effective team leader. Training should cover practical skills in leadership tactics both on and off the water.

### B.4 Team member in rescue and incidents

Paddlers need to be able to lead a group through a rescue incident. This would include the use of the group, positioning & knowledge of equipment to solve the incident.

## Part C – Safety, Leadership & Group Skills

### C.1 Group control and management

During the assessment the paddlers should show they have the experience and judgement required to safely lead a small group (maximum of 4) of competent paddlers on a 500m section of grade 2(3) white water.

During training paddlers should experience the following:

- Identifying hazards.
- Choosing suitable lines for the group.
- Choosing suitable freestyle features for the group.
- Being an active member of the team.
- Prompt and suitable decision-making.
- Positioning during communication and pre-empting issues.
- Use of signals for effective communication.
- Setting appropriate session timings for the group and determining when to rest, hydrate and eat.

It is important that paddlers learn how to add to the group dynamic, which enables swift decision-making, clear communications and positive outcomes.

## **C.2 Personal risk management**

Paddlers should experience making decisions, and understand their options and how to manage the outcome successfully to ensure a safe, fun, freestyle session.

## **C.3 Awareness of others**

During training paddlers should gain the necessary skills to be aware of what is occurring in the environment around them and know that, whilst not responsible for the action of others (not in their group), they still have a duty of care and must work together to help each other if a situation where to arise. Through this an appreciation of safe practice in freestyle should be gained.

## **Part D – Theory / Knowledge**

Throughout the training course providers will provide a broad range of information that covers all aspects appropriate to the level of the award.

Topics that may be covered include:

### **D.1 Equipment**

The paddler should gain knowledge and experience of using a range of equipment. Know how and why equipment has evolved and how best to use it.

### **D.2 Safety**

Training should provide paddlers with the knowledge of up-to-date safety requirements for the moderate water environment, as well as an understanding of hydrology and how to use this while river leading or choosing a freestyle feature to suit the group's varied ability levels.

### **D.3 Weather**

The paddler should know how to understand and interpret weather forecast information from a variety of sources and how this affects the decision-making process.

### **D.4 Wellbeing, health and first aid**

Training should ensure that paddlers have the right level of first aid training and know how to apply this training to the moderate water environment

### **D.5 Freestyle environment**

The paddler should have an appreciation of the environment we paddle in this should be a key underpinning principle.

### **D.6 Competition**

The paddler should have an understanding of the basics of UK competition structure and rules, including the roles and responsibilities of the GB Freestyle Committee and International Canoe Federation.

### **D.7 General**

Paddlers should gain an understanding of the types of paddlesport that they are involved in as well as the range of options available to those that they will be leading.

### **D.8 Etiquette**

The paddler should understand and promote a positive image for paddle sports with other river users and local residents. They should also be aware of the British Canoeing Code of Conduct.