

canoe 101

Any length of time, even a fraction of a second lost due to a slow start has serious consequences



Rapid Acceleration By Csaba Szanto

THE CANOE SPRINT START

A well-executed start is vital at the beginning of all races, especially in the shorter distances such as the 200m. Any length of time, even a fraction of a second lost due to a slow start has serious consequences, and can lead to loss of position and a psychological handicap that is difficult to overcome for the remainder of a sprint race. Even in long distance races, it is an advantage to gain an early lead over the opponents, except, in the case when tactically the start is not executed by maximum efforts and the aim is rather to reach the highest speed of the boats! To achieve a perfect start, the speed of the boat should be accelerated to its maximum speed as quickly as possible. This acceleration from the standing position of the boat takes about 8-10

seconds (50-60m) from the start line. This speed can be held for a while, usually not longer than 80-90 meters followed by the "drop off" phase when the athlete(s) establish the racing speed in accordance with the given distance.

The start almost determinates the success of the race, especially for the 200m! Hence, practicing to start a race should play an important part in an athletes training programme. The start requires from athletes, deep concentration, quick reaction, proper technique and physical strength.

Execution Of The Kayak Start

The first 4 or 5 strokes are accelerated, rapid, explosive, deep and shorter than a regular stroke. The normal draw length is reached only after the kayak has been

accelerated to the highest speed. Then the boat slows down to the travelling speed. The kayaker's arms are slightly bent, and the thrust hand is lower than it is usually. Most of the strength is derived from explosive and powerful trunk rotations and the shoulders. At the start the paddler should use his/her maximum strength. This is important since the rapid acceleration of the stationary kayak demands extraordinary expenditure of energy.

Once the kayak reaches its optimum planned speed, the stroke rate is regulated due to the distance and the stroke technique becomes normal. This technique, power and rhythm changeover must be rhythmical and continuous so as not to upset the smooth forward glide of the kayak.