

# FLAMIN' DRAGONS PADDLING TECHNIQUE

The most important skill to master in dragon boating is the stroke. The paddling technique is simple enough that a beginner can learn a non-exaggerated version of the technique in his or her first few practices, but to move the boat with the power required in competitive racing requires constant training to refine the various elements of the stroke.

Most beginners will find dragon boat paddling awkward, because it places you in an unnatural position: paddling on one side, pulling the water and keeping the stroke all up in front of you. But with time, the body will become used to this positioning and it is then that true progress towards becoming a competitive dragon boat paddler will be made.

## **SET-UP**

The paddle is forward and above the water in an outstretched position ready to commence the stroke.

- The shoulders and back should be relaxed.
- Position is forward on front of the seat.
- Both arms and shoulders begin to reach for the catch.
- Both arms are straight although the top arm may be only slightly bent.
- Outside arm is parallel to Gunwale.

There are three phases in a dragon boat stroke: Catch phase, Power phase & Exit phase (AusDBF Level 1 Coaching Workbook)

## **CATCH PHASE**

This is the point of entry of the blade into the water. The Catch Phase begins with the paddler outstretched, reaching forward with the paddle out of the water in the Set-Up position (as above). The inboard arm drives the paddle downward as the outboard arm guides the blade deep under the water.

- The body is leaning forward hinging at the hips
  - The outboard arm and shoulder are fully extended with the elbow straight.
  - The outboard shoulder should be pushed slightly forward.
  - Both arms are positioned over the side of the boat with the inboard hand directly above the outboard hand at full reach.
  - The angle of the blade on the catch is almost vertical.
  - The blade is to be buried before driving down and driving back
  - The blade is close and at right angles to the side of the boat.
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## **POWER PHASE**

This is the working part of the stroke that contributes to boat speed. The inboard arm drives downward and the outboard arm does the work in guiding the paddle back with a straight arm.

The core is tightened to form a stable trunk that helps transfer the power of the upper body.

- Downward power is applied once the paddle hits the water. The direction of the power phase is down and back along the side of the boat.
- The preferred position is to have inside leg forward for balance and outside leg slightly back.
- The inboard arm provides downward pressure to keep the paddle at a constant depth in the water and must move down toward the gunwale until the end of the stroke.
- The outboard arm remains straight until it is in line with the hip.

## **EXIT PHASE**

This phase begins by lifting the paddle out of the water cleanly and quickly at the paddler's hip.

- The top hand lifts the paddle cleanly out of the water, outboard arm only bends slightly.
  - The exit needs to be a relaxed movement, fast and clean to avoid pausing at the back of the stroke which can have a "braking" effect.
  - This is best done by taking the paddle slightly out to the side in a "J" movement and imagining the paddle being pulled forward by an elastic band.
  - The outboard elbow bends slightly as the paddle moves back to the "Set-Up" position.
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