

Video and its Practical Use in Wildwater

Video can be a very useful tool to help wildwater athletes in constructing positive mental images. However, it has to be practiced systemically and the athlete has to develop a positive mental focus.

Too often video can be used in a negative way. For example, a coach may film a session and have the athletes who participated watch it together. During this session the coach may single out an athlete making the same errors over and over. This is where the potential positive use of video is lost. This weakens the self confidence of the athlete, the athlete becomes embarrassed or angered so much that he or she cannot focus on anything constructive that may have come from that video review session. And most importantly, it leaves an error image inside the head of not only that athlete but also others in the session.

If the goal is to correct the error, stop the video at the error and ask the athlete or others what to do to correct the error. Either the athletes or the coach can give the answer in a non-accusing manner. Everyone should take a moment to absorb the correction and run it through his or her minds a few times. Make sure to check if the image they are re-running is the correct image.

When watching video of other athletes performing, try not to watch poorer performances. If you paddle after watching a poor error filled performance, the chances of making an error will increase unless you have a way to ensure the error image does not stick in the athletes mind. One way to overcome the negative picture is to introduce a positive picture. Find a good run after the error and watch it several times. Negative images can be overcome by positive images.

Never show athletes and tell them what not to do. Instead of thinking about what you are not going to do, think about what you are going to do. Run the correct image in your head 4 or 5 times. This is positive mental focus.

You can make excellent use of positive video imagery by drawing upon video and images in you own head. By going through a run mentally it's like having an extra practice run. Visualize the strokes and actually recreate the feeling of the run you'll make. Actually go through the motions.

For team runs positive mental images are also useful. For example where a team has had some excellent runs followed by some poorer performances at events. Showing the video of the earlier better runs could help some team members to rebuild confidence and to create a positive image for the remaining races.

Wildwater racers will find it effective to watch videos of the best racers on a course for two reasons. First, they can see what must be done to set themselves up for success. Second, viewing the footage gets them fired up. Athletes point out that coach's comments can help only if they help focus on what has to be done rather than on past mistakes or negative thoughts. Systematically practicing imagery and developing an appropriate positive focus is very import if not essential in competition.

Video Setup for a Coaching Sessions

When using video in a coaching session consider the following six points for a fluid, well run organized session. Be Prepared; Meet with Coach; Walk the Course; Know What to Shoot; Know Who to Shoot; Schedule Review

Be Prepared

If the video equipment is borrowed, know where the controls are and how to use it. Have enough charged batteries and tape. Consider the effects of the weather on your equipment.

Meet the Coach

Discuss the main goal of the workout with the athletes. What is the purpose of the video (technique or lines?) and decide on a time and place to review the footage.

Walk the Course

Where on the bank does the coach want to video from? This will vary on the focus of the workout. Consider the weather as well.

Know What to Shoot

Try not to waste video time. Footage of people sitting in eddies helps no one. Don't shoot coaches discussions with the paddlers unless is it a technique session and the comments will be important during the review AND you can clearly hear and see what the coach is saying and demonstrating. Avoid using the digital zoom, instead only using the optical zoom to ensure footage quality. Are we more interested in stroke technique or boat lines in this session? Beginners will typically need to see their stroke technique, while expert paddlers are more interested in lines. Know exactly what the paddler is attempting to do. This will be important during the review portion of the session. Consider using a wide angle, which will allow for splits during the video review.

Know Who to Shoot

How many people are in your group? If any athletes arrive late remember to add them into your video sequence. Practice with the viewfinder during the warm-up so you can recognize the individual athletes on camera. Avoid videoing others on the course that are not in your group.

Schedule Review

Be on time ready to review the footage. Know when and where and have the equipment setup and ready to go. Remember to consider the information above concerning focusing on the positive aspects the workout

Common Errors Seen on Video

Asymmetry

Left side should mirror right; hands equal distance from blades on both sides; each paddle blade must be identical as far forward as possible next to the boat with the blade at the same angle; length of stroke on each side must be the same; path of paddle through the water (K1-Wing) follows bow wave; path of upper hand is same both side.

Elbow Position

Elbow and shoulder at 90 degrees to the torso; elbow remains behind the hand and not underneath it; effective use of the deltoids to hold up the elbow; watch for dropping elbows.

Short Reach

Losing focus in your forward stroke may cause you to shorten up the stroke, not really putting the effort in the torso rotation. Really reach forward with a straight bottom arm at the catch. If the paddler does shorten the stroke video may show a rise in stroke rate when they use their arms only. Remember to reach, plant the paddle while having maximum extension, without letting the blade pull back in the air.

Death Grip

Look at the paddlers grip. Many paddlers experience cramps in their forearms and hands because they are gripping the paddle too tight. Try to release fingers from the shaft at the end of each stroke. Try to be relaxed in order to be smooth.

Rotation

Look for body rotation necessary for a strong forward stroke. Twist torso around spine as an axis. Apply power through the release of this built up torque and flexing of the big muscles of the chest and back.

Unnecessary Movement

Watch the boat for bobbing, yawing and tilting. Is the head moving forwards and backwards; Using unnecessary muscles for paddling; Watch for lunging forwards on every stroke causing the boat to rock front and back.

Paddle Blade

A big splash is another sign of a lunging stroke. When the blade hits the water the energy is being used to throw the water through the air and not move the boat through the water. A good stroke sneaks the blade in the water with a spearing motion and then applies the power.

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