

# Rookies 2025 Survey Results

## ChatGPT summary:

### Participation & Membership

- **Most respondents (9/11)** are MCA members.
  - **All respondents attended Rookies at least once in 2025.**
  - Overall **experience ratings were strong** (majority gave 4–5 out of 5).
  - **Likelihood to recommend:** Mostly high (scores 4–5), with one outlier at 2–3.
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### Favorite Aspects of Rookies

- **Guest coaches & variety:** Many loved the weekly guest experts and the fresh perspectives.
  - **On-water feedback:** Especially valued when paired with dryland instruction.
  - **Community & inclusion:** Friendly atmosphere, meeting new paddlers, and paddling with different partners.
  - **Race format:** Short races at the end of each session were popular, fun, and motivating.
  - **Video analysis:** Appreciated as a tool to see progress and compare technique.
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### Suggested Improvements

- **More structure and curriculum:** Several participants wanted clearer lesson plans, more organized pre-race drills, and separation between true beginners and more

experienced paddlers.

- **Basic instruction for newcomers:** Some felt it was overwhelming or too advanced; suggested more stroke basics and hands-on demos before hopping into a canoe.
  - **Equipment & logistics:** Fixing worn boats, cracked seats, missing foot braces, and better meeting spot organization (safety near bike path, not by porta-potty).
  - **Group management:** Keep canoes together for pack practice, encourage paddlers to pay closer attention during instruction.
  - **Scheduling:** Earlier release of the season calendar to allow planning.
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## Skills & Coaching

- **Confidence growth:** Most respondents reported increased confidence (3–5 out of 5).
  - **Technique improvement:** Nearly all said “Yes, a lot” or “Somewhat.”
  - **Challenge level:** Generally good, though a few found it mismatched (too advanced for some beginners).
  - **Coaching quality:** Very strong (mostly 4–5 ratings). Guest coaches like Joe Manns, Dana & Kari were praised.
  - **Feedback & attention:** Mixed; some said “Yes,” others felt there could be more individual pointers.
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## Communication & Organization

- **Communication:** Rated well (often 4–5), especially via social media updates.
- **Welcoming atmosphere:** Strongly positive; most felt included and encouraged.
- **Participation again:** Most plan to return, with some conditional on improvements (structure, beginner support).

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## Future Requests

- More drills: buoy turns, catch drill refinement, cadence vs stroke length, stern/bow tutorials.
- More structured beginner vs. advanced coaching paths.
- Continue end-of-session races, but balance with skill-focused games and drills.
- Keep announcing guest coaches in advance.

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## Fun/Lighthearted Notes

- Common “least favorite race conditions”: **brutal headwind, canoe-grabbing weeds, and a mosquito swarm the size of Canada.**

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## Overall Takeaway

Rookies is seen as **highly valuable, fun, and community-building**, with **strong coaching and communication**. The main opportunities for improvement are:

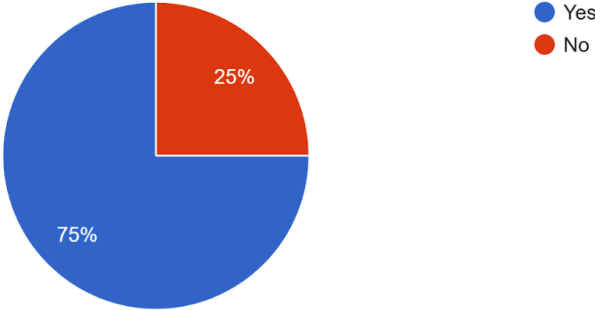
1. **More structure/curriculum** to balance true beginners and advancing paddlers.
2. **Basic skills instruction** before advanced drills.
3. **Equipment upkeep & better meeting logistics.**
4. **Consistent guest coach model & early scheduling** to help with planning.

Would you like me to also make a **one-page infographic-style summary** you could post for MCA members, highlighting key takeaways and fun stats?

# Rookies 2025 Survey Results Detail

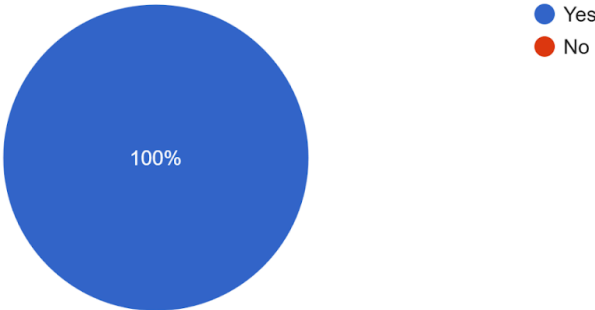
Are you a member of the Minnesota Canoe Association?

12 responses



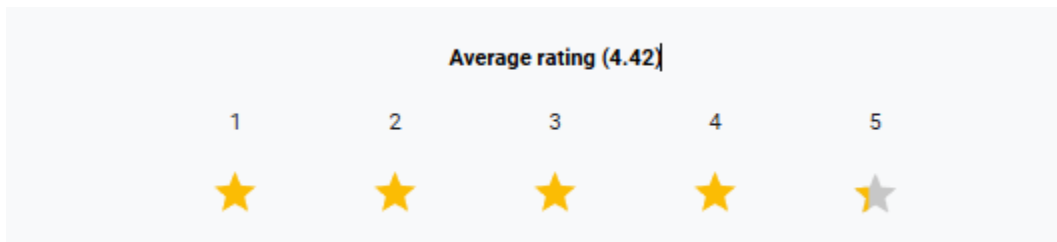
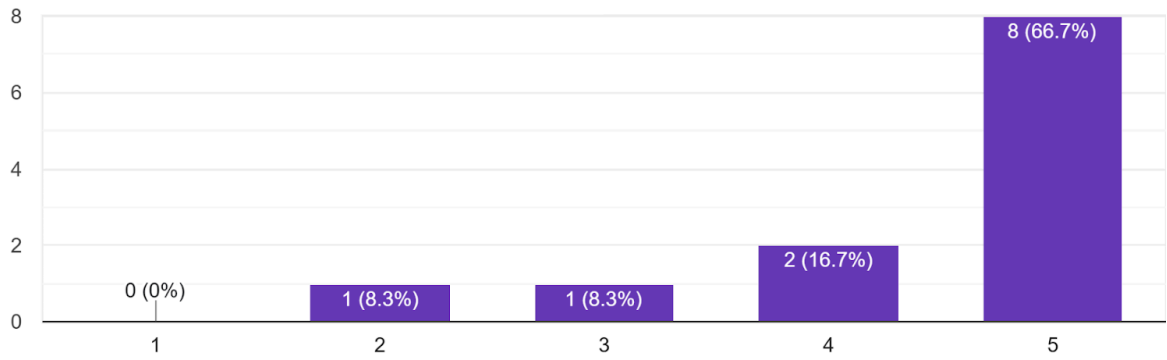
Did you attend Rookies at least once in 2025?

12 responses



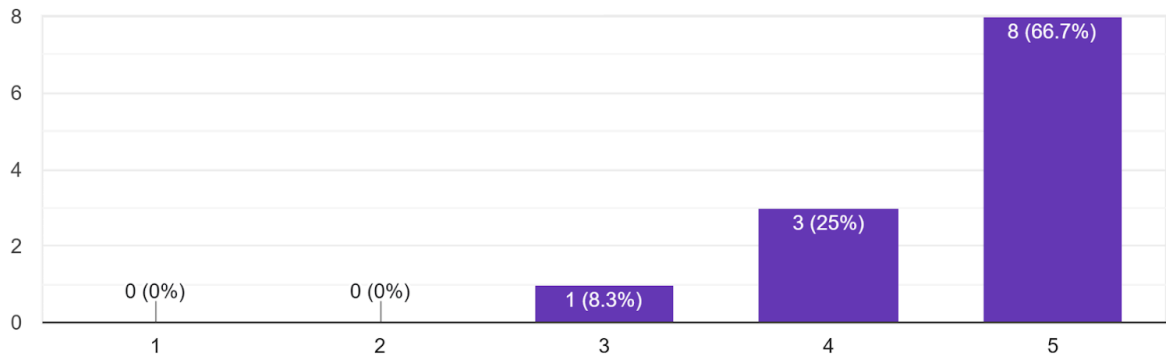
### How would you rate your overall experience at Rookies?

12 responses



### How likely are you to recommend Rookies to a friend?

12 responses



## What was your favorite part of Rookies this season? 12 responses

Getting in a boat with an expert paddler, John, who was informative and fun.

The short races were great - a fun way to practice new skills! Also - excellent communication this year through social media! The guest coaching model generally worked really well. I thought Joe Manns and Dana and Kari were especially strong coaches.

Enjoy paddling with other paddlers.

Learning a new paddling technique

Friendly community, willing to pass knowledge to improve...

The little race & the guest coaches.

The weeks where the on-shore instruction was well planned, AND the on-the-water feedback from coaches.

Getting to know all the new paddlers and see them improve Appreciated the guest coaching- Nice touch to keep it fresh.

i like the idea of having guest experts every week.

I really like the new structure and bringing in a different coach each week! Much more organized than it's ever been. Well done!

Paddling with different partners to get different feedback.

I loved the pointers from the various instructors, some more so than others. Putting some of these techniques into practice isn't always easy. I also appreciated having an experienced canoeist behind me giving me individual pointers to correct some of the many things that I do incorrectly. Again, some of these people are more helpful than others, but that is to be expected. I look forward to the race at the end of the session too. Although I usually ended up near the last in this event it was still challenging and fun. The videos are also great. Through those I am able to see others paddling and see what I do compared to other more experienced paddlers. I like the individual video that Kari made in early August.

## If you could change one thing about Rookies, what would it be? 11 responses

The meeting spot could be improved. It's a little dangerous right next to the bike path, so making everyone aware and cautious (especially when carrying canoes across) would be helpful. Also, we

often stood right next to the port a potty, which smelled terrible. Just a little more group management and shifting where we have our group training would help!

With some coaches, the portion before the race was well organized. Other times there was less clear direction about what was happening during that time. Some additional structure during the pre-race paddling could be helpful.

Try to get people to pay more attention when being instructed.

It's not really for rookies. Everyone was surprised I have never done a canoe race before just BWCA.

Isn't about changing, is adding...perhaps, after the tips on how to improve (Paddler stroke, posture, blade entry or more...) a short practice will help.

Keeping all the canoes together so they can practice pack riding.

More structure to the instruction.

Repair the boats paddles and bags. All boats have foot braces. One seat is cracked need to fix that too. They've had a good life nice to give them some TLC.

set up a more formal curriculum.

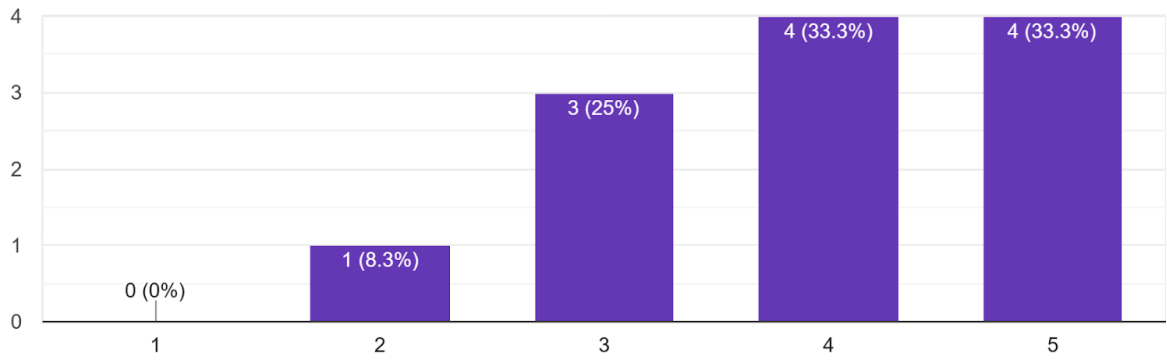
More time Paddling as a group!

This class seems to be geared for people with more experience than I have. I am learning however.

The more experienced people need to understand this and on the whole every person that was in the stern of my boat did and I appreciate all of the advice that gave me. There have been a couple of instances, however, where individuals with way less experience than me have showed up and felt totally out of place. I doubt any of them ever would return. Oh, did I mention, can we eliminate the weeds during the race?

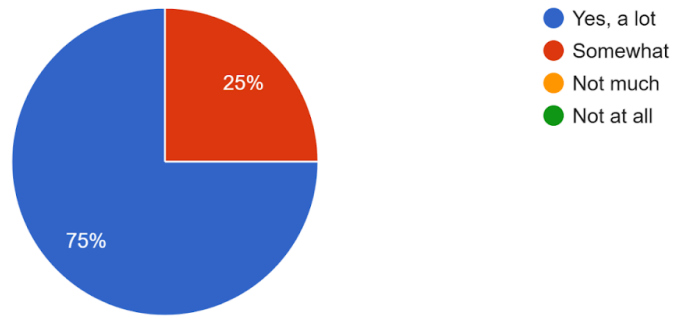
### How confident do you feel in your paddling skills after participating?

12 responses



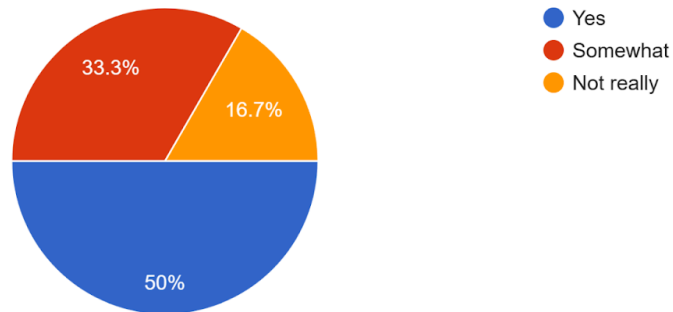
### Did Rookies help you improve your paddling technique?

12 responses



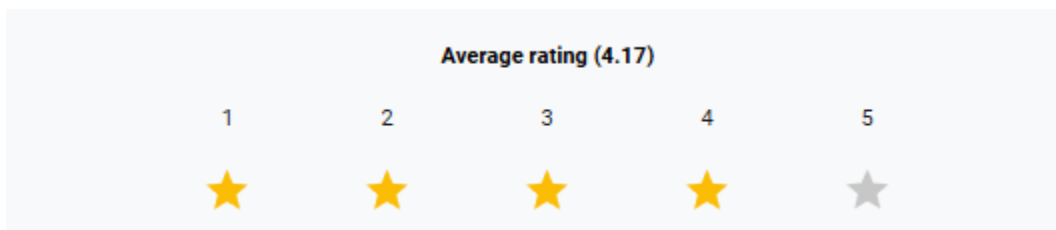
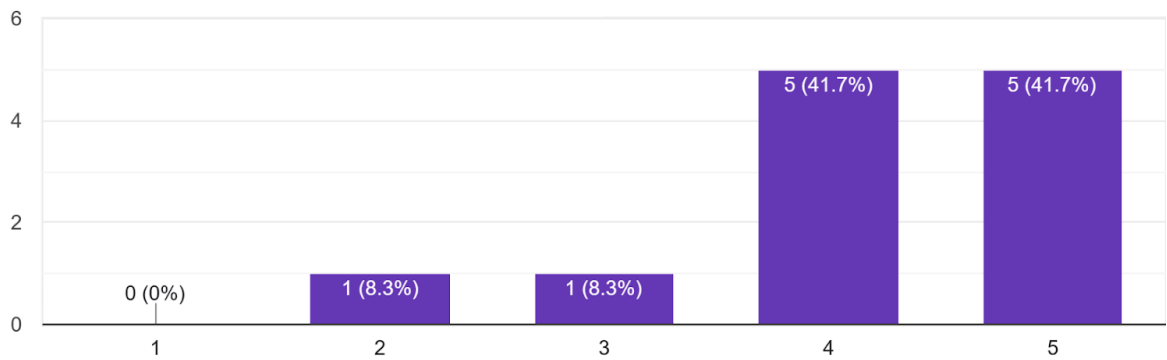
### Did you feel challenged at the right level?

12 responses



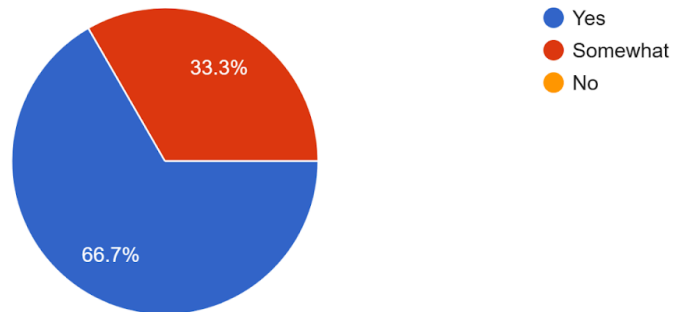
### How would you rate the quality of the coaching?

12 responses



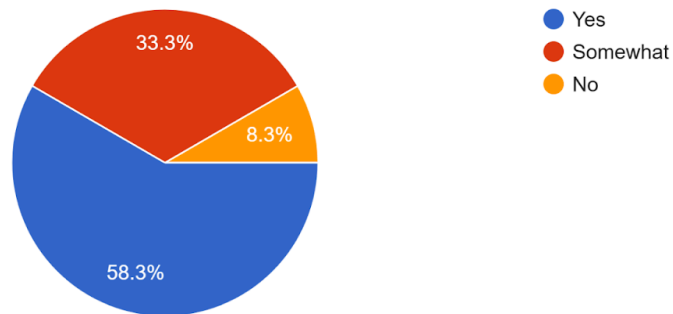
Did you receive enough feedback on your technique?

12 responses



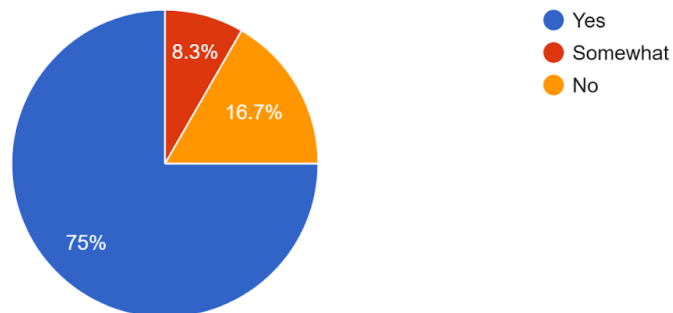
Was there enough individual attention from coaches?

12 responses



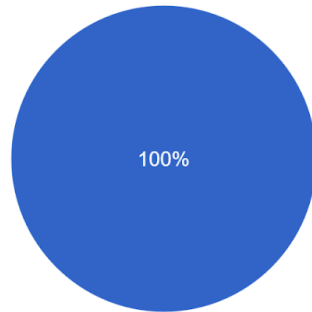
Was the location convenient for you?

12 responses



### Was the start time good?

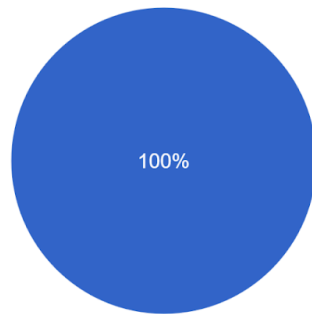
12 responses



- Yes
- No, too early
- No, too late

### Was the session length good?

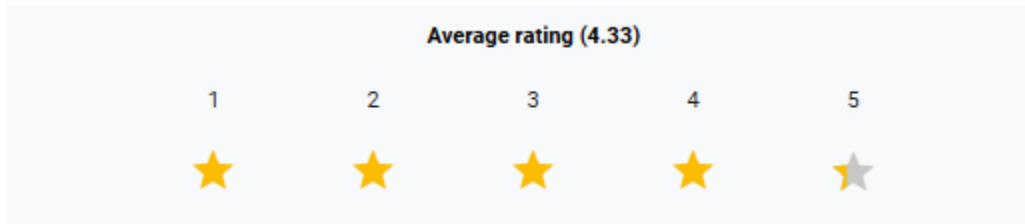
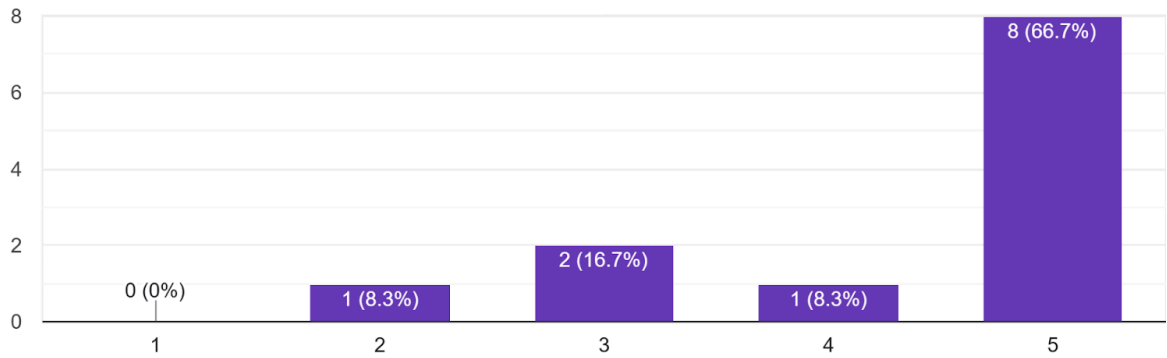
12 responses



- Yes
- No, too short
- No, too long

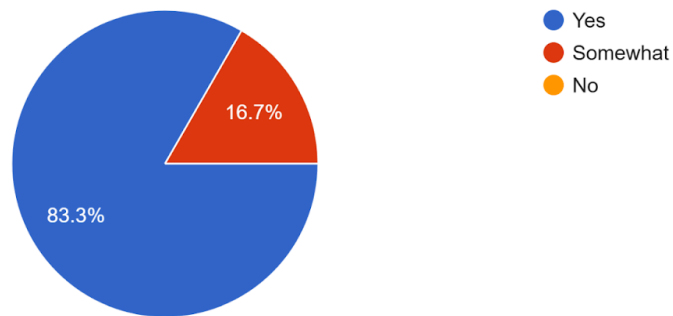
### How would you rate communication about schedule changes, weather, and events?

12 responses



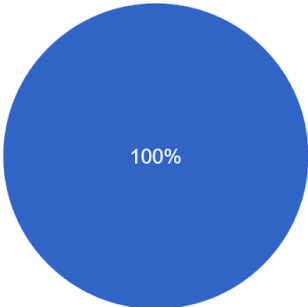
### Did the race format work well for you?

12 responses



Did you feel welcomed and included?

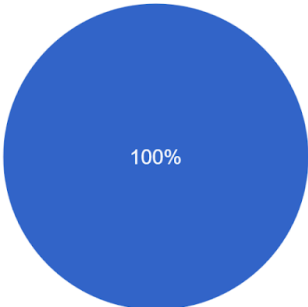
12 responses



- Yes
- Somewhat
- No

Did Rookies help you meet other paddlers?

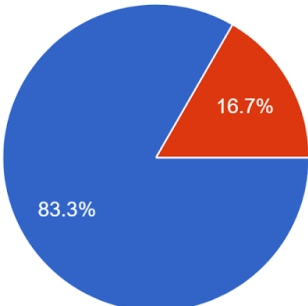
12 responses



- Yes
- Somewhat
- No

Will you participate in Rookies again?

12 responses



- Yes
- Maybe
- No

### **What would make you more likely to attend more often?** 10 responses

Getting the season schedule in early spring so I can build it into my summer schedule. Not sure when it typically comes out since I am new.

I attended whenever I was in town!

I can't think of anything

Many people were giving me many paddling tips all at once and it was too much. I did not go back.

I have rookies in my agenda.

Nothing. I was there 99% of the time.

Generally just more structure and organization. Lada has done a great job bringing in coaches every week, but I sense it's hard for him to do consistently. More buy-in from experienced MCA members to coach would be helpful.

I've attended more this year than the past 10 and have enjoyed it. Prior at east River flats we could teach about currents etc but I think it was hard and scary for new people. Cedar has been a good move.

Keep announcing who the coach is in advance, I like that. Nice to know who to look for.

I will attend with things just as they are.

### **What topics, drills, or races would you like to see?** 9 responses

Not sure what my options are. I've enjoyed everything so far.

I appreciated having each coach review key elements of basic paddling technique - each highlighted different elements that were helpful. The challenge with Rookies is that there may be brand new paddlers attending each week. It is difficult to balance adding more advanced technique instruction while also providing the basics for folks who have never used a racing stroke. On weeks when 2 coaches are present, the group could be initially separated during the dryland instruction period, with one coach working with brand new to racing paddlers and another providing some more intermediate and advanced instruction for those with more experience.

More buoy turn practice

More basic stroke instruction in the water, not in a canoe. It's hard to learn when you are in front of the canoe and only getting verbal instructions.

A full tutorial on the stirring paddle for the ones that never or seldom paddle that position. The stirring paddle only and the Bowman only drill.

Switch drills.

We did the catch drill several weeks. Perhaps some instruction on the finer points? Common bad habits, cadence vs stroke length, popping the boat. I really liked the week on riding wakes, but needed a LOT more practice.

The fun race at the end of each night at first I thought was too long but those that keep coming really have grown to enjoy it. It brings a nice closure to the night and camaraderie.

For skills I think the drills on the beach to help put people in the right Position was helpful. Also the GoPro is super helpful training tool and is smart marketing to encourage others to come when you post on FB.

More focus should be on drills and games for proper technique before wave riding.

More personalized instruction.

Which would you rather face in a race?

12 responses

