

Coaching Tips for Training a Challenge Cup Crew

If you've volunteered to take on coaching a Challenge Cup crew, first up, thank you ! This is a major fundraiser for the club and coaches are hard to come by. If you're unsure about how to proceed, the following tips should help you get your crew up to speed.

Lesson 1

After introductions, explain to the crew how long the lesson will take (around 90 mins) and find out if anyone has to be away early. Give them a brief rundown on the regatta and what you plan to achieve in the five lessons.

Next, head to the ergos. Put the crew on ergos two at a time and run them through the basics of the stroke. Start with arms only, then progress to body swing and finally bring in the slide. Watch out for the following faults once they're on full slide.

- **Shooting the slide:** Make sure the shoulders come back at the same time as the seat, so the rower doesn't end up with the leg drive finished, but the body still rocked over forward.
- **Finish:** Check the hands finish halfway up the chest and there is a definite tap down and away at the finish.
- **Hands over knees:** Ensure the knees do not break (ie: seat starts to come forward) before the hands have passed over the knees. This is a common one and you'll find most people knocking their knees with the oar handle when they first start.
- **Straight Arms:** Make sure people get their arms away straight at the finish and they stay straight all through the stroke until the next finish. Beware of rowers with permanently bent arms.

Spend about 30 mins all up on the introduction and the ergos and just try to get the basics right. It doesn't have to be perfect, but the more correct the stroke the better.

Next up, head to the boat shed. **Remember this year we're using quads and not fours !!** Show the crew where the scull blades are kept (recreational, not racing) and how to get them out and place them down on the shore. Stress the importance of keeping the button out of the sand and lean the oars on the jetty if possible.

Select the boat you're going to take (checking it hasn't already been previously booked) and get ready to take it out. Stress that boats are fragile and easily damaged and that **lots of care must be taken !** Take the boat down to the water and put the oars in and give it a brief check to make sure nothing is damaged.

Get the crew to hold the boat and hop in (stressing the correct part of the boat to place your feet) and demonstrate the basics again as mentioned on the ergo above. Show them some square blade rowing and emphasise the blade must be square at the catch and to tap down at the finish. Next show feathering the blade and how to roll the handle in the fingers at the finish. Demonstrate what happens at the catch when the blade is not square and instead slices in on an angle.

Also demonstrate balancing the boat by the pair that are not rowing. Show how moving your hands up or down will make the boat drop on one side or the other. Teach them to hold the handles steady at the required height to balance the boat and to not let it just flop around (getting the boat balanced will probably be the hardest thing to achieve in the first lesson !).

Once out on the water, row only in pairs using square blades first and then feathering. Work up from arms, then bodies to full slide. Emphasise timing, timing, timing !!! At the finish of the row, show the crew where to hold when picking up the boat (ie: not foot stretchers or minor braces). Wash the boats down and put it away. So endeth the lesson.....

Lesson 2

From now on (weather permitting), all training sessions will be in the boat on the water. At the start of the second session, hop in the boat once it is on the water and demonstrate to the crew how to feather the blade. Get each of them to try it in front of you and correct any prob's if necessary. Emphasise that the blade must be square when it goes into the water, not on an angle.

Out on the water, warm up in pairs on square blades up to full slide and then bring in the feather. Row most of the session in pairs on full slide using feather and once again emphasise timing and the basics from lesson 1.

For the last 15mins of the row, have a go at rowing as a quad. It'll be horrible, but persist and try and get some timing going !!

Lesson 3

Warm up in pairs using feather and then start rowing as a four. Spend most of the session rowing as a quad although if things are going really bad, you can drop back to pairs for a while. Try and do as much rowing as a quad as you can though.

Lesson 4

If things are going well, do some full weight pieces to simulate racing. Bring the rating up a little and maybe even try and few starts.

Lesson 5

At least one practice race over the full distance (500m from the Gazebo to the shed). Do plenty of starts and decide which one you'll use (half-three quarter-full, etc..). Do some start and 20 pieces as well.

Work out a race plan and work through what a crew member should do if they catch a crab in the race (ie: recover and pick up the timing on the next stroke).

Lesson 6

More of the same as in lesson 5. Good luck !!