

CHAPTER ELEVEN

UTILISING A SWIMMING POOL FOR SEA CANOEING TRAINING

A swimming pool is a tremendous asset when it comes to training. The obvious forms of training take the form of capsize drill, rescue drills, rolling practise and the like.

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the uses of a pool for sea canoeing technique training; I will make a list of techniques with explanations where necessary.

1. Capsize drill – without and then with spray deck.

Concentrate on achieving a clean exit from the canoe in order to prevent water entering it, and always retain a grip of your paddles. Wear a life jacket when practising this technique because, first you should be wearing one when you capsize on a sea trip, and second, it becomes a little more difficult to make a clean exit from the cockpit after a capsize. Your body is quickly brought to the surface after a capsize and you, therefore, tend to escape from the boat along the surface of the water. As the cockpit is turned sideways it fills full of water. Concentrate on getting out of the canoe whilst keeping it continually upside down.

On surfacing remember to hold on to your paddles and the canoe – move to one end of the canoe and now you can decide on your next move.

Here are the alternatives.

- a. Swim to the shore with your canoe
- b. Wait to be rescued by other canoeists
- c. Climb back into your canoe and roll upright
- d. Right the canoe and clamber over the stern into the cockpit

A and B are realistic alternatives. C is okay if you really know what you're about and D is impractical in conditions found at sea.

2. Rescue Drills

The best rescue technique is the roll. It is quick, efficient and should always work. Practice will ensure that it will work even in rough conditions.

Full explanations of the various rolls can be found in the B.C.U. handbook on the subject.

As I have already mentioned, a useful technique worth practising is to lose your paddle as you capsizes, reach for one of your 'split' blades from the stern deck and use it to roll back upright.

The Eskimo rescue is a good one. There are two ways of accomplishing this; bow presentation or paddle presentation. In both cases the capsized canoeist remains in his boat and slowly moves his arms from side to side above the surface of the water; he may need to bang with his hands on the hull of his canoe to attract attention. The rescuer can approach the upturned canoe presenting his bows for the capsized canoeist to take hold of to right himself. It is best to approach at an angle of about 45° – less chance of ramming an upturned hull and maybe even badly bruising an arm or hand.

The rescue I prefer is the one where the paddle loom is presented to the capsized canoeist. Here the rescuer comes along side parallel to the upturned canoe, places his paddle across his and the upturned canoe and then reaches for the moving hand of the capsized canoeist placing it on the paddle shaft. The 'upside down' canoeist should now pull himself into the upright position. The advantages of this particular rescue are three fold. First you have a fairly stable platform, second you are in a position immediately to assist the righted canoeist and third, should the capsized paddler fall unconscious you are in a position to reach right over the upturned hull and grab life jacket collar or arm and pull him upright.

Other Rescue Drills

I have explained these in Chapter 3, page 27. In a pool try rescuing a completely waterlogged canoe but beware of damaging boats and equipment when trying this one out. The rescue of choice when dealing with a waterlogged canoe would be the H.I. method - see page 30. First turn the boat on its side, cockpit towards you, and gently lift by the cockpit combing, keeping the canoe level, and allow the water to spill out. When as much water as possible has left the canoe by this method continue as for H.I. rescue.

Another technique worth practising in a pool is "All-In" rescues. Here, everyone capsizes (and keep your feet off the pool bottom), work in pairs, keep one canoe upside down and use it as a platform to rock the other canoe to and fro on, thereby emptying the water out. Right the 'dry' boat and I will let the following picture show how entry is made into this canoe.



Photo by C. Harvey

3. Skills

Stern Rudder

A pool is a useful aid in practising certain skills. Here's how we can practise stern rudder - the technique of placing a blade in the water at the rear side of the canoe to use it as a rudder and keep the canoe straight. We use this technique when running down a surf wave.

First, clear the pool. Place a canoe with canoeist at one corner facing diagonally across the empty pool, lead a line from his bows diagonally across the pool through the steps railing and attach to paddle shaft. Two people take either end of the paddles and run down the pool side, this 'drags' the canoe across the pool giving the canoeist the chance to try out his stern rudders and emergency stop ! !

Rolling into wave or surf.

Clear the pool. Have canoe with canoeist at one end of pool facing one side i.e. boat is across the pool. Now attach a line to bow and one to stern. Give the end of one line to a man on the side of the pool and the other line to a second man on other side of pool, both men now run keeping opposite each other down the pool sides drawing the

canoe across the pool. The canoeist should roll into the direction of movement. He should need to do no more than wind up into screw roll position before the men on the side start moving, because once under way he will automatically capsize, and be caused to roll upright by the momentum. This simulates rolling into surf waves. By the time the canoeist reaches the other end of the pool he should be quite dizzy !!

Rescues off Cape Horn in Force 8

I have already mentioned rescues, try doing them this way. Clear the pool. Place an empty canoe across the shallow end of the pool with a chap at the bow and one at the stern. Have them move the canoe up and down to create a wave formation, it is really effective.

Now come to the deep end of the pool and assemble the canoes and canoeists who are to practise their rescue technique on the water. Round the pool side have volunteers with buckets, balers and paddles, it is their job to throw and splash water over those practising the rescue. Keep everyone quiet and use the stop watch to see how efficiently a deep water rescue is performed under these conditions!!



Photo by C. Harvey

Strength Training

Simply attach a strong elastic short cord to the stern of a canoe and to the pool side and have the canoeist paddle hard in an attempt to reach a fixed point. Using a stop watch see how long he/she can hold the bows on the fixed point.

Mind the short cord doesn't snap - we could have the first canoe and canoeist into orbit !!

APPENDIX

BOOKS

- REED'S NAUTICAL ALMANAC By Frank Knight
- A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE SEA Published by Macmillan
- SMALL BOAT NAVIGATION by Lt. Cdr. Pat Hephherd
Published by Stanley Paul
- COASTAL NAVIGATION by G.G. Watkins
a Kandy Publication.
- WEATHER FORECASTING ASHORE
AND AFLOAT by Alan Watts
Published by Adlarp Coles
- OUTLOOK by G.W. White
a Kandy Publication
- THE OBSERVER'S BOOK OF THE SEA, NO. 31.
- THE COACHING HANDBOOK OF THE B.C.U.
- THE CANOE LIFEGUARD MANUAL
- OCEANOGRAPHY by M. Grant Cross
Published by C.E. Merrill
- THE EVER CHANGING SEA by David Ericson & Goesta
Wollin
Published by Paladin
- SEA CANOEING by D.C. Hutchinson
Published by A.C. Black

John Ramwell is a British Canoe Union Coach. He founded the Sea Touring Committee for the British Canoe Union and is the secretary to this committee.

John has been sea canoeing for about ten years and has undertaken several advanced sea canoeing trips, the most memorable one being an attempt to cross the North Sea during 1975. The front cover depicts the members of the expedition at day break in the middle of the North Sea between Felixstowe and Ostend.

This book is published with the approval of the British Canoe Union and is recommended by Corps of Canoe Life Guards as a sea touring book.