

PADDLING IN COLD WEATHER

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Paddling in the early weeks of the season has its own special challenges. While the air may be warming, the lake water is still very cold! And sometimes the air is quite cold too! The sweeps and the paddlers need to properly dress for the weather. Here are some suggestions.

- Dress in layers. As you build heat with the workout, you can lose a layer or two. If the top layer is windproof, you may get away with lighter layers underneath. We've gone out with hats and scarves. Wear wicking socks, so if your feet get wet, they will stay warm. When you need to shed a layer, do so during the rest periods.
- This is a water sport. There *will* be wet hands, arms, and assorted other body parts. Keep a towel and a change of clothes in your car, so you can change to dry clothes if needed after practice. Kahitians especially need to do this, as they have a 25-minute drive home.
- Bring a thermos with a warm drink in it for the trip home.

A capsized boat is highly unlikely if everyone stays in the boat, and doesn't reach too far out over the water. For most of the season the water is warm, and an "unintentional dip" is not a big deal. But in the spring, we must be hyper-vigilant because the risk of hypothermia in cold water is real, and dangerous. For this reason, we will not be heading out of the Tugaloo cove until the water warms up. If someone gets wet, we need to be able to get back to Tugaloo very quickly.

- To prevent capsizing be very careful when drawing to one side. Don't reach too far! And draw only on the command of the sweep. The paddlers on the other side should lean slightly away to keep the boat straight in the water.
- If a capsized boat happens, our practice is over and the boat needs to get back to shore ASAP. Everyone needs to work together to get everyone back on board. Please keep talking to a minimum so everyone can hear the sweep give orders. Find your buddy, grab a paddle, and get back in the now water-filled boat and paddle like crazy to get back to shore.
- The most likely person to go in the water is the sweep. Use your paddles to pull the "swimmer" close to the boat, and try to get him/her in the boat asap. This is not easy to do without capsizing the boat. He/she only has a few minutes to help you get him/her in before hypothermia sets in, and he/she can't control the muscles. Grab the sweep by the armpits or their life vest, count to three, and yank hard! The other paddlers must carefully lean to counterbalance the boat. This time of year, most of the docks have their ladders pulled in. But if there is one very nearby, you may want the swimmer to climb onto a dock to get in the boat. Whatever is fastest! Then hightail it back to shore. One of the coaches can take over as sweep.
- There should be a cell phone on the boat at all times. While paddling back in, call 911 to get help. They are trained in safe re-warming.

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THE BEST IDEA IS TO NOT CAPSIZE, AND TO NOT FALL IN. But sometimes we don't get our wish. Knowing what to do when the unthinkable happens will help us keep each other safe.

WARM WEATHER PADDLING

The really hot days of summer are not yet upon us, but they are coming! None of this is rocket science, but here we go.

The most important thing about paddling when it is hot out is staying hydrated. Nearly everyone in the club is, er, "of a certain age", and dehydration comes on more quickly at our age. As a first responder in Kahite, I see this many times every summer. Totally fit people becoming overheated doing things that would have never bothered them a few years ago. It happens. And we need to be prepared for it.

Heat exhaustion is a serious and sometimes life-threatening condition that can usually be prevented. Here are some ideas.

1. The most obvious prevention is to stay out of the heat. Well, that can work, but we wouldn't get a whole lot of paddling in then, would we?
2. The next best solution is to drink plenty of water. Gulping down a glassful of water before leaving the house to come to practice is a good start. Drinking water often during the paddle is also a good thing to do. Finish that bottle during the hour. Electrolyte waters can help on a really bad day, but usually aren't necessary.
3. The Norwegians have a saying, "There is no such thing as bad weather. Only bad clothing." Wear lightweight, cooling fabrics and a hat. The hat can be filled with lake water, and dumped over your head if needed.
4. Put on sunscreen before leaving the house so it can soak in and doesn't come off when you sweat.
5. Jump in the lake at Tugaloo before going out. You will probably be dry before we come in from the paddle. I keep an old cotton bandana in my paddle bag that I soak and put around my neck to help keep me cool.
6. Pack a change of clothes for the car in case we go out to a restaurant afterwards.

The sweeps on the evening paddles will try to stay in the few shady spots as much as possible when the weather is hot. But shady spots are few and far between on lakes. Being ready for the weather is the best option. Let's face it. It's just embarrassing to do a face plant in the boat, so we do what we can to prevent that. Enjoy the heat! It's part of being a Tennessean! 🤦