

5 Star Surf - Training Notes

For clarity of understanding and following the logical sequence a surf paddler will usually experience, some of the elements appear in sections different to that of other disciplines. The intention in the surf context is to break down the physical knowledge under headings that describe in sequence the skills the paddler is aiming to acquire i.e. take-off; followed by the ride

Venue

At five star the training course will need to access at least three venues of differing types. One of the venues will be a point or reef and where-ever possible a headland or a coastal site with difficult landing options should also be included. All parts of the syllabus would ideally be referenced in these environments i.e. riding, rescue, equipment and leadership. This obviously takes significant judgment and knowledge of the tidal and break variations of a given area on behalf of the trainer; it would not be possible to cover all aspects of the syllabus on beach breaks alone

Craft and Equipment

The students will need to be conversant with surf specific boats, ski or a general purpose boat suited to the performance expected in the surf environment at this level i.e. carving. Opportunities to spend time and be coached in these differing types of craft though not essential are recommended to allow the students to experience the differing boat characteristics. The completion of rescues in these craft is also an important element in training. This experience will form a key element of the knowledge needed on an assessment

Part A – Personal Paddling Skills

A.1 Lifting, carrying and launching

The type of break surfed at this level will mean the application of a large variation in launch and landing skills. The contexts needing practice would include coming in through a surf zone to land on an unknown beach, launching and landing on rocky foreshores, boulder beaches, steep high tide banks and piers or breakwaters.

A.2 Control

The training will focus on a high level of personal performance. Students will need guidance in the subtlety needed to be convincing at this level. The emphasis should be placed on identifying the level of error acceptable at five star without limiting experimentation and improvisation. When conditions are appropriate the coach will prioritise the paddlers needs from the following core themes of:-

- Using the full wave face both top and bottom
- hull speed
- with and against the grain/shoulder
- ride length

- reactionary and choreographed sequences
- positioning, timing and closure

A.3 Paddle out

The variations in wave type and venues are far too vast to cover the exact solution on any given day but the principles are similar. The training will need to consider extremely well thought out and pro-active strategies for negotiating pitching waves and the skills of rolling under waves. The varied types of wave venues and conditions encountered at this level will mean a huge number of possible decisions and actions on the part of the paddler, Training should paint a clear picture that the rules of engagement to allow safe surfing will not always follow simple principles and even the most proficient surfer sometimes has to admit defeat, this would however have exhausted many possible solutions. The access to some breaks will begin to impinge on leadership and knowledge covered in the level 3 Sea Award. This would include tidal movement and group leadership on coastlines with limited landings. A recommendation in this respect could be the completion of the tide and navigation course on offer to sea paddlers.

A.4 Take off

Considerable input should be given in allowing students to gain the experience and judgment linked to patience and etiquette that consistent effective take-offs require. As in the previous section the range of scenarios are far too vast to cover every option but the principles outlined above are the significant partners to excellent physical skills of late take offs, steep waves and regains. On reefs and points the paddler should be shown how to use transits, foam cones and wave patterns to position themselves with accuracy.

A.5 Turning

The coaches aim is to equip the candidate with bottom turn variations which will allow decisions on speed angle height etc to be made allowing accurate access to the ride. The training should address the bottom turn options to allow both steep reef waves and thick rolling beach break waves to be ridden. The use of specific surf craft greatly speed this process. In the context of the ride the boat should be driven by the paddler and the paddle itself used to add to the process not slow or put the rider in negative positions from which there are few pro-active options. The rider will choose to slow the boat or sling shot it into an accelerated state. It should be made clear at this point the rider dictates the sequence not the wave. Other turns might need the coach to work on timing issues and forward body positions to initiate skids and slides.

A.6 Variety, pace and attack

As soon as the riders 'default' has been established, the coach should emphasise the options that are not being exercised so as to develop a wider band width of variety. Changes in boat, wave type and power will help build an understanding of how to ride in a more varied and appropriate style for a given wave, one size does not fit all. The end of the run should be coached as a positive event

A.7 Timing, height and the shoulder

The training should again begin from the students current knowledge base, using such tools as video and isolating sections of the run in an attempt to broaden performance and understanding. An example of pushing current understanding would be the work at the top of the wave where the perception of being at the top is based on the stern of the boat rather than under the seat, the same parallel can be seen in the bottom turn, often perceived to be back' up' the wave but more normally slowing down at the bottom of the turn and the wave moving under the boat giving the feeling of carving up toward the top of the wave. Shoulder proximity is easily understood with the use of video and purposefully riding too close and/or being overtaken by it will also help breed understanding. The ability to drive the boat at an approaching wall or lip is central to beginning ariel work, although not always within a students ability range, efforts to clarify the sequence necessary to develop this aspect of the ride should be made.

Part B – Rescue Skills

Training should equip the candidate with a skill set which allows the paddler to be able to rescue from a variety of positions with multiple strategies, complicated rescue scenarios that are indicative of the types of waves surfed should be engineered at this level. A solid understanding should be evident of the rescue building blocks, checked in a controlled environment before testing in more demanding situations. The coach should be extremely careful not to expose candidates to potentially dangerous exercises whilst learning the application of problem solving and decision making skills. Safe beaches should be the initial venue but whenever possible safe practice in challenging environments and situations not always immediately accessed from a car park should be sought out. The skills practiced would include:-

- re-entry and roll
- paddling a swamped craft ashore
- no paddle surfing
- two paddle surfing
- towing in waves
- carrying a casualty in the surf zone
- rescuing an unconscious surfer
- swimming ashore with a casualty
- rip scenarios

Part C – Leadership and Group Skills

C.1 & C.2 Risk Management, Group control and communication

The Five Star leader should be able to manage a group of competent paddlers, and set up a safety framework appropriate to the environment.

Training should develop the following themes:-

- information gathering
- group / environment and objective identification
- decision making

- dynamic risk identification and management
- creating a safe working environment
- group briefing, organisation and signals
- adapting initial plans and decisions to match changing conditions

C.3 Equipment

Equipment at this level should be of a very practical nature and may be spread throughout the group. The equipment should be able to help the students to create solutions to scenarios where the surf venue is exposed and the group face the following conditions

- No landing zone
- travelling with a casualty
- equipment failure or loss
- injuries
- travel in and out through a surf zone
- summoning help

Part D – Theory

D.1 Advanced Surf forecasting

Students should be led through the process of making an accurate surf forecast for both the immediate area and when in unknown venues. The creation of this forecast should be from 'first principles' taking raw data from meteorological and oceanographic sources to build a time line concept of both conditions past, present and future. The effects of localized weather on the swell should also be covered.

D.2 Wave theory

An applied understanding of the bathymetric features of reefs, convex and concave points should be dealt with in detail equipping students with the knowledge to accurately select a venue and understand how to manage the wave type encountered.

D.3 Etiquette

All aspects of wave etiquette will be included both in theory and in a practical context. Given the environments used at this level the consequence of inappropriate application of etiquette or wave riding protocols would be increased risk or possible injury. For this reason the coach should clearly create safe situations where students are exposed to practical implementation of these principles. Competition surfing etiquette might be included by staging a basic competitive exercise during the course.

D.4 First aid

The coach should present a problem solving approach to the application of first aid particularly relevant to the environment commonly encountered in advanced surfing. This would include current CPR protocols for water asphyxiation and treatment of cold shock hypothermia.

D.5 General

It would be expected when working towards this award students should develop both the depth but commonly a breadth of knowledge. The coach might introduce such areas as life-guarding, knowledge from other disciplines such as sea kayaking or playboat concepts to illustrate the possible areas of common interest.

