

The Importance of Pre-Season Training

I have been asked many times to comment on the winter/spring preparation for our dragon boat season in Toronto. I, of course, deal with this first-hand, as a coach of the Mayfair Predators and Warriors. The challenge of ramping up to produce a high-quality race performance in early June, when most GTA crews do not get on the water until the very end of April, requires use of the months of January through mid-April, long before you get on the water. The quality of your early season water workouts is directly affected by your specific preparation over this period of time.

Most crews spend the required time over the winter in the weight room, as well as necessary cardio support through running, swimming, ERG, cross country skiing and such. What also needs to be carefully considered is the type of paddle-specific exercise that you do in the last 10-12 weeks before heading for the boat. This ensures adaptation for paddling in the boat in the shortest time possible, as well as an opportunity to work on a proper technical framework; be it a “tune up” for experienced paddlers or a learning opportunity for novices. We all benefit from this time. Paddling in this period is usually done either through paddle pool training and/or a spring training camp down south.

Paddle pool opportunities in the GTA vary as to the quality of stroke replication in the boat. Two important considerations in a useful paddle pool experience are body position and water speed. At present, there really is no paddle pool experience in the city that gives a very close simulation to the experience in the boat...until now. Great White North is building the first paddle pool specifically for dragon boating and it will be available to teams and individuals in late January 2008. It will be located in central Toronto and I have been asked to be part of the design consulting process. The key difference to other paddle pool experiences will be that the paddler will be beside, not above, the moving water body in a bench setup that is exactly the same position, relative to water, as in the boat. We have to experiment a bit with this, but we will get it right. Watch for notices about the paddle pool and keep in mind that it will be well worth it.

The other reason that certain crews are “flying” in June is because they make the investment to attend the GWN Florida Training Camp in April. Typically a crew will paddle 100-120 km in the week, which represents about 5-6 weeks of volume for most programs. That is a lead on your competition that is hard to make up in a short time. The quality of instruction and a proper progression of work ensures that the week is the best possible use of time, just before you get back on the water back home. When you see that many of the important races (including the Canadian Championships) are now held in June and July, the head start you can get through a focused camp week in April is invaluable. The camp program also offers a High-Performance option this year that implements OC training (workouts in the OC, not just long, steady paddles) to further improve your stroke mechanics and water connection. A great week – focused and fun!

High quality paddle pool and the camp experience - the way to get ahead and stay ahead when the real racing starts in June. If you have any questions, please feel free to

contact our office at info@gwndragonboat.com or check out our website at www.gwndragonboat.com.

Have a great season in 2008.

Regards,

Jim Farintosh