



Pete's PETs: Technical Development in the Winter Months?

For many provinces, athletes are into their third month of being off the water, and out of their canoes or kayaks. In terms of periodization, this is commonly termed as the General Preparation Phase (GPP). The basic purpose of the GPP is to develop the athlete's basic physical abilities and skills. The objective of this phase is to provide a base for the higher intensity work required in the later phases of training. In canoe-kayak, this is generally the dryland phase of training. This phase is characterized by medium to high volume, and low intensity. From a technical development perspective, the goal should be to improve basic technical skills that can be developed in a dryland environment, or paddle pool (gross motor skills). Technique can be constantly developed over the year, and should not be put aside through the general preparation phase months.

Here are some typical methods clubs across the country use for technical development during the winter months:

- ❑ Paddle Pool
- ❑ Paddle Ergometers
- ❑ Shadow Paddling

Paddle Pool and Paddling Ergometer

For those of you with the privilege or access to paddling ergometers or a pool where the athletes can paddle, ensure as a coach that you consider the focus and purpose of your Paddle Pool or Ergometer training sessions. On the paddling ergs, are your athletes watching a movie as they do a workout or listening to an Ipod or MP3? Are your athletes working hard in the pool, but perhaps not 100% focused on what they are doing and just getting a workout?

Dryland paddling sessions should be essentially focused on technique through the winter, especially with those clubs limited access to a paddle pool or paddling ergometers. If your club only has access to a pool once a week, consider making that session very technical in nature with specific technical focuses. When designing dryland technical sessions, it's important to consider the developmental level, and along with that, the ability of your athletes to remain focused in workouts. For example, instead of doing an 8 minute interval in the pool or on a paddling ergometer, perhaps break it into 8 x 1 min with 15 - 30 seconds rest. Each minute could have a different technical focus. The higher focus over a shorter time interval such as one minute, as well as the 30 second physical and mental break will result in much higher quality in each piece. In addition, add a mirror for your athlete to watch him / herself, or use video analysis for quick feedback to make those small changes.



Shadow Paddling

Technical development in the winter months doesn't need to be limited to the Paddle Pool, or paddling ergometers, which very few clubs actually have access to.

For clubs that have very limited, or no access to paddle pools or paddling ergometers, shadow paddling can be a very effective tool for helping develop technique and skill. Shadow paddling is essentially taking an old paddle shaft, broken C-1 paddle with no blade, or even a broom stick. A previous Coaches Column spoke about "The Palina", which is essentially a t-grip and piece of paddle shaft tied together using an adjustable string (for canoe), or two pieces of paddle shafts tied together with an adjustable string (kayak paddle). Sitting or kneeling on a bench, or even on the floor, athletes can simulate the paddling motion and work on various technical elements. For more effective sessions, have your athletes do the exercises in front of a mirror.

The downside to shadow paddling is that your athletes aren't working against any resistance. However, this is a great method to work on flexibility and range of motion, big body movements, and even finer movements such as hand position, etc.

Taking care of some technical corrections and development over the winter months can lead to great benefits when getting back on the water in the spring. As a coach, be creative how you can incorporate technical development into your general preparation phase, and in your microcycles.

References:

Bompa, Tudor. *Periodization – Theory and Methodology of Training*. Human Kinetics Publishers, 1999.

In the next Coaches Column:

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