

HISTORY OF DRAGON BOATING

In China, the history of Dragon Boat racing dates back to the 4th century BC. At that time, in the Kingdom of Chu, there was a minister by the name of Qu Yuan. Although much loved by the people, his King thought him foolish and had him expelled from his high position in the court. Unhappy and dejected, he wandered about the countryside writing poems about his love of his country and its people. Qu Yuan committed suicide by drowning himself in the Mi Luo River perhaps in a final protest against the injustice and corruption. Legend has it that local fishermen raced out with their boats in a vain attempt to save him. To prevent his body from being eaten by fish, they beat the waters furiously with their paddles, beating drums to drive off evil spirits and threw rice dumplings into the river as a sacrifice to his spirit. The death of Qu Yuan is commemorated on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, when the Dragon Boat Festival is celebrated. This was the season when the ancient Chinese paid their respects to Dragons, who were believed to control rain and rule the water. Since the time of Qu Yuan's death, this exciting and spectacular recreational activity has been a part of Chinese sporting culture. In comparison Dragon Boating is in the embryonic stage in Australia, only having been introduced to our culture about twenty years ago. In that short time however, Dragon Boating has attracted a multitude of sporting enthusiasts from all walks of life. Dragon Boating is a major sport within the Asian arena and is building as a major team sport in Australia and overseas. Today, Dragon Boat racing is undertaken in over fifty countries around the globe – including such diverse climates as South Africa, New Zealand, Europe, Britain, North America and Canada – with thousands of people competing and many more taking part as spectators. Dragon Boating is now recognized as being perhaps the fastest growing water sport on the planet.

Dragon Boating in NSW

Dragon Boat NSW (DBNSW) was established in 1984 and now has more than 58 teams competing in regular competitions, and on a part time or social level. The Dragon Boats NSW Board of Directors is elected from these clubs plus staff positions of CEO, Events Manager and Finance Officer.

Flamin' Dragons Port Macquarie Inc. (FDPM)

Our club was established in August 2004 by a group of women who were recovering from breast cancer. The club has now grown into a sports club not only to continue supporting survivors (both on and off the water) but also to all members of our community who are interested in this dynamic sport – open to all ages of men and women and from 12 years and up for the kids. It is the most fun you can have sitting down.

Welcome to your new club!

FDPM, as a long established sports club, provides the following for all members and trialling paddlers:

- Dragon boats and associated equipment
- Paddles for social, school and corporate teams
- Buoyancy vests for paddlers (weak swimmers), juniors and school teams
- A race calendar and training sessions
- Our own regatta
- Coaching in dragon boating
- Training to new sweeps (the steerer at the back of the dragon boat and responsible for the safety of the crew)

Equipment – Dragon boats

The dragon boats are 12 metres in length by a metre width adorned with a fearsome dragonhead and a tail at the stern. The 10's (5 seats) dragon boats are half the size of a standard dragon boat. The rest of the equipment includes an oar, drum and drum seat.

At training sessions

Teams are expected to unload and store the dragon boats. There is a trolley available to transport the dragon boat to the water. Usually the dragonhead and tail are not used. There needs to be sufficient people to handle the dragon boat to prevent manual handling injuries – a minimum of 10 people.

Maintenance

Dragon boats undergo maintenance during the off-season. If any team member notices a maintenance problem please draw it to the attention of a board member. The Board Members appear on the notice board in the boat shed office.

Benefits

- Dragon Boating is an inexpensive sport that is easy to learn technically.
- Improves fitness.
- It is a true team sport that caters for a broad range of fitness levels and age-groups, enabling people to all do the same thing at the same time.

Races

In Australia, races are generally conducted over a distance of either 200 or 500 metres, with occasional distances 2000 metres or more.

Regattas

- Local north coast regattas,
- All other regattas within NSW as listed on Dragon Boats NSW website events calendar
- State Titles
- National Championships
- Special events such as Lunar New Year racing (Darling Harbour)
- International Regattas

Race categories

Open 20s & 10s (20s boats have maximum of 20 paddlers, 10s boats have maximum of 10 paddlers)

Mixed 20s & 10s

Women

Men's 10s

AusDBF (Australian Dragon Boat Federation) and IDBR (International Dragon Boat Regulations) race categories include:

Juniors 10 – 16 years

 10 – 18 years

 12 – 24 years

Premiers Over 12 years + (no maximum age limit)

Senior A 40 – 49 years

Senior B 50 – 59 years

Senior C 60 + years

Corporate

School

Race rules and conduct

All racing comes under the rules set by IDBF (The International Dragon Boat Federation), AusDBF (Australian Dragon Boat Federation) and Dragon Boats NSW By Laws All dragon boats must have drummers for race days. Failure to do so will result in disqualification. Any dragon boat crew or competitor who attempts to win a race by other than honourable means, or who deliberately breaks the racing rules shall face disqualification.

Crews must comply with all instructions given to them. Once in the dragon boat paddlers must obey the commands of the Sweep. Crews will act in a polite and respectful manner towards each other, race officials and the public at all times. Crews who engage in dangerous, unruly or offensive behaviour will be disqualified.

Insurance

Paddlers' personal injury insurance is covered by registration fees paid to DBNSW.

Paddles

Paddles must comply with the standards set by IDBF 202A and complying paddles will be marked as such. Sports dragon boat teams are encouraged to purchase their own high performance racing paddles available at most bigger regattas.

Training

The correct approach to training will increase your enjoyment of the sport, it will enhance your performance and it will improve overall safety. A training program is fundamental to success. The coach and the team need to establish the level of commitment when training for upcoming regattas.

Team uniform

Paddlers must be adequately dressed for the conditions.

Typically paddlers should wear or have the following items:-

- T-shirt/singlet or rashie/vest and shorts.
- Suitable light footwear ie. Trainers, watersport shoes
- Hat and sunscreen (30+) for sunny days - BE SUNSMART.
- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes.
- Towel for after paddling
- A spare set of clothing to change into after training / competing
- A water container for use on training runs

Personal Flotation Devices and vests (PFDs)

Buoyancy vests are available for paddlers who are not confident swimmers and all School and junior paddlers (and for those who choose to wear them).

Buoyancy vests must be worn when directed by Race Organisers at any regatta and where local regulations require them.

Hints for paddling at regattas

Like any other high intensity sport, it is important to top up on fuel foods. On regatta days it is important to have regular high energy snacks to top up fuel levels and help delay the onset of fatigue.

Preparation for a race

The coach/team captain will make sure that the crew has warmed up effectively prior to each race. Stretching exercises will also be included in the warm-up. Similarly, the coach/team captain will also ensure that you warm down after racing.

PLEASE FOLLOW DIRECTION OF YOUR CLUB COACHES

Beat the heat

To avoid dehydration and heat stress DO NOT WAIT TO FEEL THIRSTY BEFORE DRINKING

Drink plenty of water as your body will benefit from keeping up fluid levels. Have a fluid replacement routine in place before, during and after participating in dragon boating.

Follow the appropriate clothing and sunscreen guidelines- BE SUNSMART.

Before you paddle: safety procedure

- **Know your place in the boat and listen to instruction from the sweep:**

When the full team is in the boat (including the Drummer and Sweep) the Sweep will call for a 'Head Count' starting with the Drummer then the Stroke (on the left) then number down the boat. This will ensure that everyone knows their number in the boat and the number of paddlers in the boat.

- **Know your buddy (seat partner)**

Your buddy is the person sitting next to you in the boat. Always remember who they are. You need to look out for them should you happen to capsize (which is most unlikely). Your buddy's personal safety depends on you and vice versa. The front row in the boat are responsible for the Drummer and the back row for the Sweep.

- **Know the safety drill procedure**

Each of you will need to take part in a practice safety drill as part of your initial training in dragon boating. You will need to know this drill because you will be using it if your boat capsizes.

- **The emergency stop:**
“STOP THE BOAT, STOP THE BOAT, STOP THE BOAT”

When the Sweep calls ‘stop the boat’ all paddlers place their paddles into the water and hold them steady against the current. The vertical paddle acts as a brake stopping the boat. The team should practice this procedure during training.

- **“PADDLES FLAT”**

You should use this position at all times when not paddling. Your paddle will be resting gently with the blade flat on the water on top of the water.

Getting into the Dragon Boat

Loading from sand/land:

- Be alert and ready to help others.
- Two people (usually the Strokes) hold the bow of the boat and make it steady as the rest of the team enters the boat.
- Know the seating position before getting into the boat. It is advisable to line up onshore in the correct position. The Sweep gets in first followed by two paddlers at a time holding their paddles.
- As soon as you are seated, put the paddles in the water (brace position).
- Strokes and Drummer push off and enter the boat last.

Loading from a jetty:

- Be alert and ready to help others.
- One person (the person from row 5) holds the middle of the boat and makes it steady as the rest of the team enters the boat (from back row, then front row, then next back etc...).
- Know the seating position before getting into the boat. It is advisable to line up on the jetty in the correct position. The Sweep gets in first followed by two paddlers at a time holding their paddles.
- As soon as you are seated, put the paddles on the water if you are able.
- Sweep will then advise to push off

Paddling a dragon boat

Team discipline is an essential element in any team sport. A training program is fundamental to success. There is a wealth of experience and advice that can be gained from one of your coaches.

Getting out of a Dragon boat

- Stay seated in the dragon boat until told to unload.
- Unload as directed by the Sweep

Capsized boats

Capsizes can happen.

Common causes - when a boat veers from their allocated race lane during a race thus causing a collision / adverse weather conditions / a large wake.

If a dragon boat capsizes remain calm, stay with the boat and look for your buddy.

First Aid

Coaches should be aware of any crew member that has a medical condition that may affect their ability to race or train – please advise if you have a heart problem, blood pressure problem, back problem, epilepsy, diabetes and asthma.

Members who have asthma are required to carry their puffers (on board the boat) and self-administer if required.

A first aid kit and defib is stored in the boat shed.

Security

Belongings will be safely locked in the boat cage while you are out on the water paddling.