

COACHING WHAT GEAR?

Just staying warm and safe for a day's paddling can be fairly kit intensive. If you add to that the need to coach you could soon find your dry bags bulging with supplies and your boat sitting very low in the water. So it helps if the kit you choose to take has multiple uses. Saying that though, even a one hit wonder may be worth the effort of dragging it along if it gets across the point you are trying to deliver. Here is a selection of things you may consider and their potential applications.

THE USUAL?

Whatever kit you would normally take to look after yourself and your companions in that craft and water conditions (like towlines or throw-lines) should be included, but a few of these might need modifying slightly for coaching.

First Aid: This needs to be fairly comprehensive, just slapping duct tape on a cut might be all that is expected by your mates, but students will expect to be well looked after (remember your higher duty of care).

Spare Clothes: A spare fleece in your size may not fit your all of your students, fleeces in XS & XL sizes can be cheaply sourced from charity shops or lost property boxes.

Spare Everything: It is incredible how many students can misplace equipment on a short drive from your storeroom to the water's edge, so having a few spares of the essential bits in your vehicle will often prove invaluable. Even if your students are experienced paddlers and plan to provide all their own equipment, they will sometimes turn up with things that are too old, damaged or inappropriate for the planned task. Having spare bungs, bolts and tools with you is an easy way to impress clients who turn up with shoddy boats.

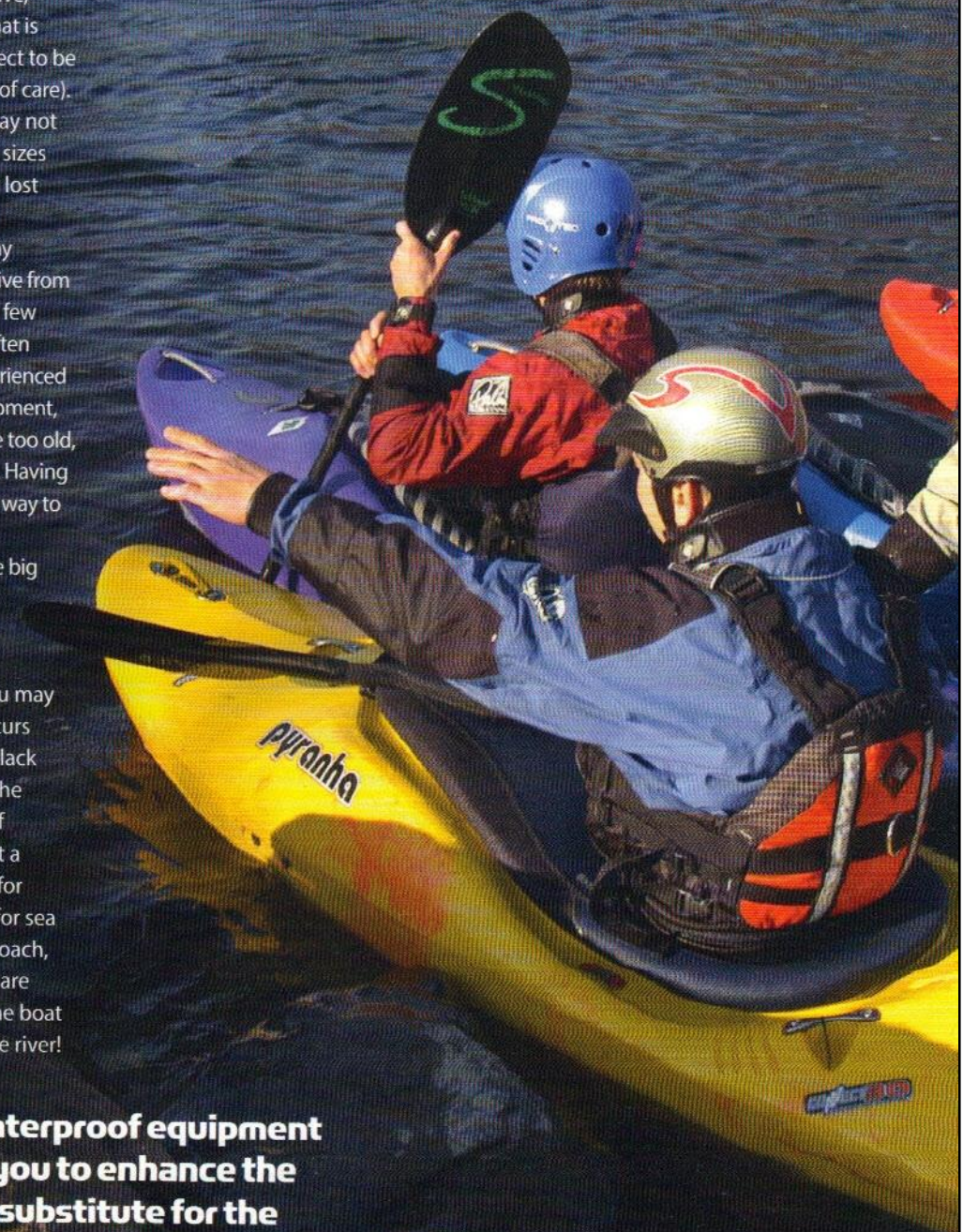
Group shelter: Emergency shelters need to be big enough for the whole group.

AND THE KITCHEN SINK...

As a coach you are on your own. Although you may have a lot of people with you if a problem occurs everyone will look to you to solve it and their lack of experience in that environment may limit the assistance your students can provide. Items of equipment that are often shared out amongst a group of peers, such as slings and karabiners for river rescues, flares, tow lines and VHF radios for sea kayakers may all need to be supplied by the coach, and kept in their own boat to make sure they are readily available if needed, and not stuck in the boat that is pinned inaccessibly in the middle of the river!

“Whatever light weight waterproof equipment you choose to take with you to enhance the learning process it is no substitute for the knowledge, imagination and experience that a good coach can carry in their head.”

Article by Karl Midlane, BCU Level 4 Inland, Sea & Open Canoe Coach at Plas y Brenin, The National Mountain Sports Centre.



COACHING TOOLS.

Having a few non-paddling items with you can be great teaching aids.

Toys, Balls & Sponges: Brightly coloured toys and balls are great for games and my favourite 'steal the duck' game works just as well with 8-year old novices as it does with military groups on adventure training. They also make excellent targets for developing accuracy; if you are developing specific skills, being able to hit a floating tennis ball whilst doing a stern rudder requires more precision than just doing it in an open space.

MODEL BOATS

Models of your chosen craft can be an alternative to demonstrating manoeuvres and will allow for viewing at speeds or angles not available in real life.

WATERPROOF VIDEO CAMERA

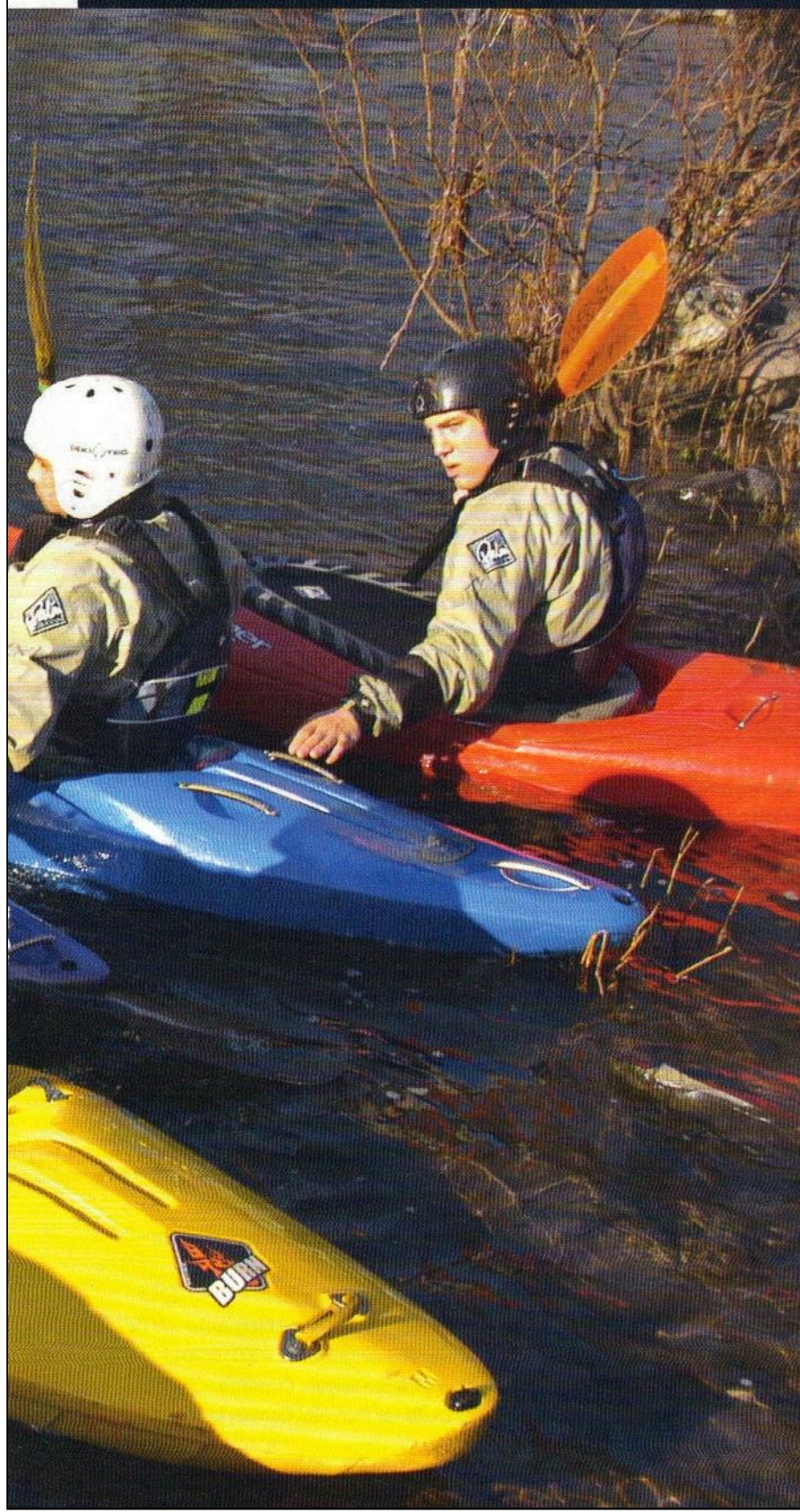
This is great for showing a student what they are really doing rather than what they think they are doing. They allow a coach to review a single performance multiple times and in slow motion for partially detailed analysis. They also have the capability of storing pre-recorded examples of performances to use as demos if you are a bank based coach.

Written Resources: Laminated copies of maps, guidebooks, tidal flow diagrams, wildlife identification charts and your favourite mnemonics can also be added for classroom clarity in the wilderness environment, and the back of laminated sheets can be pressed in to service as a whiteboard.

Tape, Pens, Crayons or China graph Pencils: Anything that will work in the damp to put a marker on boats or paddles can be handy to remind people of things like hand spacing on the paddle or blade entry points next to the boat.

YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Whatever light weight waterproof equipment you choose to take with you to enhance the learning process it is no substitute for the knowledge, imagination and experience that a good coach can carry in their head. Undoubtedly the one most important thing for a coach to carry with them is their lesson plan for the day. Whether you choose to type it out and laminate it, scribble it in a waterproof note book or just have it committed to memory, putting some thought in to the day's objectives and coming up with a logical progression will make a bigger difference to the success of the session than any fancy toy or gadget.



INFO



Karl is a canoe and kayak coach at Plas y Brenin, The National Mountain Sports Centre working on their huge range of white water, sea kayaking and open boating courses and holidays all year round. If you'd like to know more about Plas y Brenin and what they have on offer, why not visit their website at www.pyb.co.uk where you can help yourself to a free 72 page colour brochure.