



## What is Dragon Boat?

### History

Dragon Boat began over 2,000 years ago in China on the banks of the life-sustaining rivers in the valleys of southern China as a fertility ritual thought to bring good luck to the coming crop season.

Over the years a second story was introduced to give the festival a dual meaning. Legend has it that Qu Yuan, a great warrior and poet threw himself in the river Mi Lo, as a protest against the political corruption of the day. The people loved Qu Yuan very much and raced out in their fishing boats to the middle of the river in a vain attempt to save him. They beat on drums and splashed their oars in the water, trying to keep away the dragons that occupied the rivers.

Today Dragon Boat is an international sport and the fastest growing water sport in the world and a favorite among charities and corporations for fundraising and team-building benefits. Dragon boating truly is the ultimate sport for all abilities and no previous experience is required as full training will be given on the day.

Dragon boat racing is a popular sport in the United States, with an estimated 175,000 participants and over 100 festivals. The sport has seen a surge in popularity in recent years, with races taking place in areas near water across the country.

- There are around 175,000 dragon boat participants in the United States.
- There are more than 100 dragon boat festivals in the United States.
- There are more than 150 recreational dragon boat clubs in the United States.

Dragon boat racing is widely recognized as a beneficial exercise activity for breast cancer survivors, with many teams around the world specifically formed for women recovering from breast cancer, allowing them to improve their physical health, mental wellbeing, and foster a strong sense of community through the sport; this practice is often referred to as "Breast Cancer Paddlers" (BCP) and is largely inspired by research from Canadian sports medicine specialist Dr. Donald McKenzie who demonstrated the safety and benefits of dragon boating for breast cancer survivors, even after lymph node removal, challenging the previous belief that vigorous upper body exercise could lead to lymphedema

- Physical benefits: Dragon boat paddling provides a low-impact, repetitive upper body workout that can help improve muscle strength, flexibility, and cardiovascular health, which are important for breast cancer survivors during recovery.
- Mental health benefits: The social aspect of being part of a dragon boat team can significantly improve mental wellbeing by providing support, camaraderie, and a sense of accomplishment.
- Research-backed: Studies have shown that dragon boating is safe for breast cancer survivors and does not increase the risk of lymphedema when practiced appropriately

Physical and mental benefits are applicable to people dealing with all cancers.



## Why Dragon Boat?

- Wonderful Way to Enjoy the Lake!
- Great Exercise! Non-Impact, Full Body Workout!  
Dragon boat is a team sport that works out many parts of the body, including the back, shoulders, lats, legs, and core.
- THDBC embraces all fitness abilities, meeting you where you are at and through skill-building and encouragement propels you towards your fitness and/or competition goals.
- The Club provides opportunities for a no-impact full-body workout, cardio fitness, and sporting competition on various levels, and building camaraderie in a truly synchronous group activity, while enjoying beautiful Tellico Lake.



“What better environment to enjoy life here in Tellico Village, than being on our beautiful lake, while we enjoy friendships and get a great work-out. This is one of the best things I have done since moving to Tellico Village.”

“I joined to race but I gained so much more in the process physically and mentally.”



## What is Dragon Boat?

A dragon boat is a canoe-like craft made of wood and fiberglass. A crew of paddlers sitting in rows and paddling in unison moves the boat through the water. The goal is good paddle technique and synchronicity that propels the boat smoothly.

“The paddles enter the water at the same time, the paddles pull back at the same time, and they leave the water at the same time finally ending in the ‘swing’; paddles are flared out and skim over the water to be positioned for the next stroke. It’s harmonious and a splash of bright colors only to disappear into the water for the next stroke. When the whole boat “gets it” it’s a beautiful thing.”

Boat size varies, with 20-person boat being the most prevalent but 10-person boats are gaining popularity in competitions. The 20-person boat is about 40 feet and the 10-person boat, about 30-feet.

Paddlers are seated two per row and paddle continuously on the same side for the duration of the race. A steersperson keep the boat on track and provides commands to manage the boat. Races are held at various locations in venues suitable for the on water competition, team set up on shore, spectators and vendors.

Dragon boat racing is one of the fastest growing sports in the world. It is truly an impressive sight to see a dragon boat surging towards the finish line with 20 paddlers pulling hard with every stroke in perfect unison to the drummer's beat [drummers are not used for practice sessions] and the calls of the steersperson. Combine the competition and excitement of the races with the fun and atmosphere of the festivities that typically occur at a dragon boat festival, and you have a great event for participants and spectators of all ages.

## Boats Used by Tellico Heat

Through 2024, THDBC leased a 20-person boat from Dynamic Dragon Boat Racing. Dynamic provides dragon boats and related equipment, professional race logistic services, and unique experiences for charities and participants. Highlighting the world's eighth fastest growing sport and implementing a customer service focus, Dynamic has become a nationally recognized expert in the dragon boat event management market.

Dynamic stores the boat during the off-season and delivers the boat in the spring, a time determined by club management. The season ends in late October and Dynamic picks up for storage.

In the summer of 2024, THDBC purchased a used 20-person boat from Dynamic, the "sister" of the leased boat. A generous donation from Miser Wealth Partners supported the acquisition. The Club was able to make good use of both boats!

In late 2024 an anonymous benefactor donated a used 10-person boat. This is an amazing gift that provides added practice flexibility and the ability to prepare for 10-person competitions.

The boats are tied up at the Tugaloo docks with the generous approval of the POA.

Our boats do not have the colorful dragon heads on the bow that you will see at festivals. The traditional "dotting" the Dragon's eye before dragon boat racing awakens the dragon and unleashes its fire, giving boats and their crews the strength of the dragon.

## **The Paddlers**

The paddlers sit facing forwards and use a specific type of paddle. The leading pair of paddlers, or "**strokes**" or "**strokers**" **set the pace for the team**. All other paddlers synchronize their strokes to the stroke paddlers. The result of the split second difference of delay can result in a caterpillar or centipede effect whereby each successive pair of blades hits the water a fraction of a second behind the blades in front, with the collective stroke of the boat falling out of synchronization. Very experienced paddlers will feel the response of the boat and its surge or resistance through the water via the blades of their paddles, and will adjust their reach, and the catch of their blade tips, in accordance with the power required to match the acceleration of the hull through the water at any given moment.

The **engine room in a dragon boat is the middle section** of the boat, usually made up of the middle eight paddlers. The engine room is responsible for generating the majority of the boat's power. The engine room is typically made up of the stronger and heavier paddlers on the team.

Dragon **boat rockets are the paddlers in the last three or four rows** of a dragon boat. Rockets are known for their strength and speed, and are called upon to provide an extra push at the start and finish of a race. They support the engine room, which is made up of the middle rows of the boat. The water moves faster for the rockets because the first 14 seats push water back. Rockets are also known as the "white water" or "last kick". Rockets are sometimes considered the most difficult positions because the paddlers must continuously stroke through the turbulent water created by the other paddlers. However, newer paddlers may be placed in the rocket position to learn technique and timing.

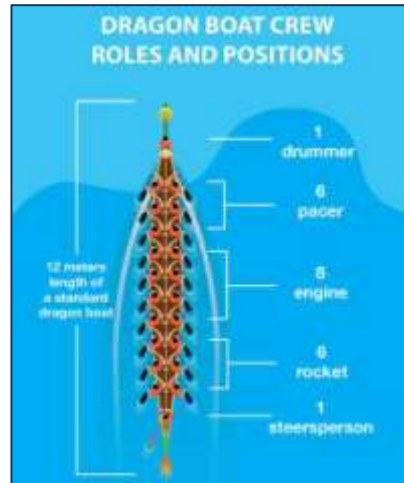
## **The Drummer and Drumming**

The drummer is utilized during a race to assist with the entire boat with the timing. The drummer sounds the pace provided by the stroke for the rest of the boat to hear.

A drummer is required during racing events, but if he or she is not present during training. For Community Festivals the event manager may provide a drummer. For United States/International Dragon Boat Festivals the Club must provide a drummer.

### The Steersman

The steersman, also known as the steerer, sweep, controls the dragon boat with a steering oar similar in function to a tiller which is mounted at the rear of the boat. For Community Festivals the event manager may provide a sweep. For United States/International Dragon Boat Festivals the Club must provide a drummer.



The boat is balanced side-to-side and front-to-back. The steerer and coach are responsible assigning seat for safety and optimal performance.

### Apparel and Accessory Tips

For introductory paddles, and for as long as you wish, the club has full life-vests and wood paddles available for your use. When you choose to join the club and spend time on the water you may consider the following equipment and apparel. Your teammates are a great source of information and tips for outfitting.

#### **WHAT TO WEAR TO PADDLE**

- Loose fitting clothing for ease of movement
- Clothing that dries quickly / wicks moisture away is ideal
- Do not wear denim or blue jeans... it's the kind of mistake that people only make once
- No jewelry, especially rings or earrings as they could cause injuries or you could lose them
- Capris or shorts work well. Some paddlers prefer cycling shorts. Long pants may be preferred early in the season or for cooler weather conditions.
- Supportive footwear with good treads that will grip when you on the wet docks and get in and out of the boat are essential. These can be old running shoes or water shoes. Remember they will get wet. NO flip flops... another mistake that people only make once
- Hat – Avoid baseball caps as they may blow off your head or impede your paddling.
- Sunglasses – the kind you don't mind losing in the water, or the kind with those rad strings to keep them on you

#### **WHAT TO BRING TO PRACTICE**

- Water bottle with a lid (the bottom of the boat is not clean so you might prefer a water bottle with a waist attachment) Not metal, please.
- Towel
- Change of clothes, especially if the weather is cool or it is raining
- Something to drink after the practice
- Nutritious snack for after practice
- Waterproof Sunscreen and insect repellent... lots of both... trust us.
- Lip balm
- Any required medication
- Note: If you must bring a cell phone or a pager on the boat, bring a zip lock bag to secure it in during the practice

- Paddling gloves (optional)
- If it is raining, wear rain gear but remember it must fit under the lifejacket.
- If it is cold, be sure to bring a change of clothes. Layering clothes works best.

### Additionally

Dragon boat **paddles** are uniform in size and shape which is determined by IDBF regulations. The club has wood paddles available for your use. When you decide to join us, you'll find that your teammates have chosen to invest in a carbon-fiber paddle. Most paddlers start with a paddle that costs about \$200, but some have upgraded after a couple of years. The most common are Hornet and Z&J. Both may be found on Amazon or at the sellers' websites. Your teammates and coaches will gladly share their experiences and suggestions! Watch Hornet Watersports for sales!

<https://www.hornetwatersports.com>

Most folks like to use **gloves designed for dragon boat/kayaking/canoeing**. The most common used cost about \$20 and may also be found on Amazon, Hornet Watersports or other dragon boat accessory suppliers.



They are available in black!

A **seat pad designed for the dragon boat** is suggested for comfort and guarding against slipping on the wood seat. Teammates and coaches will gladly share their experiences and let you try out what they have available.

From Hornet Watersports  
Available on Amazon along with other  
types.



Dragon Boat Seat Pad - Non-Slip

New Product from Hornet Watersports



#### Another Option Frequently Seen



Dragon Saddle provides a seat that is designed with one half as a 'racing glide' to facilitate the hip rotation that is an important piece of the stroke. They provide various designs; <https://www.thedragonsaddle.com/>



#### Save Your Glasses!

Glasses – Use straps to manage your sunglasses and save from going into the water. We have a rare occasion when prescription glasses fell into the water and could not be recovered!

This disaster can easily be avoided.



To wear sunglasses or not? In addition to protecting your eyes from the sun and glare from the water, there will be times you find small amount of water splashing your face. Wearing sunglasses protects eyes and prevents the need to stop my stroke to wipe an eye. Stopping the stroke is a no-no! Inexpensive [think Wal-Mart fishing section] slightly tinted glasses may be used for overcast days. All should have straps to prevent a mishap. Use of sunglasses is a personal choice.

#### Shoes

Shoes that can get wet are recommended.

Shoe selection may depend on time of year and weather. Many use athletic shoes especially early in the year to keep feet warm and dry.

As the season progresses and you're learning more about the stroke and your comfort level you may wish to stick with an athletic shoe, but pull out a lighter weight choice. Machine washable is a good choice; sweat and lake water make for smelly shoes.

You may choose a water sport shoe. Sporting goods stores and Amazon have selections. Some prefer a somewhat sturdy sole that is OK for walking and provides a sturdy platform as your leg drive develops.

The Amazon selection includes inexpensive options. Outdoor gear stores have choices.

Keens, Merrell's, and Tevas are great as well as Crosskix. Ladies, if your legs are short and you have trouble reaching the heel press, please consider Tevas or Keens, with a higher heel as compared to sneakers or some water shoes.

Do not wear flip flops! Note: many experienced paddlers choose to go barefoot for true connection to the boat.

#### Apparel

Every paddler has her own clothing preferences, body temperature and budget. You'll find what works for you through trial and error. You don't have to spend a fortune to outfit yourself for dragon boating, Dress appropriately for paddling. Remember you will be wearing a personal flotation device ["PFD"]. More on this further on.

There will be some splash. In the summer this may be welcome!

Wear, quick drying clothing that is breathable and hopefully UV resistant. Cotton or denim is NOT recommended as it holds the water and remains wet and cold longer.



Earlier in the season, during colder weather and until the water warms, neoprene bike shorts or leggings will further protect against a chill. Wool, neoprene or PolarTec insulates and repels water. Water resistant shell pants or vests may be a good option.

Note: you will not be able to change pants or shirt while on the lake. It is possible to remove an outer layer of top but the ease of doing so is dependent on the PFD type you're using. There is no place to store discarded clothing and they will get wet on the bottom of the boat.

#### PFDs (Personal Flotation Devices)

No one is permitted on the boat without a PFD. While capsizing is highly unlikely, accidents do happen, and one never knows which day is going to be the one. The club maintains a supply of life jackets for use when boarding the boat. However, members usually purchase their own based on personal preference. There is the traditional life jacket, kayakers vest, auto-inflatable vest that fits over the head with a horseshoe shape, manually inflatable vests or belts.

The club has a description of various options on the website or upon request. The pros and cons are presented based on your comfort level in the water and comfort for dragon boat.

#### "ROAD iD" <https://www.roadid.com/>

No one is permitted on the boat without a Road iD. This is an ID band that provides basic medical info and an emergency contact. A level of the product allows emergency responders to access your medical history. The basic band is OK for paddlers. If you've not yet purchased a temporary band are usually on hand by the club at practices to add your name and emergency contact. To be sure, you may provide your own until the time ROAD iD is purchased. Check with the Club about a discount before purchasing.

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New Member F.A.Q Link