

Winter Training – Make it Count

The secret to enjoying winter training and persevering through those cold dark mornings and evenings is to view the winter as an opportunity to reassess your goals and initiate a training plan which will see you come through the winter fitter and faster than ever, ready for a fantastic season.

No matter whether you are an aspiring Olympian, starting your first season as a division 9 marathon paddler or a 10-year veteran of the DW, there is always room for improvement and the basic principles are the same for everyone. Top athletes use the information shared with you in this article to achieve their potential, I hope some of the ideas inspire you to try something different this winter and help you progress through those dark winter sessions.

Goal Setting

To stay motivated during the winter months and make as much progress as possible it is essential to know the purpose behind each session, why are you training, do you want to improve or are you happy with how you are performing each year?

I believe the most important thing is to enjoy your sport, if you are committed to becoming fitter or faster and want to get the most from your winter training to enhance your performance next year I suggest that you work through the following with a pen and paper. Keep your notes handy and when it is particularly cold or dark you can remind yourself of what you have committed to do.

Step 1: ~ decide on one large *DREAM GOAL*, something you would like to achieve next season. When deciding on your goal try to make sure it is **SMARTER**:

- **S** Specific Detailed as possible i.e. complete a certain race, do a certain time for 1000m
- **M** Measurable A quantifiable distance or time
- **A** Achievable A realistic level of improvement
- **R** Relevant An obvious connection to your goals.
- **T** Timed A specific date by which the goal will be reached
- **E** Exciting Something which inspires or motivates you
- **R** Recorded Written down

Step 2:~ Assess your current performance / ability in those areas which will aid you in achieving your goal, i.e. assess your strengths and weaknesses. For this you need to be very honest. There are 5 broad areas that will affect how you perform in just about every sport: TECHNICAL, TACTICAL, MENTAL, PHYSICAL and LIFESTYLE. Each of these can be further broken down into many more specific factors. The table below includes a few examples of the components that make a successful kayaker.

Technical:	Tactical	Mental	Physical	Lifestyle
Leg drive	Race plan	Positive approach	Endurance	Dietary factors
Positive catch	Start procedure	Mental toughness	Strength	Sleep patterns
Hip rotation	Wash hanging	Perseverance	Power	Hydration
Recovery hand	Re-hydration strategy	Visualisation	Flexibility	Stress @ Home/

position				work
Trunk rotation	Portage procedure	Loving adversity	Core conditioning	Family / work / sport balance
Posture & Head position	Race day plan (meals, warm up, start times, travel etc)	Recognising limiting beliefs (and removing them)	Range of motion	Social life
Blade exit	Race experience / knowledge	Self confidence	Power endurance	Excessive Drinking!

These examples are not definitive but give you somewhere to start from. You should include as much detail as possible specific to achieving your dream goal. The list will be different for a endurance paddler to a sprinter or white water athlete, especially in the physical and technical areas. Once you have your list, rate yourself out of 10 for each component. With 1 indicating little or no ability or commitment and 10 indicating that you are as good as you feel the 'ideal' athlete needs to be to achieve your chosen goal. For instance if you kayak in division 8 and would like to move up to division 5 look at the best examples of athletes in this category and compare yourself to them, how do you score if they are a 10 in each of these areas. Be honest and realistic, you may rate yourself highly in several areas which is great but we are also interested in the ones which you find yourself lacking.

Step 3: ~ Knowing your dream goal and having a true assessment of where you are in relation to achieving that goal, highlights the areas of improvement needed. This knowledge allows you to form your *PROCESS GOALS*. These are the specific actions you must implement to move you towards achieving your dream goal. Process goals should as much as possible be **SMARTER**

“Work on your weaknesses whilst playing on your strengths”

Sometimes it can seem like you need to improve in an overwhelming number of areas, it is important to pick those areas that will have most impact on your performance. Typically it is advisable to pick 3 or 4 process goals to focus your commitment on at any one time.

When motivation is low remember that the cumulative attainment of your process goals will make the likely hood of you achieving your dream goal far greater by equipping you with the necessary skill, fitness and metal attitude to succeed.

Examples of Process Goals

Outcome Goal	Olympic qualification @ European Champs may 2004		Ian Wynne 2004 GOALS		
Performance Goal	In ideal conditions 1.36.00 sec		Win Britain's First Olympic Medal in K1 500m		
	Fitness	Tactical	Technical	Mental	Lifestyle
Process Goal (WHAT)	Improve High Lactate Tolerance	Improve Starts to keep in the race early 1st 100m in less than 19.5 sec	Speed of catch improve top recovery hand	mental imagery & removal of limiting beliefs	improve diet
HOW	1. Discuss with coach training plan 2. increase lactate tolerance sessions 3. Regularly test and monitor sessions to make sure I'm in the zone	1. Pace control sessions 2. Practice starts every session 3. improve race plan 4. spot markers on course before event	1. Feedback from coach 2. Exercises on water 10' each day 3. improve concentration	1. visualisation 2. Use relaxation techniques 3. expand realm of possibilities	1. Eat as much organic as possible 2. Increase protein intake to 80% 3. reduce refined Carbs 4. Hydrate, Hydrate
WHEN	Jan-April	Jan - April	Jan - April	Jan - April	Now

Step 4: ~ So now you have a dream goal, motivation is high and you have a very good idea of which areas you need to improve on. Its time to make a plan, one that keeps you focused and heading towards your goals throughout the winter. For the majority of canoeists their process goals will focus around fitness & endurance, speed, strength, power, flexibility and technique. Remember that training is a very personal thing, dependent on the ability of the athlete and the event they are training for, it is therefore impossible to give specific guidance on how to plan winter training however the following considerations may be useful.

WINTER TRAINING

Every session you do should build on the last one, this is why it is vitally important to plan ahead and have several weeks of training written down in advance so you can see where you are heading with each session, when you decide on the night what the session will be, it is easy to lose focus. When developing your training plan you have to be realistic about the amount of time you are going to commit to it. Your time commitment together with the identified process goals will allow you to prioritise the sessions most beneficial to you.

PROCESS GOAL: to improve endurance Training session focus: ~ increase aerobic capacity
Session should include a minimum of 40 minutes effort, this time can be divided into bursts of effort typically between 3 to 8 minutes and with a short rest, typically around 1 minute.

e.g. 10 x 4 mins on 1 min rest

e.g. 5 x 8mins on 1 min rest

tips: all efforts must be done at a **CONSISTENT** pace, rather than for example race one rest one, which reduces your 'effective' training time by half

PROCESS GOAL: to improve boat speed Training session focus: ~ speed session

It is important to include some speed sessions regularly throughout the winter. The general guidelines for such sessions is short efforts up to about 1 minutes with longer rests, typically 3 times the time of the effort.

e.g. 1 min on, 3 mins off x 10

e.g. 30 min on, 1 ½ min off x 10, rest, then repeat

tips: Be as powerful as possible whilst maintaining very good technique.

PROCESS GOAL: Improve technique Training session focus: ~ technique drills

The drills you do will be dependent upon those areas of your technique that have been identified as needing improvement. For some people their process goal this year may be to seek advice on their technique from more experienced paddlers or coaches, who can help identify specific drills relevant to weakness in your technique. Whilst your technique should always be thought about during every session, specific technique sessions are often run near the bank so your coach can comment and keep an eye on you. For those of you with no coach you can ask fellow paddlers to comment on the areas you are trying to improve upon. For example when sitting on a paddling machine look for symmetry of arm movement, is your head still or rolling around? Are your shoulders level? Do you have good leg drive and trunk rotation?

PROCESS GOAL: improve flexibility & core strength. Training session focus: ~ land exercises.

To minimise the risk of injury and maximise the power you can deliver per stroke it is important to include some land based training. You don't need a large amount of space or any fancy gym equipment to perform many beneficial exercises. This is a great time to change what you have always done and add some variety to your land training. You can try:

E.g. Swiss ball press ups. Keeping your feet on the floor, place your hands on the ball so that your chest is positioned over the apex. Lower your chest to just touching the ball and return to arms

extended, try 10 reps x1- 3 sets. This will help build strong shoulders and core strength that can be transferred back into the boat.

Tips, Do not bounce off the top of the ball, you must maintain a rigid body position with no sagging. Keep the area clear of obstacles around you in case you fall off!

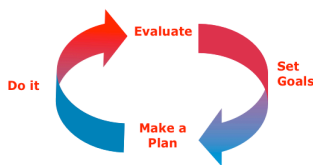
E.g. Rather than the usual easy chin ups on a fixed bar which allow you to cheat somewhat with excessive body movement! Try them from individual handles or a swinging bar (or rope). This will help you maintain good form and be super effective at conditioning your shoulder stabilisers.

E.g. Hamstring stretches. Very important component to your posture in the boat and looking after your low back when training, effective hamstring length will allow a good leg drive and hip rotation whilst reducing excessive rounding of the low back allowing for better trunk rotation.

Training is a way of pushing your body to new levels of physical stress or demand so that during the rest periods you will adapt and then be more capable of achieving those levels next time, thus showing an improvement. This works in both ways so if there is no stress from training no new levels, then your body will adapt back to the current level of stress (or lack of) you are imposing upon it, and therefore show no improvement. This is why it is so important to get the right balance and variety for each individual person to keep progressing, both in the amount of stress you give yourself in training and the amount of time resting and recovering

“If you always do what you have always done, you will get what you have always gotten”

When writing out your plans remember to reassess your progress and plan on a regular basis so you can keep adapting to any change in circumstances, this will help keep your enthusiasm and motivation high. The diagram below details the basic principle behind any improvement cycle.



When river conditions and the weather seem intent on making your life miserable you will do well to remember that there are lessons and growth in everything we do, when you always hide from the bad weather instead of getting used to it I can almost guarantee that on race day the weather will test you again (remember the DW this year and all the sprint regattas!) one phrase I learnt when training for the Olympics was “learn to love adversity” with this attitude you will be ready to face and enjoy the delights of training through a British winter.

If I was asked what the most useful piece of advice I could give regarding winter training it would be plan, plan & plan. Then do, do & do.

“You can achieve anything you want in life if you have the courage to dream it, the intelligence to make a realistic plan and the will power to see that plan through to the end”

by Ian Wynne Canoe England Regional Club Coach South East