

Member Packet

Welcome!

**We're very happy you have chosen to be a member of our dragon boat team.
If you are wondering how to say our name it's**

ketsal:ko:a:tle

which is Aztec for "feathered serpent".



The pride you gain is worth the pain.

What is a Dragon Boat?

A dragon boat is a very long and narrow human-powered boat used in the team paddling sport or dragon boat racing which originated in China. For racing events, dragon boats are always rigged with decorative Chinese dragon heads and tails. The standard crew of a contemporary dragon boat is 22, comprising 20 paddlers in pairs facing toward the bow of the boat, 1 drummer or caller (coach) at the bow facing toward the paddlers, and 1 tiller (steerer) at the rear of the boat.

Paddlers Commitment

While there is a great deal of support from the paddling community, this is a competitive sport. Quetzalcoatl expects its team members to attend practices each week. Learning the stroke and keeping in time takes practice. Patience with yourself and other team members is required and expected. By joining team Quetzalcoatl, you are entering into a relationship. Like any relationship, each side must respect the requirements of the other. Joining the team will require the commitment of time, money, and effort. The team, in turn, will help you to develop as a paddler and participate in a unique and rewarding sport. Neither side can succeed without the other.

Participation

- *I will attend scheduled practices. I understand that my placement in races depends on my dedication.
- *I will contact Bria (paddlingwannabe@yahoo.com or 503-351-3675) if I am unable to attend a practice or will be late. I understand that my teammates depend on me.
- *I will respond to team emails in a timely manner.
- *I will attend all mandatory team meetings. If I can't attend, it is my responsibility to contact a Bria to find out what I missed.
- *I am in generally good physical health to participate in this sport. I understand that paddling is a strenuous activity and I will listen to my body to decrease risk of injury.

Sportsmanship

- *I will always be respectful of my teammates, caller, tiller, team guests, other teams, race officials, etc.
- *I will support my team on and off the water.
- *I will be respectful of all borrowed equipment.

Team Dues

*Team membership dues are currently \$45 per quarter, due at the Quarterly Team Meeting. Dues are collected by the team Treasurer and checks must be made out to Janice McGuire. Races fees may be in addition to the regular team dues and will be determined by the race we enter.

*I will pay team dues on or before the due date. If I am unable to make a payment, I will contact the Treasurer to make arrangements.

*I understand that failure to pay team dues or make payment arrangements may result in my expulsion from the team.

Team Board Members

Bria Guvenir: Captain/Manager 503-351-3675, Dwon Guvenir: Caller/Tiller 503-999-4321, Janice McGuire: Treasurer 503-453-2931

DragonSports USA

DSUSA is the organization that owns and maintains the 6-16 boats used for practices and races (other than Rose Festival). Membership is mandatory and you must complete the Membership Form/Waiver and pay a one time fee of \$40. You can register online using a credit card at their website or if you rather mail a check, the Membership Form is on their website at www.dragonsports.org Make your check payable to Janice McGuire and give your completed form/waiver and check to the team Treasurer, Janice McGuire.

Practice Location, Parking & Clothing

Meet at least 15 minutes prior to the practice start time, on the boardwalk by the flag pole, by the River Place Hotel in downtown Portland. Practices last for 1 hour.

Parking: If you can find street parking or a spot in the lot off Front St (between Harrison & Market), it only charges until 7pm (green machines). There are also 4 public parking garages but they cost about \$4-\$8. One off SW Harbor Way, one off SW Montgomery, and two off SW River Dr.

Clothing: Not raining but cold, wear 2 layers. Undershirt & fleece and workout pants that let you move. If it's raining, wear the same thing with a waterproof shell over. If it's sunny, wear a t-shirt, shorts and sunscreen! Tennis shoes or strapped on water sandals (ex: Keen, Teva) are fine but if it's raining you'll want waterproof shoes, if you don't have them, your feet will just get wet, no big deal. Once you start paddling you will warm up quickly, we're all about endurance so don't layer to many times or you'll overheat. Try to choose synthetic clothing that wicks away moisture. It's also a good idea to wear a hat to keep the sun or hair off your face. Wear water gloves if you have them, they help greatly in gripping the paddle even in warm weather. Basically, wear whatever you would normally wear to workout in outdoors depending on the weather. Bring bottled water! No dehydration allowed.

Stroke Technique

Basic instruction in dragon boat stroke technique will take up the majority of coaching time. Beginning paddlers have little or no experience to draw on, and stroke mechanics may be quite challenging at first. This information will allow you to acquire the basic skills as quickly as possible. Once the basics are solidly entrenched, the paddler is in a better position to appreciate the sport. Remember the basics form the basis of later development and it is essential that paddlers are well taught and well learned.

To make a dragon boat move efficiently through the water, paddlers must not only individually paddle with good technique but also collectively move in unison and efficiently as one team. Technique refers to what your body, back, arms and paddle do. When done correctly, good technique produces an efficient stroke. A stroke can be broken down into a number of parts. We will work on each on these stroke parts, eventually putting them all together as the "perfect" stroke. That being said, the perfect stroke is based upon the skill level of team members and is modified as appropriate by the coach.

There are 7 parts to the dragon boat stroke:

Rotation

Reach or extension

Top Arm Drive

Catch

Pull

Exit

Recovery

When learning these stroke components, it is helpful/important to provide a stable environment for the paddler to learn, such as a dock or a stationary dragon boat. New paddlers are encouraged try both sides to determine which is more comfortable. If paddlers are stable and comfortable, they will be better able to learn the basic skills.

The coach will demonstrate the skills, allow practice, demonstrate again where necessary and provide the appropriate feedback. Paddlers will be encouraged to stay 'in time' even when paddling on the dock, during rest and warm up periods, etc. The carryover to racing is beneficial.

For any paddler to achieve the best possible technique, they must be seated in a stable sitting position. Novice dragon boaters may ask, "what do I do with my feet?" Positioning of one's feet is quite important though it may vary from one paddler to the next. What is important is that the paddler finds a stable, constant position in which they are able to anchor their legs and bottom, locking themselves into the boat thereby transmitting the forces generated by the back and arms to the boat. Many paddlers prefer to anchor themselves by placing the outside leg against the seat in front of them, and tucking the inside leg under their seat. Once the paddler has a stable position then the first steps of technique can be taught.

Rotation

The first step in initiating the stroke is rotation. With rotation, the paddler twists their torso from the hips. Imagine showing your back to the shore, or your chest to your bench mate. The best possible rotation will be achieved by rotating and leading with the paddling side hip. Some rotation drills include:

Pick up your paddle and grip it as you would take a stroke. Place the paddle on your shoulders (behind your head) and rotate your torso. Holding the paddle as you would to take a stroke, arms straight in front, rotate your torso.

Reach

Rotation is fundamental to a paddler maximizing reach or extension. Reach or extension is achieved by fully extending the bottom or outer shoulder and elbow at the point of maximum rotation. Throughout the extension phase, the top arm should be positioned so that a square catch can be initiated; i.e. the blade will be perpendicular to the surface of the water. A good reach drill is to put the top or inside hand on the back of the seat, while holding the trunk in the rotated forward position, then extending the bottom arm straight in front, lifting and relaxing at the shoulder.

Top Arm Drive and Catch

At the beginning of the top arm drive (downward phase), the top elbow should be slightly flexed (not locked) at the height of the paddler's head with the top hand outside the gunnel and over the water. In order to maximize the catch, the upper body is fully rotated with a slight forward flexion of the trunk and positioned over the blade, while the top arm is driven aggressively, burying the paddle without de-rotating the trunk. An instant later after the blade is buried, i.e. after the catch, the powerful trunk de-rotation begins. The top arm continues pushing down until the end of the stroke. There should be an effort to transfer all the forces from the upper body onto the immersed paddle. Emphasize driving down, not punching forward.

Pull

The pull phase begins when the blade is fully buried and is initiated with a strong counter rotation of the bottom shoulder and torso. With a straight bottom arm (that you will minimally bend at the elbow towards the end of the stroke), pull the boat past the paddle in a straight line parallel to the direction of travel. During the pull, the height of the top arm should remain relatively constant with a downward press at the top hand to keep the paddle blade fully buried throughout the entire pull phase. Be careful not to flare the blade or pull the water out to the side, for this is wasted effort and will not maximize the forward direction of the boat.

Exit

The exit phase starts as rotation ends, when the bottom hand reaches the mid-thigh. The paddle should exit quickly and smoothly by rotating the hip forward and lifting the top arm until the bottom edge of the blade just clears the water. This is followed by a relaxed snap forward with the bottom arm, the trunk winding up for the next pull and the top hand reversing the path it took on the drive down.

Recovery

It is very important to stay relaxed during the recovery phase of the stroke. Keep a loose bottom wrist and a smooth transition as the paddle returns to the starting position. This allows the body to relax between recurrent high-energy propulsive phases and will sustain the paddler through the entire race. Breathing techniques are also important and will be emphasized. Some of the common errors in technique that can limit paddlers' ability to paddle their 'best' include:

Poor positioning in the boat (space between gunnel and hip)

Low top elbow

Too much follow through (too long of a stroke)

Staying bent over

It's all about Timing!

Perhaps the most important ingredient to making a dragon boat crew work efficiently is timing. In order to maximize the 7 technical components, it is critical to have everyone in the crew working together.

TEAM: Together Everyone Achieves More.

Paddlers can achieve this by utilizing some visual cues situated around them regardless of what seat they are in.

First, they should look up the boat and check the blades hitting the water (the stroke persons will not have anyone to look at!). Second, they can look at the lead strokes top arm. Third, they should take the occasional peak at the top hand drive of someone on the opposite side of the boat. Paddlers should strive to act with these cues to ensure excellent timing.

Paddling Upfront

Reach forward with your paddle to extend to the mid-thigh of the paddler in front of you. You are now leaning forwards aggressively at about 10 degrees and your torso is rotated towards the paddle. The paddle is pulled through the water close to the boat and the paddle shaft becomes vertical. Your body untwists with the movement of the paddle, and the blade is taken out at mid-thigh. The majority of the power of the stroke occurs upfront. Movement at mid-thigh or behind the hip slows the boat down.

Things to Try

Pulling the blade through the water at an angle to the boat.

Making the shaft more horizontal, or more vertical.

Paddling keeping your arms straight (this will help you to use the powerful muscles of the torso while paddling.

During a

normal stroke, the arms flex slightly).

Leaning onto the blade during the stroke.