

Learning from Fox and Co

Richard Fox: 5xWorld Champion; 1xWorld Bronze medallist; 5xWorld team Champion; Olympian; 8xNational Champion

Liz Sharman: 2xWorld Champion; 1xWorld Silver medallist; 2xWorld team Silver medallist; 1xWorld team Bronze medallist; 11xNational Champion

Pauline Goodwin: 1xWorld Silver medallist (WWR); 1xWorld Team Champion (WWR) ; 2xNational Champion

Maria Francis: 1xWorld team Bronze medallist; 1xNational Champion

Jane Roderick: 1xWorld Silver medallist; 2xWorld team Silver medallist

Sue Garriock: 1xWorld team Silver medallist

Ken Langford: 1xWorld team silver medallist; 1xNational Champion

Melvyn Jones: 1xWorld Bronze medallist ; 2xWorld team Champion; Olympian; 1x National Champion

Paul McConkey: 1xWorld team Champion

Brian Holden and Jason Bennett: 1xJunior World Champions

John Goodwin and John Court: 1xWorld Bronze Medallists (WWR); Olympians

Laura Blakeman: 1xWorld team Silver medallist; 2xWorld team Bronze medallist; 1xEuropean team Silver medallist; 1xEuropean team Bronze medallist; 1xEuropean Junior Champion; 1xEuropean U23 Silver medallist; Olympian; 3x National Champion

Oz Roden and Bert Roden: 1xJunior Pre-World Bronze medallists; 1xJunior Pre-World team Gold medallists; 2xNational Champions

Lizzie Neave: 1xJunior World team bronze medallist; 1xNational Champion

Total: World Gold 16; World Silver 10; World Bronze 7; National Champions 30; Olympians 5; World and European Junior and U23 medals 6 ;

Wow! Impressive isn't it! In case you were wondering, the common link is the River Trent at Stone! Yes, they have all been associated with Stafford and Stone Canoe Club. I'm sure that a lot of people don't realise this when they look over the bridge and see the shallow, cold slow moving piece of water that we call home!

This came to mind when I was browsing our computers files and stumbled across the chapters of Bill Endicott's books ('To Win The Worlds', 'Two Trips To The Top' and 'The Ultimate Run' all available free at <http://www.daveyhearn.com>) that Ruth had

downloaded; most of the afternoon vanished as I read about the life styles, training regimes and success of famous slalom canoeists such as Oliver Fix, Richard Fox, Rebecca Giddens, Liz Sharman, David and Cathy Hern and others.

Stone gets quite a lot of attention in the Richard Fox case study (The Ultimate Run 1983). Fox was attracted to Stone when it became a 'Centre of Excellence' for canoe slalom in 1977 under the stewardship of Ken Langford. He wanted the training but the other attractions were:

"that Stone was centrally located and in easy reach of all other training sites, and that there was a fair bit of money to be spent on the centre. Associated with the centre is a shallow river, the Trent, which is used for slalom gates, a clubhouse, a flatwater canal which is used for distance work, and the use of a nearby gymnasium."

An early session is described that... "...really stressed penalties: if you hit a gate you had to get out of your boat, stand on the shore and look at what you did wrong" [I think that I'd be permanently out of my boat!!].

As I am currently trawling the job market, I was interested to see how Fox overcame the employment problem:

"John Court, head administrator at the Stone Centre of Excellence, arranged for Richard to do a study of canoeing facilities in the North Staffordshire area and have the Government pay him for it. He was given six months to prepare the study. This meant in effect that Richard had unlimited training time." If anyone could find a similar project for me I'd only be too pleased!!!

Generally, Fox trained on the gates at Stone gates during the weekdays, when few other paddlers were around. About one afternoon a week, he would go to other whitewater sites, such as Matlock, Clywedog, Oakamoor and Ironbridge. These places could be reached very easily for an afternoon workout (access to the Clywedog was privately attained). Gates would have to be set up and taken down each time. On the weekends Richard would go to a full-length whitewater river, usually the Treweryn in Bala.

Below are listed typical sessions that Richard Fox did at Stone in the lead in to the Bala World Championships of 1981. They show the transition from endurance/technique to speed endurance and finally speed dominated work. It may be interesting to emulate some of these sessions; slalom has changed a lot since Fox was at his peak (notably the length of course) but I'm sure that there is still much that could be learned from probably the most successful slalomist ever to have lived.

- *S-turn and breakout (upstream gate) technique.*
 - Lasted 80 minutes. Finished off with 10 minute continuous gates.
- *1 hour slalom endurance:*
 - 1. 16 laps steady = 20 minutes
 - 4 laps hard = 5 minutes
 - 4 laps steady = 5 minutes
 - 4 laps hard = 5 minutes
 - 2. 16 X 30 seconds with 10 seconds rest.
- *90 minutes breakout technique.*
 - On a gate where you have to stretch for three strokes, it is as quick and safer to use more strokes and keep speed on.

- *50 minutes slalom endurance:*
 - 1. Warm up 20 minutes.
 - 2. 10 X 4 gate figure 8 breakouts.
 - 10 X 4 gate figure 8 reverses.
 - 10 X 90 second course continuous.
- *90 minutes slalom endurance:*
 - 1. Warm up 20 minutes.
 - 2. 30 second circuit locomotor; i.e., 1 fast, 1 slow; 2 fast, 2 slow; 3 fast, 3 slow; 4 fast, 4 slow; 5 fast, 5 slow; 6 fast, 6 slow; and back down again. 30 minutes.
 - Rest 10 minutes.
 - Repeat.
- *Slalom endurance*
 - 1. Warm up.
 - 2. 4 X 240 sec. course, 120 sec. rest.
 - 3. 8 X 90 sec. course, 45 sec. rest.
- *Speed endurance*
 - 1. 10 mins. warm up.
 - 2. 2 sets 6 X 45 sec., 15 sec. rest.
 - 3. 2 sets 10 X 35 sec., 15 sec. rest.
- *Speed*
 - 1. 6 X 90 sec., 90 sec. recovery.
 - 2. 8 X 65 sec., 85 sec. recovery.
- *Speed gates*
 - 1. Warm up 15 mins.
 - 2. Practice 113 secs. + 0. 1st run 105 + 0. 2nd run 104 + 0. Three min. recovery after each.
 - 3. Split runs, 30 sec. rest half way:
 - 54 102 +15
 - 54 102 + 0
- *Speed gates*
 - 1. Warm up.
 - 2. 6 X 60 sec., 120 sec. paddle recovery.
 - 3. Rest 5 mins.
 - 4. 6 X 45 sec., 90 sec. recovery.
- *Speed gates*
 - 1. Warm up.
 - 2. 4 X 60 sec., 3 min. rest.
 - 3. Rest 15 mins.
 - 4. 8 X 30 sec., 2 min. rest.

There are some interesting quotes and ideas from Langford and Fox that provoke thought that are still very relevant today: Rather than treating a course as consisting of 30 gates, Fox visualized the course with 90 gates on it, this illustrates the precision that Fox sought.

In working out the fastest route way on a course, they looked at the route of the helmet rather than the boat, when the helmet stopped, they analyzed why that was the case. This principle was also applied to the paddles, 'Watch the blades; when they stop, ask why?' They also state that:

- “...the exit from each gate is the crucial element; the way you approach each gate is determined by the exit you want.”
- Discussing upstreams, they state that, when looking to breakout below a drop, it's fastest to have the boat already spinning (pre-turning) when it hits the hole at the bottom of the drop (very relevant today when fixes are all the rage).
- For staggers, it is best for the stern to follow the bow, if this is not the case the boat sideslips instead, losing you speed. When analyzing a course, start at the bottom because the exit from the gates is the most important part of each gate meaning it's most efficient to plan backwards.

To conclude, here is a quote from Langford that everyone should take note of:

”[You should] focus your thinking so you know exactly what you intend to do. Error is the difference between the intention and the result, to understand what the error is [where you are going wrong], you have to have a precise intention.”